

THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

INSIDE

'Militant' sales drive: three weeks and 967 subs to go!

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VOL. 59/NO. 42 NOVEMBER 13, 1995

Quebec vote: sovereignty remains on the agenda

Narrow loss, but independence backers vow to fight on

BY ROGER ANNIS
AND SUSAN BERMAN

MONTREAL — Support of a sovereign Quebec lost the October 30 referendum vote by a very thin margin. But many vowed to fight on, ensuring that the struggle for Quebecois national rights will remain at the center of politics in Canada.

Thousands, a large majority under 25 years of age, gathered at the convention center here for a rally to watch the vote results and, they hoped, celebrate a win. Cheers went up as early results from eastern Quebec showed the "Yes" side, that is pro-sovereignty, in the lead. But the mood became subdued as the returns from Montreal and western Quebec closed the gap and ultimately gave the "No" a 50.6 percent victory.

"I'm disappointed," said factory worker François Laplante as he headed home. "But we'll get another chance soon."

"It's very hard to take," said student Benoît Frigon, "but the struggle will continue. Just look at all of us young people here tonight. Do they think we'll just go away?"

Richard Boudreault, a delegate from Montreal attending the international con-



Crowd waves Quebec flags, "Oui" signs at Montreal pro-sovereignty rally of 12,000 October 25.

vention of the United Steelworkers of America in Vancouver, said in an interview, "If Ottawa doesn't give Quebec the powers to protect our language and culture, the fight will begin again."

The referendum asked for a mandate for the Quebec government to negotiate a new political and economic arrangement with Canada in which it would take over exclu-

sive powers to make laws, levy taxes, and conclude international agreements.

The proposal was initiated by the Quebec government, which is headed by the Parti Quebecois (PQ), a nationalist, bourgeois party.

Sovereignty has strong support from young people and workers. The largest

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Nov. 12: Rally for Boeing strikers

BY BOB BRUNEAU

SEATTLE — The International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) has scheduled a solidarity rally in support of strikers at Boeing for Sunday, November 12, at Everett Memorial Stadium, north of Seattle.

No contract talks between Boeing and the IAM have taken place, and none are scheduled, since October 5, when 32,500 IAM members overwhelmingly rejected Boeing's three-year contract offer. Strikers and their families, other unionists and unorganized workers, community and church groups, and elected officials are all invited to turn out for the rally. IAM international president George Kourpias will speak at the event.

Picket lines remain solid in Washington, Oregon, and Kansas.

Demonstrations of support for the strike continue. Teamsters at Boeing are contributing \$10 per member to the union food bank. The last week of October, 150 members of IAM District 142 from TransWorld Airlines, Southwest Airlines, and Continental joined the picket line in front of Boeing's corporate headquarters. IAM mechanics from Alaska Airlines, along with members of the Association of Flight Attendants (AFA), organized a car caravan to the picket lines from the Seattle-Tacoma Airport.

The mood on the picket lines is bolstered by each expression of support for the strike. Motorists blow their horns and wave to strikers as they drive by. Truck

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Activists fight to end death penalty, demand new trial for Abu-Jamal

BY HATTIE McCUTCHEON
AND JOHN STAGGS

PHILADELPHIA — "In Italy, Japan, France, South Africa, Brazil, Canada, and throughout the United States, thousands of people have petitioned, organized, and demonstrated in the streets demanding justice for Mumia Abu-Jamal, an end to the death penalty, and a new trial. This is one of the most important political campaigns for justice today," stated Pam Africa, chairperson of the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal (ICFFM). She was speaking before an African-American history class at Temple University on October 31.

In speaking engagements across the country to build for an international day of protest November 6, Africa insists, "In fighting to save the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal you are not fighting simply for him, but you are fighting for yourselves."

This case has brought international attention and pressure against the racist nature of the death penalty, which, as Abu-Jamal says, "is the fastest growing housing track for African-Americans in the country today." The campaign to free the Pennsylvania death row inmate is exposing the racist nature of the entire judicial process, stated Africa.

Abu-Jamal was convicted in 1982 of killing Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner and has been on death row ever since. The battle for his freedom is currently focusing on winning a new trial.

On September 15, despite compelling new evidence, Judge Albert Sabo issued a ruling rejecting Abu-Jamal's appeal for a new trial. Sabo presided over Abu-Jamal's original trial. He is notorious as a "hanging judge" who has sentenced twice as many people to death as any other judge in the entire country. Most of those Sabo sent to the executioner's chair — 27 out of 32 — were Black.

Abu-Jamal's lawyers presented testimony contradicting the original 1982 evidence the cops used. A host of new witnesses said that Abu-Jamal was not the man who shot Faulkner. Expert testi-

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August 12 march of 3,500 in Philadelphia celebrated stay of execution and pressed demand for new trial for Abu-Jamal.

What next? Socialist leaders lay out tasks, perspectives

BY NAOMI CRAINE

What next?

Many *Militant* readers have been involved in actions in defense of Cuba, especially regional actions that took place October 14 in San Francisco and Chicago and October 21 in New York, as well as a series of activities around Cuban president Fidel Castro's visit to New York. In several cities, activists built and participated in meetings during the speaking tour of Cuban poet Norberto Codina.

"With these modestly successful actions behind us, it's a good time to discuss the range of activities socialist workers and youth should look to next," said Joel Britton, national trade union director of the Socialist Workers Party. He spoke to the *Militant* together with Laura Garza, a member of the SWP Political Committee, who was a leading activist in the coalition that built the October 21 action in New York, and Diana Newberry and Brock Sat-

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IN BRIEF

Salvador peasants occupy land

Since October 25, hundreds of peasants have been occupying more than 20 agricultural properties in the central and western part of El Salvador, according to the Democratic Peasant Association (ADC), which initiated the takeovers. The peasants are demanding the government comply with distribution of land laid out in the peace treaty it signed with the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, which ended the 12-year-old civil war.

The national civil police said antiriot cops were on alert and ready to evict the peasants from land, which is planted with coffee and basic staples. Marcos Salazar, an ADC official, said the peasants are demanding that farms exceeding 171 hectares (1 hectare = 2.47 acres) be turned over to settle 25,000 families. He also said the peasants had occupied another 26 properties in the states of Ahuachapán, Sonsonate, and La Libertad. The peasants rallied on October 26 and planned a demonstration on October 31 in San Salvador to press their demands.

Oil workers protest in Ecuador

Thirteen oil workers in Ecuador have been waging a hunger strike since October 16 to oppose the government's privatization plans. The oil workers federation also threatened a national strike against the government's policy. Energy Minister Galo Abril said the oil industry would lose \$5 million a day in income and \$3 million in stock profits from a national oil strike.

The country's congress rejected a proposal from the energy ministry to increase the transportation capacity of the trans-Ecuadorian oil pipeline from 320,000 barrels of crude per day to 450,000 barrels. Many in congress say that the estimated \$600 million investment, which would presumably facilitate importation of oil from abroad, would affect Ecuador's sovereignty and national interests. Ecuador's oil production amounts to 380,000 barrels per day.

Chief cop in Chile finally jailed

Gen. Manuel Contreras, head of the Chilean government secret police from 1973 to 1977 under former dictator Gen. Augusto Pinochet, was escorted to jail October 21. Contreras was sentenced in 1994



Hearing in Boston to discuss the impact of proposals to cut Medicare and Medicaid. The U.S. Senate passed a bill October 28 to significantly cut these entitlements.

to seven years in prison for his role in the car bombing murder of former government minister Orlando Letelier in 1976.

"It is the first time in Latin American history that a secret police chief has ended up in jail," said Sergio Bitar, a leader of the Party for Democracy, which is part of the country's governing coalition. Bitar asserted that the U.S. government leaned on the regime to exclude the Letelier murder from a general amnesty for all other political crimes committed by the secret police from 1973 to 1978, when thousands of political activists disappeared while in military detention.

Thousands protest in Chechnya

Several thousand people assembled October 24 in the central square in the Chechen capital of Grozny demanding independence for Chechnya and the removal of Russian troops. Russian police opened fire on the crowd, killing at least one person and wounding four others.

Meanwhile, Russian commandos invaded an airport in Ingushetia, a republic bordering Chechnya, killing one person. Both armed assaults came as negotiations

between Moscow and Chechen rebels stalled. Some 40,000 Russian troops were sent to Chechnya in December 1994 to crush a movement for independence.

U.S. deal in Okinawa case

The U.S. government agreed October 25 to hand over to Japanese authorities three servicemen accused of raping a 12-year-old Japanese girl in September. Washington and Tokyo signed a treaty in 1960 stating that U.S. officials are not required to turn over military personnel suspected of crimes until indictments are made. The new agreement directs the U.S. government to "give sympathetic consideration" if Japanese authorities request custody of servicemen who are suspected of rape or murder but have not yet been indicted.

According to the *New York Times*, Washington's "concession is intended to defuse the passions provoked" by the assault. Okinawans are outraged that under current agreements the GIs didn't have to be handed over until they were formally charged. The case has fueled protest rallies of tens of thousands demanding the removal of U.S. bases from the island.

No amnesty for racists

South African president Nelson Mandela rejected a constitutional change that would extend the amnesty cut-off date of Dec. 5, 1993, for those who admit to political crimes committed during the apartheid era. Right-wing leader Constand Viljoen met with Mandela to propose extending the date to May 10, 1994, when Mandela was inaugurated.

In the final days before the April 26-28, 1994, election, members of the neo-Nazi Afrikaner Resistance Movement set off bombs that killed 21 people. Some 30 members of the racist group, including some of its top leaders, have been jailed

for the bombings.

De Klerk claims nukes destroyed

A spokesperson for South African deputy president F.W. De Klerk denied claims, stated in the recently released book *The Mini-Nuke Conspiracy: Mandela's Nuclear Nightmare*, that the old apartheid regime had not destroyed its entire nuclear arsenal. The book, which was released internationally October 20, asserts that the racist regime did not destroy all its weapons in 1993.

Cuban president Fidel Castro told a meeting in New York that the apartheid regime considered using nuclear weapons against Cuban and Angolan troops fighting against its aggression in southern Africa. Castro also referred to the claims in the *Mini-Nuke Conspiracy* that some of the fascist groups in South Africa have been able to keep some of these weapons.

New charges against killer cop

Robert Johnson, the Bronx district attorney in New York, announced October 18 that he would seek a new indictment against Francis Livoti, the cop who choked Anthony Baez to death Dec. 22, 1994. The original indictment against Livoti was thrown out supposedly because a clerk printed out incorrect charges in filing the indictment.

Baez's relatives, who were infuriated by the dismissal, staged a sit-in at the district attorney's office October 11 and demanded that the prosecutor present the case to a second grand jury. Johnson conceded. He issued a statement that said, "While I firmly believe the court's decision was wrong, based on legal and practical consideration and with the agreement of the Baez family, I have decided to represent the charges rather than appeal."

U.S. Congress to slash Medicare

The U.S. House of Representatives approved a budget bill October 26 that would drastically cut spending on Medicare, the health-care program for the elderly and disabled. The bill would also reduce Medicaid benefits, end the federal requirement to provide subsistence payments to poor children, cut off welfare cash benefits after five years, and bar states from giving federal aid to teenage mothers and children born to single mothers already collecting welfare benefits.

A similar version of the bill passed in the U.S. Senate on October 28. The Senate version includes provisions on aid to teenage mothers and increased benefits for women who have additional children while on welfare. The differences between the two versions remain to be worked out in a conference committee of the two houses of Congress. U. S. president Bill Clinton, who announced in September strong support for Senate legislation to "end welfare as we know it" that could push an additional 1.1 million children into poverty, said he would veto the bill approved in the House of Representatives.

— MAURICE WILLIAMS

THE MILITANT

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What next? Socialist leaders lay out tasks

Continued from front page

ter of the Young Socialists national steering committee.

These socialist leaders discussed the tasks and perspectives before the party and youth organization in the coming weeks and months. "There's a broad range of things that those who want to win others to a revolutionary perspective can be part of now," Britton said.

This includes strike support work, campaigning to free Mumia Abu-Jamal, joining fights around affirmative action and against police brutality, and winning new supporters to defend Mark Curtis. "It's through participating in different struggles, and studying the history and lessons of the workers movement, that new layers of youth and workers will be convinced to join in building the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists," he said.

"In all of this work, talking socialism and getting out the socialist press and other revolutionary literature is a top priority," Britton continued, pointing to the importance of successfully completing the *Militant* subscription drive and selling Pathfinder books.

The response to the anti-embargo demonstrations and to Castro's visit "reflect the openings that are there to discuss Cuba and revolutionary politics with young people and workers," said Garza. "Vanloads of young people came to the New York from Greensboro, North Carolina; Chicago; and many other areas." Particularly notable were two buses from Montreal, "with many people who were also active in the campaign for a Yes vote in the Quebec referendum," she said. Others came out in the streets in Harlem and the Bronx to greet Fidel Castro when he spoke at meetings in those neighborhoods

who "don't necessarily know much about Cuba, but like the fact that the Cuban people have stood up to Washington and are open to learning more."

Educational work around Cuba, such as teach-ins, video showings, or touring a speaker from the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, D.C., can now be organized by local coalitions in every city, Garza noted. Following up Codina's tour by selling subscriptions to the magazine he edits, *La Gaceta de Cuba*, which is a leading publication on culture and politics in the Americas, can be part of this.

Join picket lines with striking workers

Britton said he was "particularly pleased by the short, effective talk given at the October 21 Cuba rally by Floyd Davis, a striking newspaper worker from Detroit." Davis and fellow striker John Peralta, who also attended the New York demonstration, are part of a speakers bureau set up by the strikers.

"I participated in picket-line mobilizations in Detroit two weekends this fall," Britton continued, "where several thousand workers from the region helped delay delivery of the Sunday papers. This strike, along with the ongoing fight of UAW members at Caterpillar, is an example of the fact that there continues to be resistance in the working class to the employers' offensive against working people, their unions, and their democratic rights."

Britton also pointed to the recent victory by steelworkers at WCI in Warren, Ohio, against the company's attempt to run the mill with strikebreakers. "Socialist workers have a responsibility to bring workers and young people they've been working with around the Cuba actions to this and other labor fights taking place,"

the SWP leader said, visiting picket lines and helping set up speaking engagements for strikers. "Those coming around the communist movement need to get a picture of how the working class can resist, build unity, and ultimately come to power." One opportunity coming right up is the November 12 rally in Everett, Washington, to support strikers at Boeing.

Supporting workers' struggles is an important part of building the Young Socialists, Satter said. A member of the group in Indiana, for example, visited the picket lines in Detroit and then organized other young people to go as well. Following this experience and a trip to New York for the October 21 Cuba demonstration, three more people have asked to join the Young Socialists in Indiana, he reported. In Seattle, YS members have been out to the picket lines of the Boeing strikers, and in California they have jumped into the fight to defend affirmative action.

Defending Abu-Jamal, Curtis

The Young Socialists are also involved in defending Mumia Abu-Jamal, a framed-up journalist on death row in Pennsylvania. Various events supporting his fight for a new trial are planned across the United States in November, including a November 6 rally in Philadelphia. A YS representative will be part of the platform at a rally to support Abu-Jamal at Borough of Manhattan Community College in New York that same day.

"The turnout by hundreds of thousands at the Million Man March shows that many workers who are Black are looking for ways to fight against racism and the depression conditions they face," Garza said. "There have been fights against police brutality across the country, marches to defend affirmative action, debates around school desegregation, and protests against attacks on immigrant rights. These are the kinds of fights socialist workers and youth should be involved in."

During the next three weeks, socialist workers and other supporters of Mark Curtis need to put a special effort into getting additional letters to the Iowa Board of Parole urging that the framed-up unionist be released, Britton said. Curtis's case for parole is stronger than ever, and it is harder for Iowa authorities to justify keeping him in prison.

Garza pointed to upcoming conferences on women's rights and on the Irish freedom struggle, as well as widespread discussion in Canada and beyond on the referendum on Quebec sovereignty, as further examples of discussions and activities communists need to be part of.

Sell and study socialist literature

Consistent socialist propaganda — selling the *Militant*, the *New Internationalist*, and Pathfinder books — must be an integral part of this work, Britton said. "It's also a good time to organize educational series that can help young people and others just coming into politics to read and discuss the history of the communist movement, from Marx and Engels to the Russian revolution and the record of the workers movement in the United States."

"The Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists are going to be hosting regional educational conferences in four or five cities during the New Year's weekend" to further this aim, Britton reported.

"These conferences will be a great chance for many generations to discuss world politics today," said Newberry, from veterans of working-class struggles in the 1930s all the way to the newest youth interested in learning how to struggle more effectively as part of the communist movement.

"As we participate in all kinds of struggles over the next couple months we'll be meeting people who will want to come and can be won to joining the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists," she said.

'Militant' cuts costs, funds are still needed

BY DAVID BERG

BROOKLYN, New York — "I first started reading the *Militant* because I couldn't stomach the *Birmingham News* and *Post-Herald* anymore," said Arthur Spears, a longtime reader of the socialist paper, speaking to a full house at the Birmingham Pathfinder Bookstore October 28. Spears showed the audience clippings from the local big-business papers and contrasted their coverage of plant closings and government attempts to reduce workers' compensation to the *Militant*'s. "The *Militant* explains these things from a working-class perspective. You learn why so many things happen."

Backers of the *Militant* in Birmingham sent in a report on their meeting to illustrate how they have been campaigning to raise money to finance this working-class paper. The measure of the meeting's success, Susan LaMont reports from Birmingham, was that "\$660 was raised that night, bringing the total collected to \$1,843, almost half-way toward our goal of \$3,700." This helped *Militant* supporters there get on schedule this week.

Partisans of the *Militant* are hosting fund-raising meetings in several cities in the next few weeks. Emulating the example of those in Birmingham, especially the effort to reach out to new readers and contributors, will help collect more money.

This money is badly needed. Five weeks into the *Militant* Fund campaign, supporters of the paper have raised a little over \$48,000 of the \$125,000 goal. This puts us at 38 percent, when we should be at 50 percent — a slip from last week.

At the Birmingham meeting, two other avid readers of the socialist paper also made a strong pitch to contribute generously to the fund. James Rose, a member of the United Auto Workers Local 1155 at the Pemco aerospace plant in Birmingham, explained, "I first saw the *Militant* during the civil rights movement." Ten years ago, he met *Militant* supporters on the job and began reading it regularly.

Underscoring the importance of the *Militant* coverage of the Cuban revolution, Rose said, "If the socialist struggle is crushed, it would crush the working people all over the world. If you don't have a newspaper that opens you up to the truth, it's hard to know what's going on."

Dora Whiteside, a leader of the Black Student Awareness Committee at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, spoke about going to New York for the October 21 demonstration against the U.S. embargo of Cuba. "It was my first time in New York, my first time on a picket line, my first time at a demonstration," she said, adding that she only recently began to learn the truth about the Cuban revolution, thanks in great part to the *Militant*.

LaMont reports that the event was "a wonderful evening of food and political discussion." John Hawkins, a Socialist Workers Party militant who is also a member of the United Mine Workers of America, spoke on "The Cuban Revolution in the World Today."

To complement the vital contributions raised through the *Militant* Fund, the paper is also cutting costs wherever possible. Staff writer Naomi Craine explained that all 16 pages of the November 6 issue were produced by going directly to film, a first for the paper. Previously, paper pages of the *Militant* were shot on a camera to produce film that was then converted into metal plates that run on a printing press. Craine estimates that at least 13 hours of labor is saved now by scanning pictures for the *Militant* on a computer, and then printing them out on film pages that can be used to produce plates for the presses.

"This is the latest step in process that began over a year ago, when we converted to desktop publishing. By doing that we cut over 60 hours of duplicate labor of the volunteer workers" who produce the *Militant*, she said. Going straight to film, Craine explained, also affects the quality of the paper. "You get neater type, sharper photographs, and it's easier to train volunteers how to produce a professional paper." The change "only cost a small investment of about \$500 for a scanner and some extra computer memory."

Matching the spirit of the *Militant*'s advances in productivity, supporters of the socialist paper can use the last five weeks of the campaign to reach out into the working class with the *Militant* and advance the fight of working people all around the world. The *Militant* Fund is part of that fight. Let's use the last five weeks of the drive to catch up and make the goal of \$125,000!

\$125,000		Militant Fund		
End of week five				
	Goal	Paid	Percent	
Puerto Rico	\$100	\$100	100%	
New Zealand				
Christchurch	\$650	\$496	76%	
Auckland	\$2,470	\$1,294	52%	
Wellington	\$80			
NZ Total	\$3,200	\$1,790	56%	
United States				
Philadelphia	\$6,000	\$3,735	62%	
Atlanta	\$4,500	\$2,660	59%	
Salt Lake City	\$3,800	\$2,185	58%	
Chicago	\$7,500	\$4,245	57%	
Twin Cities	\$6,500	\$3,575	55%	
Miami	\$2,600	\$1,410	54%	
Birmingham	\$3,700	\$1,836	50%	
Greensboro	\$2,100	\$935	45%	
Cleveland	\$2,100	\$911	43%	
Houston	\$3,500	\$1,410	40%	
Newark	\$8,000	\$3,210	40%	
Pittsburgh	\$5,000	\$1,785	36%	
New York	\$7,500	\$2,623	35%	
San Francisco	\$10,000	\$3,490	35%	
Detroit	\$6,750	\$2,095	31%	
Brooklyn	\$8,000	\$2,432	30%	
Morgantown	\$2,600	\$690	27%	
Peoria	\$2,000	\$520	26%	
Los Angeles	\$10,000	\$2,402	24%	
Washington, DC	\$3,000	\$630	21%	
Boston	\$5,000	\$750	15%	
Des Moines	\$3,200	\$471	15%	
Seattle	\$7,000	\$917	13%	
Other		\$1,146		
US Total	\$120,350	\$46,061	38%	
Australia	\$400	\$68	17%	
Britain		\$20		
Canada		\$12		
France		\$4		
Greece	\$130			
Sweden	\$750			
TOTAL	\$124,930	\$48,055	38%	
SHOULD BE	\$125,000	\$62,500	50%	

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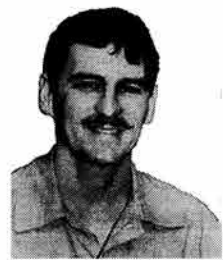
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Iowa inmates discuss impact of Million Man March

BY MARK CURTIS

FT. MADISON, Iowa — A large number of Black inmates here demonstrated their support for the Million Man March held in Washington, D.C., by fasting and "taking it easy" on the job the Monday of



Mark
Curtis

the march.

Prisoners gave diverse reasons for supporting the march. A coworker of mine said he thought the march was for "racial equality." Another man said it was a protest against the U.S. Congressional plan to slash Social Security, Medicare, and welfare programs.

Someone else pointed to the racist police and the statistic that one third of young Black men are under the control of the prison system — that is either facing charges, already in prison, or on proba-

tion. This particular man thought this was a conscious policy of genocide against Blacks and that the gathering would be a good opportunity to make a stand against that; but also turn youth away from drug abuse and violent gang wars.

The fast was widely observed and few Blacks entered the chow hall that day. I respected the fast, too, out of solidarity with those who wanted to make a stand against racism, and also to be in a better position to talk about the big political questions that were raised by this event.

Like others, I watched the march on C-Span, which broadcast the speeches. I wasn't impressed by Louis Farrakhan's speech, though. He began with his theory that the United States is ruled through a Masonic conspiracy and offered mystical interpretations of numbers, the heights of buildings in the capital and the symbols on the back of a dollar bill.

Although he slammed "white supremacy," but not racism (a subtle difference), Farrakhan said nothing about defending affirmative action and welfare for those who need it. Neither he nor other speakers mentioned solidarity with Black and other workers involved in strikes, like the one at Caterpillar, or called for a jobs program to ease unemployment that is es-

pecially ravaging Black youth.

One thing was for sure, this march was big, undoubtedly much larger than the U.S. Park Service estimate of 400,000. Even bigger, though, is the question of what strategy to defend Black rights was presented to those whose attention was grabbed by the march.

In the majority of discussions I've had here, most guys stress that they don't agree with most of Farrakhan's views. However, they do like his idea of raising money to start schools, factories, and businesses that will be "controlled" by Blacks. They don't trust the government to ensure a decent livelihood to the people it has used and abused for so long. And why should they?

Capitalist system in depression

But can economic progress and self-sufficiency for most Blacks and other workers occur by starting business up under conditions that exist today? I don't think so. We don't see today a robust economic picture with expansion and the room for a new capitalist class to grow and pull others forward in its wake. Instead we see the capitalist world getting more competitive, filled with corporations downsizing and with smaller businesses getting

squeezed, absorbed, or driven into bankruptcy. Class conflict between the owners and employees of businesses is getting sharper, with bitter strikes as one result. On a world scale, and on an historical scale, the system of capitalism is in decline.

If the American system is unwilling to grant the oppressed nationalities equal treatment and democratic rights, then it is even less willing to let them in on the economic action and economic "self-determination."

The alternative is to fight uncompromisingly against racism today and at the same time against the system of capitalism that produces racism and exploitation and for a socialist society based on human solidarity instead of profit for the wealthy few. Fighting for such a program, would be a great step forward. Registering thousands to vote when the ruling rich and the Democrats and Republicans own the playing field will be a dead end.

A strategy that that leads to class independence from the parties of the ruling rich and to a working-class course was not presented at the march. But millions around the world — Black, brown, and white — can be attracted and won to such a perspective.

Curtis backers obtain letters demanding parole

BY JOHN STUDER

DES MOINES, Iowa — "Please be advised that you have been approved to attend the Parole Board interview for Mark Curtis #805338 scheduled for 11/21/95. You need to be at the Iowa State Penitentiary by 8:30 a.m. for maximum security inmates," reads a letter Debbie Nichols, Public Services Supervisor for the Iowa State Penitentiary, sent to those who Curtis has asked to attend his upcoming parole hearing.

Curtis, a union and political activist convicted on frame-up charges of rape and burglary in 1988, has been in prison in Iowa for over seven years. More than 300 letters have been sent to the Iowa Board of Parole in the last two months urging that the board grant his release. Dozens of the

letters have come from unionists, political activists and supporters of political rights in Iowa.

Three years ago the Iowa state legislature adopted a law abolishing prisoners' rights to an annual meeting with the parole board. Since then, the board had refused to meet with Curtis until this fall.

"The decision to grant Mark a parole hearing reflects the fact that they are feeling the pressure," said Hazel Zimmerman, defense committee secretary-treasurer. "It marks a real turning point in the fight for Mark's freedom. They have opened the process that will ultimately result in his getting out. We need to take advantage of this opportunity to reach out and broaden support for his release."

The refusal by the prison authorities to

grant Curtis a hearing or to consider releasing him has made more and more people question whether there are political reasons behind his continuing imprisonment, Zimmerman said.

In addition, revelations about police racism, frame-ups, and brutality—such as the tapes exposing Los Angeles cop Mark Fuhrman in the course of the O.J. Simpson trial—have widened doubt about Curtis's conviction, which was based on the testimony of a Des Moines cop who had been suspended from the force previously for lying and brutality.

Under Iowa State Penitentiary regulations, Curtis is entitled to have nine people sit in on his hearing to show their support. Curtis has submitted the names of Jane Curtis, his mother; Kate Kaku, his wife;

Frankie Travis, a unionist locked out by A.E. Staley in Decatur, Illinois; Kitty Loepker, a steelworker at the Granite City Steel company in Granite City, Illinois; Larry Ginter, a family farmer from Rhodes, Iowa; William Kutmus, Curtis's attorney; William Taylor, President of Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers local 7-507 in Chicago, who has written to the board offering to help find Curtis work when he is paroled; and John Studer and Hazel Zimmerman, the officers of the Mark Curtis Defense Committee.

In addition, under Iowa law the Department of Corrections contacts Keith and Denise Morris, the parents of the young woman Curtis was framed up for allegedly attempting to rape, and invites them to attend and speak at the hearing. They have attended every previous hearing the board has allowed, to aid parole and prison officials in arguing against Curtis's release.

The Mark Curtis Defense Committee is urging supporters to gather letters from political figures, union representatives, and others urging the parole board to free Curtis. Such letters are continuing to come into the committee's office for delivery to the board.

"Why don't you parole Mark Curtis?" writes L.W. Martin, a farmer and activist in the American Agriculture Movement from Hutchinson, Kansas. "I have followed the case for years and believe he was framed and should be compensated for the injustice."

"As a member of the United Mine Workers of America I am all too familiar with the victimization of union activists," writes Libby Lindsay, from UMW district 17 in West Virginia. "I have followed Mark's case from the beginning and firmly believe him innocent. Guilt or innocence aside, Mr. Curtis has more than met all conditions for parole and there is no justification for his continued imprisonment. His immediate release would be the closest thing to justice in this entire case."

Another letter came from Roger Warren, a gold miner in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. Warren was himself framed up by the police and railroaded to prison following a bitter struggle against Royal Oak Mines. He is now in jail at Stony Mountain Institution in Manitoba.

"The facts are that Mr. Curtis is a model prisoner, from all reports, and has used his time constructively," writes Warren. "The further argument for his release is that he has served more time than would be usual under these circumstances."

To send a letter to the parole board supporting Curtis's freedom, address it to the Iowa State Board of Parole and mail it to the Mark Curtis Defense Committee, Box 1048, Des Moines, Iowa, 50311. Tel: (515) 246-1695. The Committee will deliver your letter to the board.

Mexico students march for public education

BY VANESSA KNAPTON

MEXICO CITY, Mexico — Ten thousand students marched across campus to the administration building here October 2. They were protesting attempts by university officials to limit the number of students who attend the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), the largest university in Latin America.

This march, organized by the University Student Council, was part of a series of student protests against recent government decisions to limit public education in Mexico. The protests began this fall when students realized that the university administration had denied admission to 8,200 students who had successfully passed the entrance exams. There are slots for 40,000 new students every year, but this year officials admitted only 31,800.

Many of the "excluded," as they are now known, along with other students, launched a 34-day hunger strike, which ended when the students occupied the administration building and forced university officials to listen to them.

The students demanded to maintain the number of newly admitted, maximize the total number of new students, stop selling the entrance exams to certain students, and end corruption in admissions.

Student organizers noted that the government is also trying to cut admissions to the Science and Humanities Colleges (CCH), preparatory schools that are an organic part of UNAM. Those who graduate from the CCH are admitted to UNAM without further entrance exams.

The administration had already "reduced the number of CCH students admitted from 15,000 to 7,000," said Araceli Murillo Rodríguez, one of the organizers of the student protests. She noted that,



University students in Mexico City protest government economic policies in March

when students took over the University tower for a week after the hunger strike, they used the time to establish links with CCH and high school students as well as others affected by the new policies.

"The problem is that the University is too small for a city of 20 million," said Hugo Gómez, a political science student. "They want to privatize the university, but this kind of neoliberal proposal is not best for a country like ours."

Many of the leaders of these protests have also participated in other political activities, above all in solidarity work with the peasant struggle in Chiapas. They have organized caravans of humanitarian

aid to Chiapas and successful fundraising events at the university, such as a rock concert that attracted 15,000 people.

In addition, they have participated in youth work brigades to Cuba. "When we were there, we discussed the question of human rights in Latin American countries and denounced the Torricelli law [which tightened the U.S. economic embargo of Cuba]," said Gonzalo Badillo, one of the students.

Barry Fatland from Los Angeles and Marilee Taylor from Chicago contributed to this article. Fatland, Taylor, and Knapton are railroad workers and members of the United Transportation Union.

Reach out for new readers!

Join the Militant
subscription drive

Militant 1,950
Perspectiva Mundial 525
New International 750

Sold 50%
Should be
63%

S E P T E M B E R 2 3 - N O V E M B E R 1 9

967 subs to go: All-out effort needed in last three weeks!

BY LAURA GARZA

"In the last 10 days supporters of the *Militant* have been on a campaign footing to participate in tens of demonstrations, rallies and meetings organized around the referendum," wrote a supporter from Montreal.

Participating in the activity and debate on the Quebec sovereignty struggle, opened doors to sell the socialist press more widely.

Militant readers in Canada, along with a few from Boston who joined for massive demonstrations in the days before the October 30 vote, took advantage of the opportunity. In ten days they sold 140 copies of the *Militant* and 11 subscriptions; 2 subscriptions to the Spanish-language monthly *Perspectiva Mundial*; and 60 copies of a French-language translation of articles from the *International Socialist Review* on the fight for national rights of the Quebecois and Native people in Canada.

The task for readers in every area participating in the international subscription drive is to be on a campaign footing in the remaining weeks of the drive.

We need to go at a running pace to get the average of 322 new subscriptions per week during the remaining three weeks to meet the goals. Turning to a variety of events and discussions on current issues facing the working class is the only way to do this.

By now, we should have been at 63 percent of the goal in *Militant* subscriptions, but we are only at

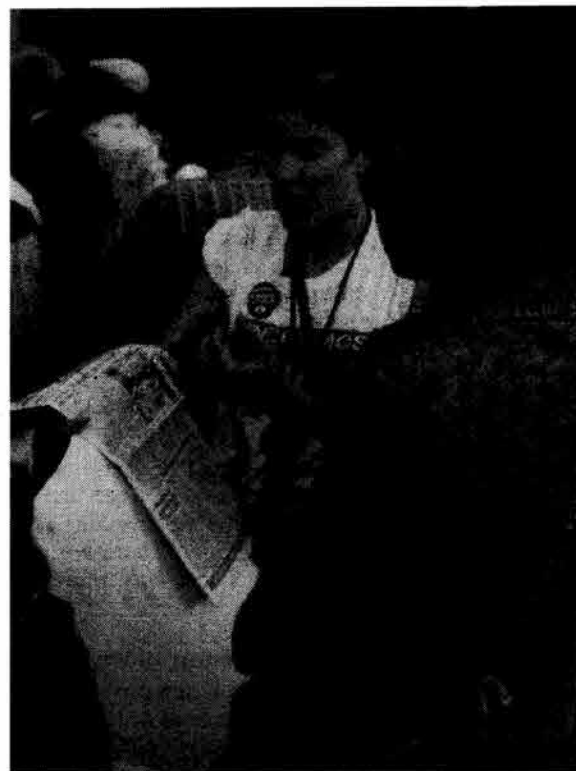
50 percent—

one full week behind. We are ahead of schedule for *Perspectiva Mundial*, but only at 43 percent of the goal for *New International*. These figures, however, do not reflect sales from the nine-day target effort now under way.

With an all out effort it is possible to meet all three goals in full and on time. Now is the time for every individual distributor to make plans with their time through November 19, which includes taking personal goals, to ensure the success of the sub drive.

The *Militant* will fax to distributors the results of the target effort on Wednesday, November 8. That scoreboard will include all subscriptions received at the business office as of the previous evening, Tuesday, November 7.

In each city supporters can then use that information as they plan the last two weeks of sales, making their top priority meeting the



Militant/Carole Lesnik

Selling subs at California affirmative action rally

international goals.

Reports from many areas indicate that distributors have stepped up their stride and are in the mode of finding every opportunity to sell subscriptions.

Socialist workers from Des Moines and Peoria, for example, teamed up to get to Lawrence, Kansas, and Kansas City, Missouri. They visited the University of Kansas; participated in a demonstration against the dictatorship in Burma; set up a literature table in the Black community in Kansas City; met with leaders of the campaign to free Native American activist Leonard Peltier who was framed up on murder charges and is serving two life sentences in Leavenworth, Kansas; and sold \$200 of Pathfinder literature to a university bookstore.

Ardy Blandford wrote, "The key to the success of the team was keeping up the [literature] table for 5-6 hours at a time." They sold 7 *Militant* and 2 *Perspectiva Mundial* subscriptions, 2 *New Internationalists*, and 28 single *Militants* in a day and half.

In St. Paul a hearing on a bill that would lift limits on snowmobiles and trucks in a northern Minnesota national park drew almost 1,000 people and three in the crowd bought introductory subscriptions to the socialist newsweekly.

In Stockholm supporters took the suggestion of other areas and organized Sunday sales resulting in selling two subscriptions in a student dorm area in Uppsala and 13 single issues. Chicago reports on plans to take advantage of people with time off to visit three different campuses in the region.

This kind of effort to get to a wide range of activities throughout the week, to use fully the weekends for sales mobilizations in working class communities and elsewhere, and to organize regional teams is what we need to catch up.

Socialist Workers candidates in November 7 elections

Boston, Massachusetts	
Maceo Dixon	* City Council
Valerie Johnson	* City Council
Cleveland, Ohio	
Mike Fitzsimmons	Board of Education
Des Moines, Iowa	
John Cox	Mayor
Shirley Peña	City Commissioner
John Studer	School Board
Greensboro, North Carolina	
Joan Paltrineri	*Mayor
Miami, Florida	
Seth Galinsky	City Commissioner Group II
Newark, New Jersey	
Toni Jackson	State Assembly
Bob Miller	State Assembly
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	
Deborah Liatos	Mayor
John Staggs	City Council At-Large
Hattie McCutcheon	City Council At-Large
San Francisco, California	
Jim Gotesky	* Mayor
Jean Toumey	* District Attorney
Osborne Hart	* Sheriff
Salt Lake City, Utah	
Nelson Gonzalez	Mayor
Seattle, Washington	
Marc Kinzel	* School Board Position 6
Meg Novak	* City Council Position 1
Rich Stuart	* Port Commissioner Position 5

* denotes write-in campaign

END OF WEEK FIVE

City	Militant goal	Militant sold	%	PM goal	PM sold	NI goal	NI sold
United States							
Indiana	10	7	70%	0		0	
Salt Lake City	50	35	70%	15	6	15	7
Seattle	70	47	67%	15	11	20	10
Boston	40	26	65%	8	7	16	10
Peoria, IL	32	20	63%	2	3	8	3
Atlanta	55	34	62%	18	12	15	9
Philadelphia	75	45	60%	15	1	15	5
New York	120	70	58%	75	54	50	21
Brooklyn	160	93	58%	50	32	50	34
Twin Cities, MN	70	40	57%	12	6	20	7
Des Moines	50	27	54%	25	10	20	9
Detroit	65	35	54%	10	3	20	1
Los Angeles	120	64	53%	75	48	75	30
Birmingham, AL	49	26	53%	5	1	15	
Chicago	65	34	52%	20	14	25	4
Houston	55	27	49%	20	13	16	1
Cleveland	40	19	48%	10	5	15	1
Greensboro, NC	55	25	45%	10	6	10	
Miami	60	27	45%	20	14	30	10
San Francisco	98	42	43%	30	11	60	21
New Haven	5	2	40%	1		2	
Morgantown, WV	48	19	40%	2	1		
Newark, NJ	130	50	38%	35	32	40	17
Washington, DC	45	16	36%	15	9	20	5
Pittsburgh	65	19	29%	5	1	15	1
Denver	7	2	29%	3	2	3	2
Tucson	5	1	20%	2		2	1
Albany	7		0%	1		5	
Cincinnati	8		0%	2		2	
Total U.S.	1,659	852	51%	501	300	584	207
Canada							
Montreal	50	27	54%	12	8	30	12
Vancouver	45	24	53%	6	4	20	7
Toronto	50	15	30%	10	6	25	6
Total	145	66	46%	28	18	75	25
Sweden							
Stockholm	20	10	50%	15	14	20	23
Malmö	2	0	0%	2	1	1	
Total	22	10	45%	17	15	21	23
Britain							
London	35	19	54%	10	4	25	18
Sheffield	12	5	42%	1		3	1
Manchester	40	14	35%	1	2	20	10
Total	87	38	44%	12	6	48	29
Greece							
Australia	5	2	40%	1		4	3
Total	15	5	33%	3	3	12	8
New Zealand							
Auckland	18	6	33%	1	1	15	13
Christchurch	8	2	25%	1		3	1
Wellington	2		0%	0		1	
Total	28	8	29%	2	1	19	14
Iceland							
France	10	1	10%	1		3	
Puerto Rico	6		0%	5	1	20	11
Other	2		0%	6	2	4	2
Total	18	1	5%	12	3	27	13
International Total	1,979	983	50%	576	346	790	326
Should be	1,950	1,229	63%	525	331	750	473

IN THE UNIONS

Australia					
AWU-FIME	2		0		0 1
Canada					
CEP	4		1		2
IAM	1				1
USWA	5	2	0		2
Canada total	10	2	1	0	5 0
New Zealand					
EU	2				
MWU	2		0		0
New Zealand total	4		0		0
Sweden					
Metal union	1		1		4
United States					
UAW	65	30	46%	10	2
UFCW	6	2	33%	10	6
OCAW	20	6	30%		
IAM	59	16	27%	9	1
UTU	58	8	14%	3	
USWA	28	2	7%		
UNITE	20		0%	19	2
UMWA		7			
U.S. Total	256	71	28%	51	11

Cuban poet discusses artistic freedom

BY DAVID ROSENFELD
AND WENDY LYONS

NEW YORK CITY—Some 150 people jammed into the meeting hall of Casa de las Américas here to discuss culture in Cuba today with Norberto Codina, the Cuban poet and editor of the noted literary magazine *La Gaceta de Cuba*. The October 28 meeting culminated Codina's one-month speaking tour of half a dozen cities.

Whether a longtime supporter of the Cuban revolution or a young person learning about Cuba for the first time, everyone in the room was still abuzz about the previous week's visit of Cuban president Fidel Castro to New York. Many at the meeting had marched against the U.S. economic embargo of Cuba on October 21, participated in picket lines to counter right-wing mobilizations at Cuba's United Nations mission, or come out to see Castro in Harlem or the Bronx.

Luis Miranda, director of Casa de las Américas, welcomed Codina and the audience to a celebration of what had been accomplished the previous weeks by those opposing U.S. policy toward Cuba. Codina expressed appreciation for being able to end his tour with such a celebration.

The discussion with Codina, conducted in Spanish and English, was lively and frank. "What are the changes in attitude in Cuba toward homosexuals? I personally suffered discrimination," said one questioner. "I was a member of student and revolutionary organizations in Cuba, but I was expelled from them for being gay. If I had not been discriminated against, I would be living in Cuba today."

"I don't think the Cuban revolution is married to any one person, not even the main leader of the revolution, Fidel Castro," Codina replied. "The revolution is the work of us all. An injustice as great as the one you have described cannot be associated with the revolution. It is associated with individuals who are horribly prejudiced.

"Revolutionaries cannot accept the marginalization of gays in the 1970s. We have made big advances on this question. There is greater maturity today.

"Many individuals have left due to injustices. But the Cuban revolution is alive despite errors and mutilations. This battle belongs to our society as a whole. It must be forged in the soul of all Cubans."

To warm applause, Codina said, "I am grateful that you have spoken."

A writer from Iran who was in the audience asked about government control and censorship of the arts in Cuba. "Many times we have had many arguments against censorship," Codina replied. "Censorship is as old as art itself and exists in all countries. There is always a struggle by the creator for greater space.

"I do not have to answer to any censor. No policeman or bureaucrat reviews what I publish. But I also have a responsibility. A number of writers on the island, for example, complained that we devoted too much space in a recent issue to Cuban artists living abroad.

"I would be dishonest to say that there is no censorship. But every day there is less censorship and greater freedom."

The Cuban editor concluded, "The fight between the forces of inertia and the

forces of change continues."

Codina spent a week in New York, speaking on several area campuses and participating in poetry readings at the Cafe Creole and Biblio's bookstore. Reggie Mason, of the Young Lions Movement and a central organizer of the Boogie Against the Death Penalty for Mumia Abu-Jamal, chaired the poetry reading at Cafe Creole. Mason also brought greetings to the Casa de las Américas meeting. The Cafe Creole event was a dynamic interchange between Black and Puerto Rican poets — some of whom are also political activists — and the Cuban poet.

At Hunter College, 95 people, mostly Spanish-speaking students from the campus, listened intently as Codina answered a questioner who maintained that the majority of important Cuban artists have always lived in exile.

"That is not true," Codina said. "And even for those living abroad, the germinating process started on the island.

"There are many views within the Cuban government, but the position of *La Gaceta* is that there is only one Cuban literature. We have tried to bridge the schism between art inside and outside the island. We have fought the notions that the poet who leaves is no longer Cuban or that

the poet who stays is no longer a poet.

"In 1992 we published a special issue devoted to writers living abroad," he explained. Describing the controversy that ensued, Codina said that the magazine was attacked by Radio Martí, a radio station sponsored by the U.S. government and beamed into Cuba. But the magazine also came in for criticism from some supporters of the revolution. "They said that with the severe shortage of paper, we should not have published the work of Cubans who have left."

An informal meeting with 15 workers and trade unionists was held at the headquarters of District Council 1199 of the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees union. Several garment, auto, and rail workers attended in addition to health-care workers.

A young garment worker asked Codina, "Are youth in Cuba more or less motivated since the period of economic hardships began in Cuba?"

"Cuba is going through its most difficult period, where there has been a strug-



Militant/Janice Lynn
Norberto Codina, editor of *La Gaceta de Cuba*.

gle for survival on a daily basis," Codina replied. "Some could have said it would be the end of culture but no, youth have broken through with force into art and literature, especially poetry."

Sovereignty remains issue in Quebec

Continued from front page

Yes results were in electoral ridings (districts) whose population is composed of Quebecois workers.

"It's a victory, it's not a defeat," said Angelo Allard, a member of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers (CEP) union at the MacMillan Bathurst cardboard box factory in Montreal. "There is a gain of almost 10 percent from the 1980 referendum. The federal government will not come through with any improvements so that's going to push support up."

Vote goes down to the wire

The race began with the No campaign holding a big lead in polls. But the contest became transformed in the last ten days, when the Yes took the lead in the polls. An air of panic began to settle into the anti-sovereignty camp.

The No campaign was led by the federal government, the opposition Liberal Party in Quebec, and the largest corporations in Canada. They pulled all the stops to scare voters with the prospect of economic collapse should the Yes win.

They threatened to block Quebec from membership in the North American Free Trade Agreement and deny the province's residents the use of the Canadian dollar and passport. They argued that tens of thousands of jobs would be lost, and that a sovereign Quebec government could no longer afford to pay for pensions and other social services.

U.S. president Bill Clinton weighed in on October 25 with a statement of strong support for the No.

To Ottawa's dismay, the threats seemed to backfire.

Suzanne Pellerin, an estimator for Hydro Quebec in Rouyn-Noranda in northern

Quebec, echoed the sentiments of many Quebecois workers when she told a journalist, "Maybe the economy will be better with sovereignty. There are no jobs now so we can't lose any more than we've got."

Rallies, demonstrations grow

A series of demonstrations involving thousands on both sides marked the last week of the referendum campaign.

Twelve thousand rallied for the No in Verdun, near Montreal, on October 24. An equal number rallied at the same location for the Yes the following day. Five thousand came out for sovereignty in Quebec City on October 24 and an equal number came out in opposition in Longueuil, also near Montreal, the day before the vote.

The largest rally by far took place on October 27 when the federal government organized a reactionary, pro-Canada "Unity Rally" that drew more than 100,000 people into the streets of Montreal.

Many came from other provinces. Airline and rail companies offered cut rate fares as much as 90 percent for travelers going to the rally. Government employees were given the day off to attend. Some schools were closed.

"We say no to those who would strip us of our Canada," Prime Minister Jean Chrétien told a cheering crowd.

Other pro-Canada rallies took place across the country, including one in Toronto on October 29, which drew 6,000.

In spite of these mobilizations, there was not a wave of anti-Quebec intolerance unleashed across Canada. Most discussions in schools and workplaces between opposing views were civil.

Many Canadians believe that the Quebecois have legitimate grievances and should be recognized as a "distinct society" with more powers than other provinces.

As the polls were giving the Yes a lead, many believed that the federal government should recognize the legitimacy of a yes vote.

"Of course there should be discussions if the yes wins," said John Kadulski, a student at the College Français in Montreal, at the October 27 pro-Ottawa rally.

Canada rulers barely breathe relief

Despite their win in the vote, Canada's capitalist rulers did not come out strengthened. "Canada survives," was the best headline that the Montreal *Gazette* could muster.

Lysiane Gagnon, an anti-sovereignty columnist in the Montreal daily *La Presse*, wrote following the vote, "We're entering... an era of perpetual confrontation.... Canada will become more ungovernable and the federalist leaders will pay dearly for this half victory."

Many capitalist politicians and com-

mentators are now calling on the federal government to come up with constitutional reforms to placate pro-sovereignty opinion in Quebec. But in comments to journalists on October 31, Chrétien made clear once again that his government has nothing to offer.

"We will win the next vote," said college student Karl Gagné at the convention center rally, "precisely because they have nothing to offer. But this time, we won't have to wait 15 years for another vote."

The capitalist leaders at the head of the sovereignty movement are also facing a crisis. The day after the vote, Quebec premier Jacques Parizeau announced he would resign following the end of the current session of the provincial legislature.

The announcement followed a speech to the Yes rally on the night of the vote that stunned many of his supporters. After welcoming the increase in the pro-sovereignty vote among Quebecois, he declared that the fight for a sovereign Quebec would continue. He then added, "Now let me address my remarks to us, to the 60 percent [of Quebecois] among us who voted Yes."

"We were beaten," he said. "That's true. But by what? By money and the ethnic vote."

At the press conference where he announced his resignation Parizeau defended his words of the previous day.

As in the 1980 referendum, there was a massive No vote from English-language voters and most immigrants. Native Indians also voted in large numbers for the No.

Parizeau and other PQ leaders say that immigrants are a threat to the status of French as the official language in Quebec. They have opposed self-determination for Native people.

This, along with massive cuts in social programs carried out by the PQ government, undercut support for the Yes among Natives, immigrants, and a number of other working people.

Most officials of Native Indian organizations in Quebec came out squarely on the No side and argued publicly that Quebec nationalism was inherently racist and anti-Native.

At the root of support by Quebecois for more political autonomy is the discrimination they face in Canada. Wages, health care, and education services are inferior. In 1993, 20.7 percent lived below the poverty level.

Many Quebecois view sovereignty as a way to combat that discrimination and as a tool to fight for jobs and better living conditions.

"For me," said Fanny Gendron, in a typical comment at the convention center rally, "the Yes campaign means hope. For more jobs, for a better future for young people, to see our language and culture respected."

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Bob DesVerney: four decades in the fight for communism, a life worth emulating

BY OSBORNE HART
AND JEANNE TUOMEY

OAKLAND, California — "Bob DesVerney was the kind of person whose political life you could point to and say: Go forth and do likewise, if you want to do the most important thing an individual can do today," said Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, at a meeting here in late August to honor DesVerney's life and political contributions.

The longtime activist and leader of the communist movement died July 27 at the age of 67 in Oakland, California. DesVerney joined the Socialist Workers party in 1948 and spent the next four and a half decades building the communist movement. He served on the party's National Committee from 1963 to 1971.

"From the day he became a communist some 45 years ago Bob remained true to that dedication," Barnes said. "It's easy to slide into taking this for granted. But being a communist, being a revolutionist, is first and foremost a deed, not a condition. It is a free act, and one that has to be frequently renewed."

"In capitalist society, a great deal of what the vast majority of us do, day in and day out, is not the result of free acts in any way, shape, or form. But acting as a communist is one of the few social acts one does under no duress. You're not drafted by a draft board. You have no parole officer breathing down your neck. The repo man isn't focusing your attention. You don't do it under threat from the cops. And you sure don't become part of the communist movement because it's a way of putting food on the table."

"Every day — under no duress, with no coercion, no penalties — Bob was free to change his course," Barnes said. "He was free to walk away from the fight, to walk away from being on the self-sacrificing front lines of the working class."

"He never did. He kept moving toward the hottest fights till the day he died."

Bay Area meeting

Some 100 of DesVerney's comrades, family members, friends, and others — an audience spanning several generations — celebrated that course at a Sunday afternoon meeting here August 20. The meeting capped a busy weekend of political activity for socialist workers and youth in the San Francisco Bay Area.

A Militant Labor Forum that Friday attracted a standing-room-only crowd at the Pathfinder bookstore to hear an eyewitness report from the 50th anniversary commemorations in Japan of Washington's heinous atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The following night young people from the Bay Area who had just returned from the Cuba Lives International Youth Festival in Cuba reported back on their trip to a meeting of 65 people.

The event to honor the life of Robert DesVerney was held at the Health Education Center at Samuel Merritt College in Oakland. At a reception before the program, set up in an outdoor courtyard, participants

enjoyed a buffet prepared by Bay Area supporters of the SWP and studied a display of photos, articles, and other items highlighting events that marked DesVerney's more than four decades in the communist movement.

Young people at the meeting were especially attracted to the displays, each of which suggested big pieces of modern revolutionary history. These included DesVerney's membership card, dated Aug. 1, 1960, in the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, which had been established a few months earlier to get out the truth about the Cuban revolution and oppose

remember the young men in my graduating class who went to the war and never came back," Finer said. DesVerney had been drafted into the U.S. Army and sent to Korea shortly after he joined the SWP, she recalled, and their shared hatred of that brutal imperialist aggression is among her earliest memories of him. "I'll never forget the deep anger we felt at the U.S. government, which considered young people expendable — little more than cannon fodder."

"I came to the conclusion that ordinary people had to organize together or there would be no end to the killing, devasta-



Victims of racial injustice—David "Fuzzy" Simpson (left) and Hanover Thompson.

Behind Racist Terror In N.C. "Kiss" Case

Front cover of January 1959 *Young Socialist* featuring the Monroe, North Carolina, "kissing case." Two young boys were arrested in October 1958 for letting a white girl kiss one of them. DesVerney became an organizer of international protest campaign that helped win the release of the two Black children after five months.

Washington's efforts to overturn it. There was also his membership card in the Organization of Afro-American Unity, signed by Malcolm X and dated June 1964. The OAAU had been founded that same month by Malcolm X as an organization to unite all Blacks, whatever their other political or religious views, in a common, uncompromising battle against national oppression and superexploitation worldwide.

Also on display were such items as copies of the OAAU *Blacklash* newsletter, including the Aug. 3, 1964, issue with a front-page article by DesVerney on "Afro-American Political Power"; the Italian edition of his 1964 pamphlet *The Black Ghetto*; a brochure from his 1979 campaign as the SWP candidate for school board in Oakland, California; and a leaflet from the 1984 Socialist Workers election campaign in California that DesVerney had translated into Chinese.

Those attending the celebration of DesVerney's life included a number who had come in from Los Angeles and elsewhere in California. Some in the audience had worked with him for many years in the communist movement, while others were from a younger generation of fighters, including 10 members of the Young Socialists.

Kathryn Crowder, a railroad worker and member of the United Transportation Union (UTU), chaired the meeting and welcomed everyone on behalf of the San Francisco branch of the Socialist Workers Party. In addition to introducing the four speakers, Crowder read excerpts from several of the messages sent by individuals who had worked with DesVerney (see box on the following page).

Korean War

The first speaker was Sherry Finer, who had joined the SWP in New York City in 1952, the same year she met DesVerney. Finer said she had been radicalized by the Korean War of 1950-53. The U.S. rulers had been dealt their first defeat in the post-World War II world, as their invasion forces were battled to a stalemate by Koreans, aided by Chinese volunteers, fighting to reverse the partition of Korea imposed by Washington in 1945.

"Just out of high school at the time, I

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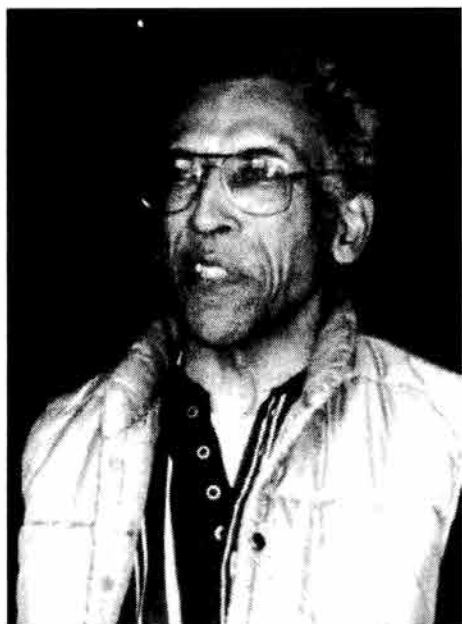
Young Socialists Meet; Form New Youth Movement

by Tim Wohlforth

DENVER — Students and young workers from all parts of the United States met at the APL Labor Temple here and laid the basis for a nationwide revolutionary socialist youth movement. The Conference was called by the editorial board of the *YOUNG SOCIALIST* for December 27-28.

Participants registered delegates representing YOUNG SOCIALIST youth groups in 14 states and 16 cities. With diverse political backgrounds, they met to discuss political, social, and economic issues, to work with all young socialists, and to support every effort toward united socialist action. The delegates were divided into working groups to discuss the role of the youth in the revolution, the role of the youth in the struggle against racism, the role of the youth in the struggle against imperialism, and the role of the youth in the struggle against the capitalist system.

The delegates decided to meet this challenge by organizing a national youth movement. It was felt that the greatest obstacle to the growth and development of the youth movement was the lack of a national youth organization. The delegates decided to form a national youth organization, the Young Socialist Youth Movement, which would be the voice of the youth in the revolution.



Robert DesVerney in Oakland, California, in June of this year.

and Simpson of being an "accomplice." The judge ordered both children sent to a reformatory, saying they might be paroled by the age of 21 "if they have earned it."

A nationwide Committee to Combat Racial Injustice was launched in New York City in December 1958 to demand that the two youngsters be released immediately and all charges dropped. At the end of December, a national conference of Young Socialist clubs from 14 cities took up the case as a central campaign. Jim Lambrecht sent a message to the meeting recalling DesVerney's participation in that struggle. At the time, Lambrecht was organizer of the New York club, which was called the Young Socialist Alliance. (The same name was taken a little more than a year later by a new national youth organization at its April 1960 founding convention in Philadelphia.)

'Kissing case' campaign

The YSA, Lambrecht said, "began publicizing the 'kissing case' immediately. And SWP members pitched in. We set out to build a national 'kissing case' committee on the issue of freeing the boys." Noting that DesVerney was 31 at the time, too old to be in the youth group, Lambrecht said that "Bob made himself available full-time" to work with YSA members and others to win support for the Committee to Combat Racial Injustice. "He spoke to citywide gatherings of preachers in Manhattan and to NAACP youth groups in Manhattan, the Bronx, and Queens. I accompanied him to many of those meetings and saw him work enthusiastically and successfully."

After just two weeks' work, some 40 people in the New York area had signed up as sponsors of the campaign to free the boys, Lambrecht recalled. "We all gained confidence from the support the case got from the Black community, and Bob especially just came alive as an effective organizer and speaker."

After the two children had spent five months in jail, the campaign — which by then had gained support and publicity worldwide — scored a victory in February 1959. Both boys were released from the reformatory and returned home.

Finer explained that Monroe, North Carolina, was at the center of other civil rights battles in the 1950s and early 1960s, as well. Like many areas in the South, in Monroe the Ku Klux Klan and other racist outfits routinely shot up neighborhoods to terrorize Blacks. These attacks accelerated in 1956-57 after Blacks waged a successful fight to integrate the local library and began pressing for equal access to the public swimming pool.

In response to the Klan violence, Robert F. Williams, the local NAACP leader and a Korean War veteran, organized self-defense to protect the Black population against the racist vigilantism. After some in the Black community sandbagged the front of their homes and fired back — with accuracy — at racist night-riders, Klan activity died down.

The "kissing case" was the racists' attempt at retaliation against the Black community in Monroe. Williams became chairman of the defense committee, and soon afterward he became an active supporter of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee as well, conducting a speaking tour on its behalf. In 1961 Monroe authorities framed him on kidnapping charges, and he left the country, taking asylum first in Cuba and later in China. Williams returned to the United States in 1969. Seven years later — and more than 15 years after the indictment! — the frame-up charges against him were finally dropped.

Backer of the Cuban revolution

After the Cuban revolution triumphed on Jan. 1, 1959, and once Wall Street and Washington realized its revolutionary leadership could not be bought off, the U.S. government began to organize to overthrow it. In 1960 DesVerney became an early member of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, as did other members of the Socialist Workers Party and YSA. He traveled to Cuba in 1961 to see the revolu-

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tion firsthand, in order to help get out the word about it to workers and young people in the United States.

In September 1960, Fidel Castro traveled to New York City to address the United Nations. After numerous hotels refused accommodations to the Cuban delegation, the Hotel Shelburne in midtown Manhattan finally agreed to take them. The day after Castro's arrival, however, the management demanded a \$10,000 cash deposit, so the Cuban leader moved his entire delegation to the Hotel Theresa in Harlem, where they were enthusiastically welcomed by members of the community.

"I saw Bob up there every night," said

the slogans from the list, which was found in DesVerney's files. "Fidel is welcome in Harlem anytime," read one of the signs. Others said "Cuba practices real democracy, not race discrimination" and "We need more Castros, fewer Uncle Toms." A placard DesVerney himself made and brought up to the Theresa — reading "U.S. Jim Crows Fidel, just like U.S. Jim Crows U.S. Negroes!" — ended up in a photograph in the *New York Post*.

In reading DesVerney's notes from the mobilizations outside the hotel, Finer said she was reminded of how brazenly the big business media pumped out lies to try to undercut support for revolutionary Cuba. DesVerney had remarked on the media's "lurid articles," including claims that the

"As a reporter for the *Young Socialist*, I didn't have that problem," Finer said, holding up a copy of the October 1960 issue that she and others were selling on the picket lines. The *Militant* and *Young Socialist* stood out more and more as papers that defended the Cuban revolution.

"We had a banner headline that read 'Vote Socialist!' — we were campaigning for the 1960 SWP presidential ticket at the time — and people could see right away that we were partisans of Cuba." The front page also featured an eyewitness account on the First Latin American Youth Congress, which had been held in Cuba July 26-August 8. Seven YSA leaders, and a number of young people soon to join the YSA, had participated in that congress.

Finer told a humorous story about a reporter from one of the major dailies who was getting hassled and tried to pretend he was really with her. But some Latino supporters of the revolution in the crowd yelled back at him, "No, no, she's a *socialista*, you're yellow press!"

Revolutionary capacities of fighters

A theme of several messages to the meeting was DesVerney's internationalist outlook and the impact that the post-World War II struggles in the colonial world had on him.

"Bob lived in the world of class politics," wrote Tom Leonard, a veteran SWP leader currently living in Houston. "He was very concrete in his understanding of U.S. imperialism's wars, and unbending in his active opposition to them. This was especially true of the Korean War, and later the war in Vietnam.... Bob understood the revolutionary capacity of oppressed people to fight back against seemingly impregnable imperialist domination."

This confidence in the revolutionary potential of working people was expressed not only in DesVerney's activism, but also through his writings. As the battle for civil rights in the South was raging in the 1960s, and Black rebellions in response to police riots shook Harlem in 1964 and the Watts section of Los Angeles the following year, DesVerney's articles on the rise of the fight for Black liberation and its weight in the class struggle were invaluable both for their accurate reporting and Marxist analysis.

"I first learned about Bob from reading an article he wrote for the SWP *Discussion Bulletin* in preparation for the 1963 party convention," wrote Doug Jenness, an SWP leader in Minneapolis, in his message to the meeting.

"Bob's contribution, entitled 'Why White Radicals Are Incapable of Understanding Black Nationalism,' unambiguously pointed to the revolutionary proletarian features that were part of the new interest and support to Black nationalism.

As a young rebel," Jenness continued, "and a brand-new member of the Young Socialist Alliance, I had been following with enthusiasm the course of Malcolm X." Jenness recalled that this contribution to the discussion on the fight for Black rights "also had a big impact on the party as a whole."

Bob had clearly been uplifted by the new revolutionary openings in the Black rebellion, which he captured in the next several years in the lively articles he wrote for the *Militant* that were turned into popular pamphlets."

Written under the pen name Robert Vernon, these pamphlets were *The Black Ghetto*, first published in 1964; *Watts and Harlem: The Rising Revolt in the Black Ghettos*, co-authored with George Novack and published the following year; and *On Black Separatism*, an exchange of views with Afro-American writer Robert Browne first issued in 1968.

Winning youth to communism

Several of those who sent messages to the meeting spoke of how DesVerney's example, his writings, and his patient political collaboration had helped win them — along with other young people, Black and white — to revolutionary politics and a communist perspective.

That was a central point of the talk by Thabo Ntweng, a member of the SWP National Committee from Los Angeles who joined the YSA in 1969 along with a number of other young workers from East Harlem.

"One of our pastimes was listening to tapes of Malcolm X," he told participants in the Oakland meeting. Not content to hear the message themselves, "We would play them over four-foot-high loudspeakers pointing out the window, so the whole neighborhood would get into the act."

Taking off from Malcolm's speeches, his group discussed the civil rights struggle, the Vietnam War, and the Cuban revolution. They also began participating in political activity and decided to find out more about communist and socialist groups that were involved in these struggles.

"We wrote to all the groups, and the YSA and SWP were among the first to respond," Ntweng said. "What impressed me the most the first time I walked into their bookstore in Manhattan was the international flavor. There were posters and banners on the walls from struggles all around the world, as well as books and pamphlets about them."

"It was Bob, and some other comrades as well, who had the task of taking a bunch of young, impatient, hard-core Black and Puerto Rican nationalists and winning us to a communist perspective," Ntweng said. Among the books and pam-



Militant/Joseph Hansen

Fair Play for Cuba Committee picket line of more than 500 at United Nations in November 1960 to protest U.S. government's dispatch of Navy warships to Caribbean. DesVerney, at center wearing hat, counted himself among the early supporters of Cuba's socialist revolution and campaigned energetically in its defense.

Finer, who covered the events for the *Young Socialist*. Thousands of Blacks and Latinos gathered around the hotel to get a glimpse of the revolutionary leaders from Cuba, she recalled, and cheers would go up when any of them came to the window and waved to the crowd. "Bob was there jumping up and down on the cars cheering along with everyone else."

During these actions, DesVerney took the time to write down a detailed list of some of the homemade placards greeting the Cuban delegation. Finer read a few of

Cuban delegation was paying picketers to come out on the streets.

"The daily press would actually report that those demonstrating in Harlem were anti-Castro," Finer said. Articles and news broadcasts contained reports of Cubans plucking chickens in their hotel rooms and allegedly holding lavish parties with prostitutes. "The reputation of the papers was so bad among the people in Harlem that the crowds would often scream 'yellow press' and throw pennies at the reporters," she recalled.

'Our enemy was here at home, not in Vietnam'

Following are excerpts from several of the dozen messages that were sent to the Oakland meeting celebrating the life of Robert DesVerney.

I met Bob at the end of 1949 when the Socialist Workers Party set up a youth branch in New York City. He was about 18 years old at the time and I believe a pre-med student for a while. In a very short time he dropped those plans for the role of a revolutionist, which he sustained for the rest of his life....

Bob was drafted into the army as part of a wide draft of young people to fight U.S. imperialism's war in Korea. We had a going away party for him in the basement of a new member's home. At that moment we were in the process of recruiting about a dozen young people who were all in a Stalinist youth club in Astoria, Queens. I recall that he was in a cheerful mood and not at all depressed about being drafted. And as I later discovered when I, as the organizer of the branch, received numerous letters from him that he felt that the experiences he was going through were important to him....

He came back in good shape and returned to being an active and dependable member of the branch. He had the ability of gathering information on the latest developments in the Black struggle. He attended meetings of other groups and

sensed shifts in their positions, which was why he could later play such a leading role in the party's understanding of Black nationalism and Malcolm X.

Ethel Lobman
New York, NY

It was in 1966 that I first encountered Bob. A carload of us had driven up from Georgia to Tennessee for a gathering of activists from the new antiwar committees that had been springing up around the South. In the course of the meeting, a tall, thin Black man with striking sharp features and green eyes took the floor and announced he was from the Harlem Committee to End the War in Vietnam.

At the time, Harlem stood as something of a symbol of Black militancy and self-confidence, and we all listened with great interest as he began to speak in a distinctive New York accent. The young people in the room were overwhelmingly white, a reflection of the composition of the antiwar movement at that stage. I'm sure it occurred to most of us that this meeting was even more important than we thought if this Black leader had come so far to offer advice and assistance. He said that many in Harlem were becoming aware of the war and they were against it. As far as they were concerned, their enemy was not in Vietnam but right here.

Later, as I was talking with members of

the Young Socialist Alliance who had also come down for the meeting (there were then no YSAers or Socialist Workers Party members in the deep South), it was suggested that I might already know the man from Harlem — who had given his name as Robert DesVerney — as Robert Vernon, his pen name. And indeed I knew the name well. The previous year, a friend had sent me a copy of "The Black Ghetto." It had been an eye-opener, enabling me to understand for the first time what was happening in the big cities of the North....

Like anybody else who ever knew Bob, I was often awed by the breadth of his knowledge. The ruling class likes to think they have a monopoly on learning. Bob was among many I was to meet in the SWP who proved them wrong. In truth, they haven't a clue about the fundamental forces at work in the world today and where it's all taking them. By becoming part of a party that is a product of the history and lessons of working class struggles, Bob — through word and deed — was able to make a contribution of his own, one that will be well remembered. I join you today in celebrating his life.

Nelson Blackstock
Los Angeles

I was the organizer of the Oakland branch executive committee while Bob DesVerney was a member of the branch

[in the mid-1980s]....

When the appeal was made for help with translation for the first volume of the Comintern series (*Lenin's Struggle for a Revolutionary International—Documents, 1907-1916: The Preparatory Years*) Bob came to life with the joy of helping...He felt strongly that this series was a big priority for the party to reconquer our knowledge of our place in history....

Bob was also determined to do his weekly plant gate sale even in the rain. I was most often his sales partner and had to brave all kinds of obstacles because we would do that sale no matter what. Bob even had backup places for us to go to if the shift at the oil refinery was working late and the workers weren't there when we were. He was working at the post office and knew where workers would go to hang out....So we would go there and talk politics with a few workers and sell the *Militant*....

[Bob] really loved to be around the young people coming into the socialist movement. A couple of young YSAers lived next door to Bob and whenever some of us would get together over there Bob would come out from under his books to sit out and mostly listen. He'd want to know what the young folks were cooking up. He really believed in us and the future. Miesa Patterson-Zarate
Atlanta, Georgia

phlets they studied were the writings of Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin on the national question and the working-class struggle for socialism.

The Vietnam War and antiwar movement were at a high point at that time. Ntweng, like many others his age, was subject to the draft. "Before we joined the communist movement, we had decided that we would not go in the white man's army — under no circumstances, that was it," he said. One of his friends had written a letter to the draft board stating, "I will never fight in your army and kill black and brown people of the Third World. The only army I will fight in is an army of Black liberation."

DesVerney discussed another approach with them — one he argued would be more effective in advancing their common goal of opposing imperialist war and preparing a revolution at home, and an approach he himself had carried out during the Korean War.

"Bob explained that we needed to stick with our class, not try to dodge the draft. If drafted, he told us, we should go and try to build opposition to the war from within the military," Ntweng said. "In both war and peace, revolutionaries should be with our class, whether in the workplace or on the battlefield."

"We listened to Bob's views because he had won political authority with us. He was a communist who was Black, who had been drafted into the imperialist army and continued carrying out opposition to the Korean War while in Korea," said Ntweng. "But I have to say that this idea came as a big shock at first."

DesVerney explained that in order to lay a political basis to fight attempted victimization, revolutionaries should tell their draft boards they opposed the Vietnam War and planned, when off duty, to exercise their rights as citizen soldiers to express their views and organize active duty GIs to participate in antiwar activities. And he pointed to examples of SWP and YSA members, as well as other soldiers, who were doing so right then.

Internationalist perspective

DesVerney could read or speak more than 40 languages, and he used those skills to broaden his understanding of the struggles of the oppressed around the world.

Georges Mehrabian, who worked with DesVerney in the Bay Area in the 1980s, wrote to the meeting about one occasion when DesVerney put this ability to work. A gang of right-wing Vietnamese thugs, Mehrabian said, had announced plans to break up a forum featuring a reportback from a *Militant* reporting trip to Vietnam some nine years after the 1975 victory and reunification of the country.

"There were over 100 right-wing Vietnamese across the street from the Oakland Pathfinder bookstore where the forum was being held," Mehrabian recalled. "There were about an equal number of defenders in front of the store. Among them, in the front line, was Bob. He was holding a sign in Vietnamese that a number of rightists ran across the street to grab from him. He taught them that was a mistake — they failed."

"I asked him what the placard said. He replied, 'We beat you in Vietnam, we'll beat you here.' The episode impressed me as to how simply and completely Bob had become one with the toilers of Vietnam. How he saw the struggle there as an extension of the struggle here, and vice versa."

DesVerney's internationalism was also an influence on a new generation of revolutionaries in the 1990s. In the week leading up to the meeting, members of the Young Socialists here in the Bay Area — most of whom had not known DesVerney for very long, or in several cases not known him at all — took an interest in reading and learning about the contributions he had made to building the communist movement.

Speaking at the meeting for the Young Socialists was Rebecca Gettleman, who had recently returned from a trip to Cuba. "The depth of Bob's contribution to the collective knowledge of the communist

movement is invaluable for young people becoming interested in politics today," said Gettleman, a UTU-organized rail worker.

She said that in reading a number of DesVerney's articles, she was struck by the similarity of political questions that were attracting young people today and when DesVerney was writing about the Black struggle in the early 1960s. Both the ideas of Malcolm X and the Cuban revolution "remain relevant and ripe for reopening the discussion" on why young people need to link up with a communist workers organization, she said.

"For young people who are interested in relearning the history of the Black rights

research material available through public and university library systems that not just student youth but workers as well could gain access to. He taught any comrade who asked how to find, order, and use these resources, and to be proud of taking advantage of everything that creative labor had gathered and stored to advance human knowledge.

"And, as others have commented on, the number of languages that rolled off his tongue was mind-boggling."

"But there is a problem with focusing on these attributes, of course," Barnes said. "We can wonder at them. We can even be amazed by some of them. But most of us will not emulate them, and they

movement — that was what was most important about him," Barnes said. "He didn't come into the party as a leader, as some people do — not as leaders of the communist movement, but as leaders of some organization or struggle in the unions or social protest movements. But that's not how Bob came to us in the late 1940s."

"He once told me he had wandered into the movement, in a certain sense, after looking at group after group, hunting for answers, and not finding satisfactory ideas anywhere else. And he became a leader in the Socialist Workers Party — after becoming a communist, after becoming an active internationalist, a citizen of the world."

DesVerney was "the opposite of the caricature of the absent-minded intellectual," Barnes said. "He deeply understood that revolutionary ideas don't grow out of other ideas — that no ideas that advance science and human culture come about that way. He knew that ideas, the tools for organizing human life, come out of social labor and class-struggle experience, and nowhere else. Even discoveries about the most seemingly nonpolitical matters — mathematics, laws of the physical world that are independent of human will — are only grasped by human beings indirectly, under the impact and constraints of the social relations during the times in which they live, work, and produce."

"Bob was a revolutionary activist not just because he was determined to fight for what he believed in, and couldn't imagine acting any other way," Barnes said, "but also because he knew that doing so was a precondition for the advance of culture, the advance of human knowledge. He knew that organized social struggle and political action were a precondition to advance the self-confidence of the great majority of humanity, the working class and its toiling allies. It was their road to the moral high ground."

"Bob lived the fact that Marxism is not a set of principles, not even a set of very lofty and scientific principles. No, Marxism is the political generalization of the line of march of a class, of its relations and conflicts with all other classes, and of its destiny to sweep every aspect of the legacy of capitalist exploitation and all remaining forms of social oppression and property rights off the face of this earth."

Revolutionary journalist

Barnes related how he first met Bob in June 1961, at a camp in northern New Jersey where the Socialist Workers Party was holding its convention. "I had relatively recently returned from spending several months in Cuba, where I had participated in the massive mobilizations that registered the expropriation of the land and factories of Yankee and Cuban exploiters

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March against the Vietnam War of 600 in Atlanta, Georgia, in August 1967 was largest held up to that time in the city, drawing support from civil rights and student groups. DesVerney's internationalism, both in his activity and writings, helped win young fighters to the communist movement.

struggle in this country without the fetters of capitalist educational methods, Bob's contributions are honest and forthright on the subject," Gettleman said.

A person to emulate

In the concluding talk at the Oakland meeting, SWP national secretary Barnes pointed to the pitfalls it was easy to fall into in describing Bob DesVerney's life and contributions. DesVerney's love for the discipline of mathematics and the natural sciences, his command of languages, and his knowledge of music were so noticeable that it was possible to miss what was truly most remarkable about his life.

"Bob was a person who, once he had developed a serious interest in mathematics at a young age, spent his entire life deepening, testing, and broadening his mathematical abilities. He was a reader and serious student of professional scientific and scholarly journals in several fields. He had become expert in the use of

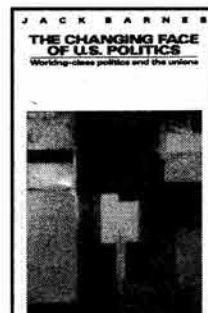
actually end up blurring who Bob really was.

"Because Bob, in fact, was a totally 'emulatable' person." From the time he joined the SWP at age 21, DesVerney became a communist and lived his life that way. "What was most important about Bob," Barnes said, "was not the 40 or so languages — he often pointed to the surprisingly large number of people who had multiple languages. What was important was the 40 or so years of building the communist movement. Cadres with that kind of record are far more precious and rare."

Barnes told the story of someone who once tried to ingratiate himself with DesVerney by playing up to his language skills. DesVerney turned to this person, Barnes said, "and very politely, not trying to be mean, simply replied: 'You know, there is no advantage to being confused in 60 different languages.'"

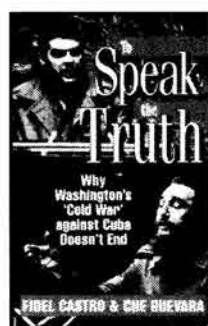
"Bob was a leader of the communist

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alike," Barnes said. "Those actions by revolutionary-minded workers, *campesinos* [peasants], and youth had made an enormous impression on me. And when I joined the YSA and then the SWP upon my return, I looked up to Bob and other comrades with more experience than I had as 'the Cubans' in this country."

Barnes said that what immediately impressed him about DesVerney was that he "fought to help make accessible to others the unbroken thread of common experiences of generations of workers who slowly and painfully — over a much longer period than any of the founders of communism hoped it would take — are putting together a working-class leadership that can do the job, that can make a socialist revolution here and around the world."

What was most important to DesVerney was to be able to *share* his knowledge. Pointing to the earlier remarks by Ntweng and several of the written messages, Barnes recalled how DesVerney "revealed in discussions with revolutionary fighters to work out political positions, tactics, and strategy."

"To me Bob was first and foremost a journalist, a revolutionary journalist," Barnes said. "He had the traits of a real journalist. He made accurate lists, like the one Sherry read us from the actions to welcome the Cuban delegation in Harlem. It was hard work, but for Bob it was the only road to trustworthy journalism. And it was also a lot of fun."

"He couldn't help but be an accurate recorder of political events, no matter what was happening. He wrote down what he saw, not an exaggeration of what he saw. And, at the same time, he often jotted down hilarious, sometimes unprintable, X-rated, parodies of the buffoons of capitalism," Barnes said.

"Bob made use of facts and shared what was going on with the reader. And it was on the basis of that commonly accessible information that he then drew some generalizations that we could all learn from and be equipped to discuss and debate."

Barnes noted that DesVerney's writings were deeply appreciated by vanguard fighters in the Black struggle at the time. James Shabazz, one of Malcolm X's closest collaborators in the OAAU, for example, wrote an introduction in 1964 to DesVerney's pamphlet *The Black Ghetto*, a collection of articles all of which first appeared in the *Militant*. "The authenticity of his data can be vouched for by any member of the Harlem community," Shabazz wrote. "For he is no stranger there, but can be seen at rallies, interviewing the residents of the ghetto and those who claim to lead them, or even 'hotfooting' it after a group of racing teenagers in the darkness of a 'racial disturbance.'"

Rev. Albert Cleage Jr., the central leader of the effort to launch the Freedom

Now Party in Michigan, wrote a preface to that same pamphlet. "Robert Vernon is one of the few journalists in America today who understands the Negro's struggle for 'Freedom Now' well enough to write about it intelligently and in depth," Cleage said. "This would be enough — this ability to see, to understand, and to describe — if this were the full dimension of Robert Vernon's talent. But beyond this, he can analyze the basic problem and offer a solution."

Responses like these to DesVerney's revolutionary journalism, Barnes said, "helped teach me that the true test of what a revolutionary organization does is not ultimately determined by how it views its own accomplishments. The cadres of the party, of course, must democratically assess their collective experience and decide what to do next. But the ultimate test of what a revolutionary organization says and does is whether it rings true to genuine fighters who are not part of your organization — or at least are not yet part of it. Is it a help to them?"

That's why it was no small matter, Barnes said, that Shabazz and Cleage "agreed to introduce a pamphlet written by a well-known, longtime leader of the Socialist Workers Party and take full responsibility for doing so. That was a test of whether we were on the right track or not." Of course, Barnes added, such tests can only be made when advances in the class struggle are propelling layers of fighters in a revolutionary direction.

The SWP leader recalled another example of how this leadership lesson had been driven home — this one from quite a different direction, from a mistake DesVerney had made and learned from.

In October 1964, Barnes recalled, the Militant Labor Forum in New York City organized a debate between DesVerney, a Black woman who supported the right-wing Republican campaign of Barry Goldwater, and a liberal backer of the Democratic incumbent, Lyndon Johnson. The Goldwater supporter wasn't a leader of that campaign, just someone who was a camp-follower of the far right. And in the course of the debate, DesVerney not only made several sharp comments unmasking the anti-working-class character of both the Republican and Democratic presidential campaigns, but in the process devastated the woman speaking on behalf of Goldwater.

"When Bob wrapped up the debate that night, we thought we had won it in a stunning way," Barnes recalled. But a reporter from *The Village Voice*, a widely circulated weekly in New York, was in the audience, and wrote a nasty article about the forum that appeared on the front page of the next issue. "Well, we're used to dealing with distortions in the press," Barnes said, "and we replied in a letter that the *Voice* published a week or so later."

"But that wasn't all there was to it. Bob



GI in Korea during U.S. retreat in late 1950 in face of counteroffensive by Korean liberation forces and supporting Chinese volunteers. DesVerney was drafted and sent to Korea during the U.S.-organized war — a war that marked the first military defeat for Washington in the post-World War II world.

insisted he had made a mistake; he had taken advantage of someone who wasn't a leader and done something more than simply answer her politically; he had gone on enough to embarrass her personally."

Barnes recalled DesVerney saying, "It's not enough to be right. You're also dealing with people, and you have to take responsibility for what you do with your capacities as a leader, and even how you use the political strengths of your own organization."

Barnes explained that DesVerney "could recognize that mistake because he thought primarily about and through *people*. Ideas, formulas, the sciences — all these were things that strengthened you, like running or weight-lifting. They broadened your scope and provided tools you could use to do more effective political work. But nothing could ever substitute for the actual, living work that Bob drew such pleasure from, collaborating with and sharing experiences and ideas with others in building a common movement."

A communist worker in uniform

Barnes also recalled that DesVerney, along with other SWP leaders who served in the military and merchant marine in World War II or Korea, taught him how to resolve the problem that Ntweng's neighborhood friend had addressed to his draft board during the Vietnam War: How can revolutionists agree to go into an imperialist army and kill worker and peasant allies in other countries?

"The answer is: you don't have to," Barnes said. "If you know how to function as a class-conscious worker in uniform, you don't have to be put in a position where you're going to kill other workers. In fact, you gain respect from other GIs for demonstrating the savvy to prevent fellow workers from being killed."

During the Korean War, DesVerney had had several different assignments in the army, not only translating but also at one point guarding Korean prisoners of war. "The prisoners were trying to buck each other up by singing revolutionary songs and so on, and Bob desperately wanted to do something to demonstrate his solidarity with them," Barnes said, recalling a story DesVerney had once told him. "But he had to consider the consequences of his actions for the Koreans, not for himself. So as he was passing by, he

just said something under his breath, in Korean, that translates roughly to 'Right on!' There was an immediate flicker in their eyes, and then they went on talking and singing."

Effects of colonial revolution

"The postwar revolutions in China, Vietnam, Algeria, and Cuba were all of a package to Bob," Barnes said. "I know how important the Cuban revolution was to Bob. But it was the Chinese revolution, I think, that had the biggest impact on him. 'The Chinese revolution was probably the most unthinkable event that had ever happened to the imperialists. For all of Western colonial history, the people of China had simply been a massive collection of objects to be exploited, to produce goods to sell at a superprofit.'

"Then, in 1949, the great lie that people of color could not fight back and defeat their imperialist overlords was put down in the most spectacular manner possible — by a mighty peasant and worker revolution in the most populous country in the world."

The Chinese people all of a sudden were no longer objects of the predatory plans of landlords and capitalists. Overnight they became the subjects, the makers of history. They threw the imperialists out of China and made practical, concrete sense of the abstract demographic fact that the great white colonial heirs were a tiny — and decreasing — minority in the world.

"All these events were happening as Bob was a young man who had just joined the communist movement in New York City, and they had an enormous impact on him, just as they did on Malcolm X," Barnes said.

DesVerney lived in a world of the merging of the colonial revolution and the socialist revolution, Barnes explained. In China, he said, this didn't happen "under a revolutionary leadership you could admire; the Stalinist leadership of the Communist Party of China did great damage to the revolution, the results of which are much easier for millions the worldwide to recognize today than a few decades ago, when the impact of the revolution itself was still much fresher."

"But, more importantly, the world had been turned upside down in China. It had been opened up forever to the toiling ma-

From Pathfinder

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Fred Halstead

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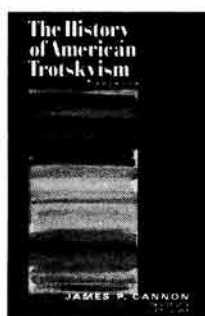
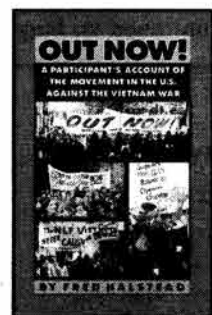
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jority of humanity, never again to be closed off. During Bob's lifetime, from among peoples of color the world over, one could see the potential cadres and leaders of a world communist movement emerging. And that process is what Bob did whatever he could to advance right here in the United States as well."

Radicals and communists

Barnes recalled that he had been a leader of the YSA and of the SWP branch in Chicago in 1963, when DesVerney's *Discussion Bulletin* article "Why White Radicals Are Incapable of Understanding Black Nationalism" arrived in the mail.

"Bob explained the rise of nationalism, its historical character, its place in the U.S. class struggle," Barnes said. "Our immediate embracing of his contribution to the discussion on Black nationalism flowed naturally from the struggles he and the party he was a member of were deeply involved in at the time."

As Jenness had pointed out in his message read at the meeting earlier, DesVerney's article caused quite a stir in the party at the time and helped shape its political response to this new development in politics. "It was a powerful answer to what had become a justifiably hated dodge in sections of the workers movement, especially, but not only, among Stalinists, social democrats, trade union 'progressives,' and other petty-bourgeois currents."

"Bob put the lie to any notion that a pledge of some future class-struggle unity and multinational character of working-class leadership was a reason to hold back today from recognizing leadership that was developing in forms you hadn't necessarily expected — such as Malcolm X and what he represented politically."

"But the greatest single theme of Bob's article was one that is often missed. The rise in Black militancy in the '60s was a qualitative advance not only for the struggle for Black freedom — although Bob makes the case for that fact, as well, a case that few have made as effectively. He also presented the view that what was developing was a giant leadership advance for the entire world class struggle to overthrow discrimination, oppression, and exploitation. It marked an advance for communist leadership."

The year after the article first appeared in the bulletin, DesVerney prepared an edited version that was published in the Winter 1964 issue of the *International Socialist Review* under the title "White Radicals and Black Nationalism." Barnes said that he "and some other younger firebrands" had argued with DesVerney at the time that he should have kept the earlier, more pointed title to the article.

A few members of the party had objected to the initial title, Barnes recalled. They thought that at least DesVerney should have made clear he was talking about all white radicals *except* those in the YSA and SWP. "But his original title was correct, I argued with Bob. Once you stop thinking of yourself as a radical, white or otherwise; once you stop viewing yourself as part of a current in the 'radical movement' and its milieu, and instead start acting as a revolutionist, as a proletarian internationalist, as that part of the working class, then all the contradictions are open to being solved. And that was what the political continuity of the Socialist Workers Party had taught us to do."

DesVerney agreed, but he told Barnes, "Well, but for those who still think of themselves as radicals but are learning fast, why don't we just make it a little softer?"

"At the time, I couldn't quite find my way to forgive Bob for that small concession," Barnes said, "but I came to appreciate his point."

Real scandal of the 'Bell Curve'

Barnes noted that even after DesVerney had retired from day-to-day activity in the mid-1980s, he continued to take ideas seriously, follow the party's work nationally and internationally, participate in public events and political gatherings of the communist movement, and accept any project proposed by the party leadership. Among other things, he occasionally wrote letters to the editor of the *Militant* presenting his views on various questions, something DesVerney thought was "absolutely natural for a member or supporter of the So-

cialist Workers Party to do, just like anybody else," Barnes said. "Bob didn't erect those kind of barriers between party members and other thinking workers and youth. He had been a communist political activist too long to ever do that."

The SWP leader used the example of a letter DesVerney had written to the *Militant* in December 1994 about the controversy around the book *The Bell Curve*, by Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein, which had been released a few months earlier. "Bob deeply understood the racist abuse of genetic flimflam to 'prove' the alleged inherited and immutable character of intelligence and, thus, racial superiority," Barnes said. "In fact, he waged a fight for at least two decades to educate about such fakery and help explain that the very concept of race is a social construct of capitalist social relations, not a fact of biology."

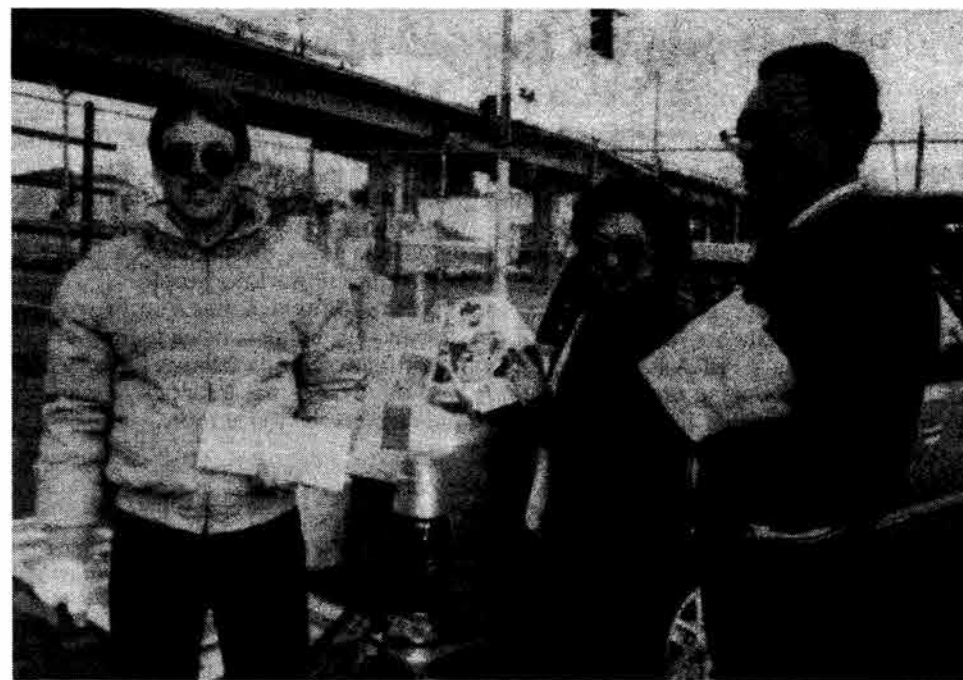
"But Bob saw something different in *The Bell Curve* than simply more of that kind of racist pseudoscience. He recognized why the book had become 'the scandal of the bourgeoisie.' That's what Bob called it the last time the two of us spoke face-to-face, at a socialist educational conference in Los Angeles over the New Year's weekend a few months ago. Bob's phrase helped me answer a question about the book that came up later, during the discussion at that conference," Barnes said, "and we incorporated the phrase in a resolution discussed and adopted by the party convention earlier this summer."

The Bell Curve became a scandal, Barnes said, "because in the course of the debate around it, the bourgeoisie, both supporters and critics of the book, liberals and conservatives alike, were forced to acknowledge that capitalist society necessitates maintaining a class hierarchy — a social construct, not a biological fact — that permanently denies equality to the majority of human beings, those who work for a living."

The purpose of the book, Barnes said, was to provide a rationalization for better-off layers of professionals and the middle class — those the authors call "the cognitive elite" — as to why they deserve to be richer and more comfortable than the great majority of humanity; it's because they're supposedly smarter.

"It was aimed at middle-class liberals in particular," Barnes said. "Quit denying it! — that was the message. 'You deserve to be better off. It's necessary, especially in this computerized and hi-tech world we're living in.' Murray and Herrnstein didn't insist that the causes were strictly racial or genetic. There are a lot of social factors, too, but it all comes down to the same political fact, they insisted."

But the book was also a warning that even if layers of workers could be taken in by such ideological rationalizations for a while, deepening social polarization and



The Oakland Postal Worker
Bob DesVerney, right, with co-workers in front of truckload of canned food they and other members of the Oakland local of the American Postal Workers Union collected for striking cannery workers in fall 1985. Cannery workers in Watsonville, California, won their battle in March 1987 after 18 months on strike.

impoverishment was leading to inevitable class battles — and sooner than many in the bourgeoisie and the middle class might hope. "Ultimately *The Bell Curve* sounded the trumpet of a coming civil war in the United States. It is written to give courage to those who are determined to defend their better living standards against those who produce all the wealth and the foundations for all ideas and all culture — the toiling masses of humanity."

For the U.S. capitalist rulers, DesVerney pointed out in his December 1994 letter to the *Militant*, "the worst possible catastrophe would be upheaval or social revolution, with the cognitive elite overthrown, scattered, and marginalized by us dummies who do all the work. Note that if the 'theory' is valid, a disaster like social revolution not only *shouldn't* happen, it *can't* happen; it is flat-out impossible."

But in trying to make this fake prognosis stick, DesVerney pointed out, the U.S. capitalist rulers "confront the vexing problem that the Cuban workers and peasants, in their vast majority of African and Hispanic origin, the very ethnic groups so woefully deficient in gray matter and clustered toward the low end of the IQ bell curve, have made and maintained a successful social revolution for 35 years against enormous odds, not only against the former Cuban ruling class, but against the powerful and cerebral masters of the latter, Murray's and Herrnstein's darling American ruling class, which is still frothing at the mouth and afraid to let its citizens come into contact with our presumably benighted Cuban neighbors."

In concluding his remarks to the meeting, Barnes pointed out that DesVerney set "an example regardless of whether or not you agreed with or understood each

and every one of his ideas or supported the party he devoted his life to building." In this regard, Barnes extended a special thanks to friends and family members who were not a part of DesVerney's movement who had come to participate in the celebration of his life and political contributions.

Advancing communist continuity

"Anyone trying to fight their way out of the muck, mire, and hatred of this society could see the strengths, power, and love that Bob exuded. We salute his life. In saying farewell, we present that life to you in good conscience as an example to follow."

At the conclusion of the meeting, Joe Swanson, a rail worker and leader of the SWP in San Francisco, made an appeal for special contributions to the SWP Capital Fund to honor DesVerney's lifelong work. Swanson explained one of the current projects the fund would help make possible: organizing to make available on CD-ROM the entire collection of articles that have appeared in the Marxist political and theoretical magazine of the Socialist Workers Party and its predecessors over the past 60 years, as well as a complete subject and author index to those articles.

Those attending the meeting contributed \$6,262 to the Capital Fund.

Steve Clark and Paul Mailhot contributed to this article.

Additional contributions to the SWP Capital Fund in Robert DesVerney's name can be sent care of the Militant.

L.A. Thai workers sue garment bosses

BY HARRY RING

LOS ANGELES — A federal suit has been filed against garment manufacturers and retailers who illegally profited from the labor of 72 Thai garment workers who were held in near-slavery at an El Monte apartment complex for several years. They toiled there as long as 22 hours a day for a fraction of the minimum wage.

Initially, the suit targeted the operators of the El Monte sweatshop. They are also under federal indictment for smuggling undocumented immigrants.

Recruited in Thailand and flown to California by the sweatshop gang, the workers were forced to remain in the El Monte compound assertedly until they worked off their travel expenses.

Released when officials raided the place in August, they were promptly jailed by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Hit by protest, the INS released them on bond to remain here as potential material witnesses in the federal trial.

Sixty-eight of the workers have joined in the civil-rights suit.

At a news conference, attorney Julie Su of the Asian Pacific American Legal Center said that in addition to the \$7 million in back wages owed the workers, the suit seeks to win \$10,000 a day in punitive damage for each of the workers.

Su declared the garment companies and retailers who marketed the clothing made by the Thai workers were complicit in perpetrating forced labor and peonage. She charged that they "knew or reasonably should have known" of the illegal conditions the workers were subjected to.

She said they labored 18 hours a day or more "behind razor wire, sharp fences and armed guards. They slept six to ten in a bedroom made for two. [They] lived and worked under the constant threat of harm to themselves and their families in Thailand." Su angrily declared, "The horror of the El Monte slave labor camp brought to the public's attention conditions that garment workers live with — and garment manufacturers profit from — every day."

"With this law-suit, the Thai workers say, 'No more.' The days of garment manufacturers and retailers cheating workers and taxpayers alike throughout this corrupt industry must end."

"Exploited immigrant workers," she continued, "are being blamed for a whole host of the social and economic ills that plague our society. Today, these Thai workers are fighting back and placing the responsibility where it belongs."

Other participants in the media conference included Cristina Vasquez, an official of the garment workers union,

UNITE, which is supporting the action, and American Civil Liberties Union attorney Mark Rosenbaum.

Speakers pointed to the rampant abuses by garment shop bosses. Attorney Della Bahan cited a survey by state and federal inspectors of 69 California manufacturers and contractors, chosen at random.

They found that 92.8 percent violated health and safety laws; 68.1 percent violated overtime payment laws, and 50.7 percent violated minimum wage statutes.

In an interview after the news conference, Chanchanit Martorell, executive director of the Thai Community Development Center, discussed the present situation of the El Monte workers. The Center has taken primary responsibility in helping them adjust to their new situation.

Housing and jobs have been found for all of them, she said. Some are doing domestic work or child care. A majority are working in the garment industry — a dozen of them in union shops. They appreciate the change in their job situation, she added, "the ventilation and light." And, she chuckled, "They go home at night."

Meanwhile, in Bangkok, 14 workers who had earlier been entrapped in the El Monte setup, filed suit for back wages. All of them will be interviewed by Randall Grimes, an INS officer there.

Boeing strike

Continued from front page
drivers blast their air horns. Other workers display signs of support in car windows. The IAM and Boeing's second largest union, the Seattle Professional Engineering Employees Association (SPEEA), held a joint press conference here October 23. SPEEA negotiates the contract that affects 20,000 engineers and technical workers at Boeing. SPEEA is opening up negotiations with Boeing on its contract, which expires December 1.

At the press conference, IAM District 751 President Bill Johnson stated, "We're working together with SPEEA to ensure that all employees maintain decent health insurance, pensions, and have jobs for the future.... We won't let the company pit one group of workers against another. SPEEA has been extremely supportive of the Machinists strike in everything from walking the picket line to providing food and other supplies. We want to provide support for them as they enter their critical phase of contract negotiations."

As Boeing has scaled back its workforce, both unions have lost thousands of members. Seattle area membership in the IAM has declined from 39,000 in 1990 to the current 23,000. SPEEA's membership has declined from 29,000 in 1991 to 20,000 today. The issue of jobs is critical for both unions.

In an important move to strengthen the IAM strike, the Machinist District Council 751 voted to pay \$100 a week strike benefits to some 400 members who are honoring the picket lines after being recently called back to work before the strike began. These union members would have normally not been eligible for strike pay until after they had completed 90 days membership in the union.

A group of retired Machinist members are meeting weekly to discuss a possible class action lawsuit against Boeing for breaking its pledge to pay retiree health insurance coverage. About 2,600 Machinist union members were enticed into an early retirement program this year. Part of that offer included company-paid health insurance through age 65. The contract proposal rejected by the Machinists October 5 contained sharp increases in health care costs for retirees, including those who enrolled in the "early retirement" program.

On October 30, National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) regional director John Nelson ruled that "as a result of Boeing's bargaining, the strike has been an unfair labor practice strike from its inception."

The IAM had filed an unfair labor practices complaint with the NLRB October 10. The union charged that Boeing had made last minute changes in the medical care proposals during the negotiations, without enough time and details for the IAM to properly consider them. They also charged Boeing with unfairly including retiree health benefits into the negotiations and failing to provide the union with information on company subcontracting.

Boeing officials stated that they will provide the IAM with details of their proposed health care plan and will remove from contract negotiations the question of altering medical benefits for retirees. The company, however, plans to contest the ruling requiring that it provide the union with information on subcontracting.

Bob Bruneau is a striking member of IAM Local 751A at Boeing in Seattle.

—CALENDAR—

NEW YORK

Manhattan

March for Social Justice and the Rights of Latin American Workers Against the Policies of Giuliani and Pataki. Sat., Nov. 18, 12 noon. 137 St. and Broadway. Sponsored by *Coalición Latina Por la Justicia Social* (Latino Coalition for Social Justice). For more information, call (212) 927-9065, 923-6031, 795-1123, 795-0379.

AUSTRALIA

Sydney

Free East Timor. March and rally on the fourth anniversary of the Dili massacre, Sat., Nov. 11, 12 noon. Assemble Hyde Park opposite St. Mary's Cathedral; march to Town Hall. Sponsor: November 12 Committee. For more information, call (02) 823-2769, 797 8717, 727 3644.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

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

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

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Celebrate 67 Years of the Militant. Speaker: Martin Koppel, staff writer for the *Militant* and editor for *Perspectiva Mundial*, author of the *The Shining Path, Anatomy of a Reactionary Sect.* Sat., Nov. 18, 7:30 p.m. Dinner 6 p.m. 2546 W. Pico Blvd. (near Vermont). Donation: \$5 for dinner; \$5 for program. Tel: (213) 380-9460.

San Francisco

An Evening in Celebration of the Militant Newspaper. Speaker: Gale Shangold, Socialist Workers Party, member, Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees Local 482. Sat., Nov. 11, 7:30 p.m. Dinner 6 p.m. 3284 23rd St. Donation: \$5 for program; \$10 for dinner.

FLORIDA

Miami

Celebrate 67 Years of the Militant Newspaper. Speaker: John Hawkins, national commit-

tee member, Socialist Workers Party. Hawkins is a coal miner and member, United Mineworkers of America in Birmingham, Alabama, a long-time activist in fight for Black rights. Fri., Nov. 10, 6:30 p.m. 137 N.E. 54th St. Donation: \$5. Translation into Spanish and French. Tel: (305) 756-1020.

ILLINOIS

Peoria

The Changing Face of U.S. Politics. Speakers: Norton Sandler, leader, Socialist Workers Party; David Yard, member United Mineworkers of America; Reid Craig, student at Knox College. Sun., Nov. 12. Reception 2 p.m., program 3 p.m. Baker Hall, Room 253, Bradley University, 1422 Main St. Donation: \$5. For information, call: (309) 671-2202

MASSACHUSETTS

Boston

The Struggle for Sovereignty in Quebec. Speaker: Representative, Communist League of Canada. Fri., Nov. 11, 7:30 p.m. 780 Tremont St. Donation: \$4. Tel: (617) 247-6772.

MICHIGAN

Detroit

Report on the International Women's Conference in China. Speaker: Detroit area participants in the China conference and a slide show. Fri., Nov. 10, 7 p.m. Donation: \$4. **Celebrate 67 years of the Militant.** Militant Fund Rally. Speaker: Argiris Malapanis, Militant staff writer and co-author of the Pathfinder book *The Truth About Yugoslavia: Why Work-*

ing People Should Oppose Intervention. Sat., Nov. 18, 7:30 p.m. Dinner 6:30 p.m. All events held at 7414 Woodward Ave. Tel: (313) 895-7616.

PENNSYLVANIA

Philadelphia

Celebrate 67 Years of the Militant Socialist Newspaper. Panel of young activists and workers. Sun., Nov. 12, 7 p.m. 1906 South St. Donation: \$6. Tel: (215) 546-8218.

BRITAIN

London

Grand Re-opening of the Pathfinder Bookshop; a Social, Cultural and Political Evening. Hear prominent Cuban artist José Delarra speak on "Art, Culture and the Revolution." Sat., Nov. 11, 7 p.m. 47 The Cut. (opposite Young Vic theater; nearest tube Waterloo). Donation: £2. Tel: 0171-401-2409.

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland

Cuba and South Africa: The Struggle Against Apartheid. Speaker: Helen Mulrennan. Fri., Nov. 10, 7 p.m. La Gonda Arcade, 203 Karangahape Road. Donation: \$3. Tel: (9) 379-3075.

Christchurch

One Year of the Cease-Fire in N. Ireland — All Party Talks Now. Speaker: Joan Shields, Communist League. Fri., Nov. 17, 7 p.m. Both events at 199 High St. Donation: \$3. Tel: (3) 365-6055.

November 6 rally for Mumia Abu-Jamal

Continued from front page

mony was presented refuting the ballistics evidence of the prosecution. The defense also presented evidence of police brutality and harassment. Judge Sabo summarily dismissed the entire claim, stating, "The petitioner fails to prove by a preponderance of the evidence each and every claim presented to this court."

Abu-Jamal's hearing took place alongside the exposure of decades of criminal activities in the Philadelphia police department and highway patrol.

Six cops in the 39th District admitted to framing people up, lying, beating "suspects," and planting evidence on innocent people. Judge Sabo, in his 154-page brief denying Abu-Jamal a new trial, stated, "Petitioner failed to sustain his burden of proving that the police 'brutally beat' him or 'hurled racial epithets at him.' No witnesses were coerced or intimidated, nor is there any evidence that these nonexistent events were 'part of the Philadelphia Police Department's pattern and practice.'"

Sabo's decision is being appealed to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

"A national and international campaign forced Judge Sabo to lift the August 17 execution order and grant Mumia a stay. Now more than ever we must keep the pressure on, no matter who's in office, to assure our brother gets a new trial," said Africa.

Support for the struggle to free Abu-Jamal is growing among college and high school students and other youth.

Theresa Goodlowe of the ICFFM said in an interview that a recent tour of campuses in Ohio to build the November 6 rally was very successful. Students from all backgrounds and nationalities were eager to support the case, she said. Groups from Antioch and Oberlin are bringing vans to Philadelphia for the rally.

At Temple University, Goodlowe said, a student asked, "Why wasn't this a big focus at the Million Man March? This is something we all should be involved in."

In a law class at Swarthmore College, another student said, "This case is obviously much broader than Mumia. This goes to the heart of the judicial system in this country."

At Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, students invited supporters of Mumia Abu-Jamal to come and speak. The campus newspaper had run a front-page article entitled, "Mumia Must Fry Now!" The article covered the case from the view of the cops and prosecution only. After Africa spoke and gave the facts of the case, many of the students, most of them white, organized to remove all the issues of the newspaper from campus.

At Rowan College, University of Delaware, Boston University, and other schools, student groups are organizing to bring buses, vans, or carloads to Philadelphia to participate on November 6.

Local events are also planned in New York, Pittsburgh, and other cities on November 6.

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You don't dump on them — The feds have been shipping nuclear waste to Idaho storage sites since the '50s. But state officials now have a firm agreement with



Harry Ring

Uncle Sam. Shipments must stop in 2035.

Getting saucy — Robert Underwood, Guam's nonvoting delegate to Congress, noted that salsa has overtaken ketchup as the lead-

ing U.S. condiment. He said that if people want to come here, "they should be prepared to use our condiments," and proposed a "ketchup-only" bill that would mandate its use in government food services. He declared that his proposal makes as much sense as "English-only" legislation.

They know something? — Back in 1992, *Time* magazine reported that three insurance outfits owned by tobacco companies charge smokers nearly double for life insurance.

Taking care of business — Forced by a lawsuit, the Clinton administration released a video showing crash-test dummies catapulted out the rear door of Chrysler minivans with deficient

door latches. Instead of a recall, the feds agreed, Chrysler will notify owners they can come in for replacement latches, meanwhile, assuring them the vehicle is "among the safest of minivans." A government official said it was "a common sense, smart government solution."

Poor little lamb — With thousands of tapes obtained by court order, Procter & Gamble is pressing its fraud suit against Bankers Trust, charging the bank swindled it and other companies into investing in dicey derivatives which brought big profits for the bank and stiff losses for the companies. P & G sees in Bankers Trust, "a culture of greed and duplicity."

The values system — Samples

from the Bankers Trust tapes: "I've buried my clients so much that it's going to take me four years to trade them out of it." "Funny business, you know? Lure people into that calm and then just totally f--- 'em."

Astonishing — A Gallup marketing survey in Latin America came up with a remarkable finding: Rich people have more in common with their counterparts in other countries than with many of their neighbors. Reuters reports Gallup discovered that "a typical banker in Mexico City is quite similar to his counterpart in Buenos Aires."

Oh — Merry-Go-Round, the clothing chain, went bankrupt, shut 460 stores and fired 4,000

employees. So far, accounting and law firms and other experts hired to "rescue" the company have pocketed fees totaling nearly \$11.5 million. How is that possible? A company staffer explains: "Being bankrupt doesn't mean you don't have any money. It means you don't have enough money."

'I'll have the grilled vulture' — The accounting firm Price Waterhouse pocketed 1.5 million from Merry-Go-Round, including \$5,000 for two dinners — four Waterhouse execs one night, five the next. Restaurant tabs were several hundred. The balance? At dinner, they talked about Merry-Go-Round. So, nach, they charged for their time, at rates ranging up to \$390 an hour.

Haitians discuss U.S. invasion

BY ROLLANDE GIRARD

MIAMI — Thousands of people participated in a street festival in the Haitian community here October 15 to mark the first anniversary of Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide's return from exile.

Aristide, who was elected president in 1990, was toppled by a coup d'etat in September 1991, and lived in exile for three years. On October 15, 1994, he returned to Haiti after the invasion of the country by 20,000 U.S. troops. Today several thousand U.S. and United Nations troops continue to occupy the island. Most of these soldiers are scheduled to leave in February.

Serge Lausier, a participant in the street festival, told this reporter that the situation in Haiti is "better than it was before, we were living with no government, step by step I believe everything will be as it is supposed to be."

Others argued that things are not changing — the situation is very difficult economically and political murders still occur, although much less than before the return of Aristide.

While the numbers of Haitian refugees has dropped since Aristide's return, more than 1,000 Haitians seeking asylum have arrived on the U.S. shores or have been stopped at sea by the U.S. Coast Guard since the beginning of 1995.

On October 1, about 300 Haitians arrived on a boat in Miami's port. They were detected by a Miami police officer, who saw some of them walking down a street barefoot. When stopped, several of the Haitians had only a phone number and 25 cents on them to make a phone call to their

relatives.

Mary, a garment worker at Bag Specialists in Miami, told her coworkers that a Latino cab driver came to her church with several of the Haitians from the boat.

The driver said he had found them wandering the streets and took them to a Haitian church where he thought they could get help.

Most Haitians have had very little chance to gain asylum in the U.S. since Aristide was returned to Haiti. The U.S. government and other institutions have considerably reduced their financial aid to groups such as the Haitian Refugee Center (HRC). The HRC has seen its budget shrink by more than \$200,000. Of the 15 attorneys and legal aids that the center used to employ, now only one lawyer is left. He has not been able to take any new cases since June, due to heavy work load.

According to the *Miami Herald*, "Inflation in Haiti has dropped from 52 percent to less than 25 percent for the fiscal year ending September 30.... 10,000 people are employed in the assembly industry." The *Herald* noted that 35,000 to 40,000 were employed in this industry before Aristide was overthrown in 1991.

International lenders, who pledged to invest \$1.2 billion, now insist that the Haitian government must privatize the nine most important national industries including the two national banks, the airport, electric and telephone companies.

One of the main proponents of this privatization plan, Prime Minister Smarck Michel, resigned his post October 16 reportedly because of the mounting pressure against the privatizations in the Haitian

government reflecting the widespread opposition in the country.

Reverend Gerard Jean Juste, an Aristide aide, made a recent visit to Miami. He told his audience at a meeting of Veye Yo, a Haitian rights group here, that the privatizations would provide better services and remove some of the corrupt officials previously appointed to these corporations. Some in the audience expressed skepticism about this being true.

Philippe Hood said at the October 15 street festival that "there would be less jobs, so people are afraid" of the impact of the privatizations.

Some Haitians here are also afraid of what will happen when Aristide leaves the presidency. Another election will be scheduled soon and the new president is to take over on February 7, 1996.

Juan Gabriel said he is worried about



U.S. troops in Haiti help safeguard Washington's interests

the future. He said that "the Macoutes [right-wing paramilitary thugs organized during the Duvalier dictatorship] are waiting for January to take power again."

Seth Galinsky, the Socialist Workers Party candidate for City Commission Group II in Miami, said at the street festival that "the U.S. invasion and occupation of Haiti is not resolving any of the problems. On the contrary, it is the decades of U.S. intervention, which has brought only exploitation and repression. The people of Haiti have shown that they will fight for their sovereignty and for social justice."

— 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —

THE MILITANT

Published in the Interest of the Working People

November 13, 1970

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NEW YORK, Oct. 30 — Over 5,000 people, predominately Puerto Rican, marched along an 80-block route today demanding independence for Puerto Rico.

Oct. 30 marks the 20th anniversary of the rebellion at Jayuya that confronted the exploitative colonial regime and proclaimed Puerto Rico a republic. The 1950 rebellion was led by the Nationalist Party of Pedro Albizu Campos.

This year's commemoration was initiated by the Young Lords Party, Movimiento Pro Independencia, and the Puerto Rican Student Union.

The unprecedented show of solidarity with the independence struggle was a glimpse of the power of the one million Puerto Ricans who live in New York City. Along with the demand for the independence of Puerto Rico, there were demands and slogans relating to Puerto Rican self-determination in the United States. A favorite chant was, "A Vietnam yo no voy porque Yanqui yo no soy" (I don't go to Vietnam because I am not a Yankee). It resounded loudly throughout the long march from 125th St. and Lexington Ave. to the United Nations Plaza.

Thousands of spectators poured out along the streets of East Harlem, waving and raising clenched fists to shouts of "Free Puerto Rico, right now!"

The bulk of the demonstrators were

high school students who had cut classes to attend the demonstration. The turnout was unexpected, even by the organizers of the action. As a result, technical problems delayed the scheduled rally considerably, and about half the crowd dispersed before it began.

THE MILITANT

PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

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November 10, 1945

American forces are directly involved in the civil war which broke out last week in north China. On October 27 soldiers of the Fourth Army, which is commanded by the Stalinist Yanan regime, fired on the barge of an American Admiral. The fire was returned by the barge. This exchange symbolized what may now occur on a wide scale.

The extent of the war between Chiang Kai-shek and Yanan became known October 28. Stalinist sources, quoted by the United Press, said "undeclared civil war was raging in at least 11 provinces of North China." The Chiang Kai-shek government "has concentrated 800,000 troops in the area to wipe out communist forces."

China is one of the great prizes of the Second World War. Chiang Kai-shek has a long bloody record of ruthless reprisals against the Chinese masses whenever they have sought to better their living conditions or to build a free and independent China. American Big Business counts on using Chiang Kai-shek as a puppet which will further the imperialist interests of America. That is why Washington is doing its utmost to strengthen his hand.

FBI covers up killing in Iowa

BY ROXANNE GOULD

SIOUX CITY, Iowa — After the FBI investigated and cleared the Sioux City police of any wrongdoing in the shooting death of her 29-year-old daughter Kimberly, Louisa Frazier called for a sunrise prayer service on October 21 at the grave site of Dakota Chief War Eagle.

Kimberly Frazier was killed on March 1 after a 911 call to police reported that she had allegedly kidnapped and assaulted another woman. Six police officers were dispatched, and within 32 seconds after arriving at the Frazier residence, a cop shot Kimberly. Louisa Frazier, who was only a few feet away from her daughter, was not allowed to go to her as she lay dying. A nurse visiting in the neighborhood volunteered medical assistance, but was not allowed to help either.

The allegations made in the 911 call were later found to be false, and, therefore, according to Louisa, Kimberly had not committed a crime. The police and FBI justified the shooting by claiming that Kimberly lunged at them with a knife. Louisa said that her daughter displayed the knife at the request of the police, and when she did so, she was shot.

In April more than 400 community members and Native American leaders, including American Indian Movement leader Vernon Bellecourt, participated in a March for Truth in downtown Sioux City. Immediately following the demonstration, the FBI agreed to investigate. According

to Louisa Frazier, however, the FBI report was merely a rubber stamp on the Sioux City police report. None of the witnesses, including Frazier, were ever contacted in the FBI investigation.

After the October 21 prayer service, Frazier issued a press statement.

"We need justice for my daughter," she told the crowd of 50. "Do they think I am naive enough to think they don't cover up for one another? Am I to close my eyes to what is happening to law enforcement in this country? I won't do that."

"I, like other Native people, am offended that anyone would insult our intelligence by slapping our faces, telling us to heal ourselves and expecting us to quietly go do that. Maybe we aren't the ones who need healing. Maybe we aren't the ones who are sick. My daughter did not have to die, and I am not the only one in this town who knows that."

Frazier said that she found the FBI report "totally unacceptable." Several of the community leaders and individuals in attendance vowed their continuing support until justice is found.

Upcoming efforts to bring attention to this injustice are a march, which will take place here on March 1, 1996, on the anniversary of Kimberly's death, as well as a forum in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Frazier is also pursuing civil action.

For more information on any of the above activities contact Frank LaMere at (402) 878-2242.

In Quebec, Ottawa is the loser

The October 30 vote on Quebec autonomy showed a strengthening of Quebecois resistance to national oppression since the previous referendum in 1980. Ottawa won the vote (by a 1.2 percent margin). But it clearly comes out as the loser. For Canada's capitalist rulers, confronted with a serious crisis for their economy, the 49.4 percent "Yes" vote for independence is certainly bad news.

The growing support for Quebec sovereignty since 1980 means that Ottawa has not succeeded in breaking the confidence of millions of working people in Quebec whose aspiration to equality, dignity, and justice has become irrepressible.

Quebecois are a French-speaking oppressed nationality representing 80 percent of the 7 million people living in Quebec. The discrimination they suffer on the basis of the language they speak, the denial of their right to self-determination, has been a pillar of capitalist domination in Canada for over 150 years.

But the Quebecois fight against national oppression has succeeded in reducing the gap between those who speak French and those who speak English in Canada. Gains have been made in terms of income, education, and health care — gains that have strengthened the working class as a whole in Canada.

It is this reality that is haunting Ottawa and the capitalist rulers it represents as they try to shift the burden of their economic decline on workers through drastic cuts in social services and programs and through undermining the democratic rights of working people.

Ottawa's scare campaign during the referendum battle did not succeed in deepening divisions between workers who speak French and those who speak English. It did not succeed in whipping up anti-Quebec chauvinist sentiments among working people either.

The mobilization of tens of thousands in rallies, meetings, debates, demonstrations, and parades during the last few weeks in Quebec has put the question of sovereignty back on the table for all working people to consider, discuss, and act on for some time to come.

But the referendum campaign also clearly showed that in their fight against oppression and discrimination working people across Canada cannot count on capitalist politicians. Through their attacks on women, immigrants, and Natives, leaders of the Parti Quebecois and Bloc Quebecois, who were calling for a Yes vote, have undermined the support for Quebec sovereignty. The Quebec government cuts in social services since its election a year ago also undermined some of the main gains made against Quebecois national oppression over the last few decades.

It is through common fights for their rights, for jobs for all and for better living and working conditions, and in opposition to slashing of social entitlements that working people will keep undercutting the divisions imposed on them by the capitalist rulers.

The fight against the national oppression of Quebecois and other oppressed nationalities in Canada is an essential contribution to achieving working-class unity — and eventually from the yoke of capitalism.

Head to Seattle November 12

Head to Seattle November 12. That should be the watchword for working people and rebel-minded youth across the United States. The rally called there in support of the Boeing workers' strike will be an important time to show solidarity and deal a blow for our class against the bosses.

All working people have a stake in the outcome of the struggle at Boeing. The aerospace giant is trying to force concessions on the 32,500 machinists, including cuts in health care for workers and retirees, no wage increase for two years, and more layoffs. Beating back this attack would strengthen the position of all workers facing this kind of offensive by the employers.

The Boeing strike is part of a slight conjunctural upturn in labor skirmishes. Over the last couple of months, we've seen several examples of working-class fightback that highlight the importance of solidarity.

Steelworkers at WCI in Warren, Ohio, pushed back the company's union-busting attempts and won a contract in October. The steelmaker had locked out the unionists and then tried to run the plant with strikebreakers. Fellow workers, students, and others in the area rallied to support the steelworkers, though. As the unionists and their supporters refused to back off or be intimidated by company thugs, WCI was forced first to suspend production at the mill and then to reach a settlement.

The newspaper workers strike in Detroit, now in its fourth month, is also winning broad support. Picket-line mobilizations of as many as 3,000 strikers and support-

ers have slowed production and illustrated the broad backing the workers have. Some of the unionists have now set up a speakers bureau in order to get the word on their strike out to unionists and other fighters.

At the same time, United Auto Workers members at Caterpillar continue to walk the lines, more than a year into the strike, and shorter battles like strikes at General Electric in Erie, Pennsylvania, and by bus drivers in Twin Cities, Minnesota, break out here and there.

In the course of fighting these battles, workers can begin to draw some important lessons on the need for unity among all working people. In Detroit there have been discussions on the picket line about how racist comments against strikebreakers who are Black or Latino divide and weaken all workers.

Union officials have put most of the blame for job losses at Boeing on the subcontracting of work overseas. In the context of building the strongest possible fight against the company, however, workers can discuss out why we need international solidarity.

So turn out for the rally in Seattle November 12. Bring along friends and co-workers. And get involved in building solidarity in your area with all of these labor struggles. You can get out to the picket line along with others, or invite a striker to come speak at your union, campus, or community, as well as at political events ranging from Cuba solidarity meetings to rallies to defend Mumia Abu-Jamal, where fighting workers can connect with others who are in struggle.

Vote Socialist Workers

Many working people across the United States will have an opportunity November 7 to cast a vote for the socialist alternative. The *Militant* encourages our readers to back the Socialist Workers candidates running in state and municipal elections in nearly a dozen cities (see list on page 5).

Why vote Socialist Workers? Because working people need our own political voice, independent of the capitalist rulers. The servants of big business have no perspective to offer working people a way out of the depression conditions that are getting worse. Their system, and all their representatives — Democrat, Republican, and "independent" — simply offer more wars, unemployment, police brutality, strikebreaking, attacks on affirmative action, and other assaults. We need our own program and political course, based on working-class solidarity and joining in struggles that advance the interests of workers and farmers worldwide.

Socialist candidates participate in and support battles like those waged by striking workers at Boeing, the Detroit newspapers, and Caterpillar. Whether participating in the fight to win a new trial for death row inmate Mumia Abu-Jamal in Philadelphia or joining protests against attacks on affirmative action in California, communist candidates present a fighting program for workers and youth engaged in struggle.

In all of this they explain that the best thing any worker or young person who wants to fight for a better world can do today is join the Socialist Workers Party or the Young Socialists.

Doug Jenness, who was the Socialist Workers candi-

date for city council this year in St. Paul, Minnesota, pointed out that unemployment worldwide is higher than any time since the Great Depression in the 1930s. "Electing me to city council won't solve the problem," said Jenness, writing in the *Militant* recently. "The real challenge is for the labor movement to lead a campaign for jobs."

The socialist campaign outlines proposals essential to this fight: 1) Reduce the work week with no cut in weekly pay, in order to spread the available jobs to more workers; 2) Launch a massive government-financed public works program to build and repair schools, hospitals, public transportation, and child-care centers; 3) Establish and enforce affirmative action programs, including quotas; 4) Substantially increase wages, Social Security benefits, and pensions to union-shop levels, beginning with the minimum wage, and institute cost-of-living escalator clauses to keep up with inflation.

Above all, working people need to count on our own strength and fight for the necessary measures to defend our livelihood as the economic and social crisis grinds on. Through these struggles workers and revolutionary-minded young people can begin to understand the capitalist system as a whole and draw the communist conclusion that there is no way to make any piece of this dog-eat-dog system work for the toilers — the vast majority of humanity.

A vote for the socialist candidates is a vote that recognizes the need to replace the current regime — from City Hall to the White House — with a government of workers and farmers and build a new socialist society.

AFL-CIO tops try to shore up image

BY BOB MILLER

NEW YORK — The first contested election for the top posts of the AFL-CIO since its formation in 1955 got prominent media coverage during the federation's convention held here October 23-25. "Militant is elected head of AFL-CIO, signaling sharp turn for labor movement," proclaimed a *New York Times* headline.

"With the election of John J. Sweeney yesterday as the new president of the AFL-CIO," the *Times* article began, "the American labor movement took a sharp turn toward militancy, rebuilding union membership, moving women and minorities into policy-making ranks and tackling a hostile Congress." The *Wall Street Journal* described Sweeney as an "aggressive organizer known for recruiting members of low paid industries."

These characterizations are typical of the favorable coverage in the big-business press. At the root of this shakeup in the upper ranks of the trade union bureaucracy is an effort by the labor tops to defend their privileged positions as discontent and resistance among the ranks of working people continues to mount.

The turn in the top echelons of the AFL-CIO to a more

NEWS ANALYSIS

social-democratic facade occurs at a time when the employers believe they need the trade union officialdom — the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class — less than any time since the end of World War II.

The winning "New Voice" slate led by Sweeney, the president of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) for 15 years, also included United Mine Workers president Richard Trumka for secretary-treasurer and Linda Chavez-Thompson, a vice president of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, for the new post of executive vice president.

Thomas Donahue, the incumbent president, had served as secretary-treasurer for 16 years under Lane Kirkland, who stepped down in August rather than face a challenge for his post. Sweeney had initially appealed to Donahue to run against Kirkland.

Following his election, Sweeney told the convention, "We will use old-fashioned mass demonstrations as well as sophisticated corporate campaigns to make worker rights the civil rights issue of the 1990s." Sweeney defended what he called "civil disobedience," like blocking bridges in Washington, D.C., this September as part of an SEIU organizing campaign.

One reason for the more radical-sounding talk is the mounting pressure on the union officialdom to protect their dues base from which they derive their privileges. Union membership has declined to 15.5 percent of the workforce in 1994 from 34.7 percent in 1954.

Nevertheless, the total number of union members has stabilized in the past two years and a step-up in union organizing drives can be expected. The "New Voice" slate and their supporters point to opportunities to organize layers of the lowest-paid workers, which often include many women, Blacks, and immigrant workers. They project spending millions on organizing drives.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in the period from 1983 to 1994 participation of women in the workforce grew from 40 million to 51 million and of Black and Hispanics from 13.8 to 22.2 million. The 35-member AFL-CIO executive board had included only two Blacks and three women. The convention expanded the board to 54 seats with 10 reserved for women and oppressed nationalities.

The labor battles of today, from the strikes against Boeing and the Detroit Newspaper Agency to the ongoing fight against Caterpillar, often last weeks and months or longer. A layer of union officials sense that these examples of working-class resistance and rank and file initiatives foretell more explosive developments in the future. Union officials who can "talk the language of the workers" become more valuable to the bureaucracy as it prepares to do its best to keep future rank-and-file insurgencies within the bounds of capitalism.

These officials are stepping up their efforts to tap into the restiveness in the unions and draw rank-and-file militants and radical activists into union posts and committee structures. Sweeney announced, for example, a "Union Summer" of corporate and political organizing with 1,000 organizers sent to unionize workplaces and "campaign for labor's friends against its enemies."

The more militant talk by union officials does not come out of a big upturn in workers struggles, but from their belief that it is now the only way to have any influence on the future and maintain their dues base.

The lack of leverage of the trade union bureaucracy in bourgeois politics and the collapse of the liberal-labor coalition in the Democratic Party is a big factor in the officialdom's image makeover. It is the only way they can pull workers behind their strategy of concentrating on the 1996 presidential elections to reelect Clinton and campaign for Democratic control of the now Republican-dominated Congress.

The AFL-CIO convention took no steps toward what working people need most: efforts to mobilize the toilers to fight for jobs for all, protest the capitalist assaults on the social wage, and join workers on the picket lines.

Bob Miller is a member of United Auto Workers Local 980 in Edison, New Jersey.

Minneapolis drivers end walkout with contract

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

nursing student, at the wind-swept picket line outside the bus barn near the airport. "How do they expect us to support ourselves, much less raise a family, as part-time workers for the six to eight years it would take to become full-time under their contract?"

Some 350 people participated in a "Walk for Transit" rally in downtown Minneapolis the day after the strike-breaking threat. Pride of service and opposition to

cross unofficial picket lines set up by 80 young dockers employed by Torside Ltd. and subcontracted to the port company. The young dockers were dismissed for refusing to work beyond overtime agreements.

Jimmy Nolan, chairperson of the T&GWU National Docks and Waterways Section, chaired the rally and explained how the union learned about a contract in the pipeline for Mersey docks to take in toxic waste shipped from Japan. The Mersey port workers had always refused to handle toxic waste, and this was another reason why the port company wanted the sacked workforce and the union out of the way, Nolan said.

Almost all the unions that participated in the solidarity event have been in recent disputes with their bosses, some involving strike action. The Fire Brigades Union had just suspended a series of 24-hour strike actions against the Merseyside Fire Authority after the bosses agreed to unconditional negotiations.

A mass picket of an estimated 200-300 dockers and their supporters was staged October 23, outside the gates of Seaforth Container Terminal. None of the local workers employed by the Merseyside Docks and Harbours Company who have been scabbing, turned up to challenge the pickets.

General Electric workers strike in Pennsylvania

More than 3,500 members of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America struck General Electric's big railroad locomotive plant in Erie, Pennsylvania, October 26.

The main issue in the walkout is outsourcing fabrication of snowplows for some locomotives and simultaneous company plans to eliminate hundreds of jobs.



Militant/Michael Pennock

Rally to support striking Minneapolis bus drivers, October 19.

ON THE PICKET LINE

other workplaces in your area, including interesting political discussions.

Bus drivers in Minneapolis ended their walkout against part-time jobs on October 28, after nearly three weeks on the picket line. Unionists ratified a new contract by a nine-to-one margin.

The contract allows the company to hire part-time drivers up to 24 percent of the workforce. The company sought the ability to hire up to 29 percent whereas the union demanded that it stay at the current 15 percent.

The governor of Minnesota had vowed to break the bus strike. Speaking on October 18, the ninth day of the strike, Gov. Arne Carlson said the walkout must be over by the late-November Thanksgiving holiday. Otherwise he threatened to authorize a fleet of private buses, vans, and taxis to provide "essential service." State officials had said the Minnesota National Guard could be used to protect the scab fleet.

The reaction of many of the 2,100 strikers to the governor's comments was anger. "We're really hacked off," said Sonja, a part-time driver and full-time

the proposed big increase in part-time work were major themes sounded by speakers and participants.

Teamsters Local 120, which represents Ryder car haulers, organized a solidarity rally of 500 people on October 22.

London dock workers rally to defend strike

"You can keep kicking a dog and it'll crawl away from you, but at some stage the dog'll turn on you," declared Jimmy Davies. "We're telling Mersey Docks and Harbour Company our crawling days are through: we're here to stay!" Davies is a member of the Transport and General Workers Union (T&GWU). He is also secretary of the Merseyside Dock Workers Shop Stewards's Committee.

Speaking at a rally on October 21 before some 2,000 people in the centre of Liverpool in North West England, Davies summed up the determination to fight of 350 port workers sacked on September 29 by the Mersey Docks and Harbours Company.

The mass firings followed the refusal of these port workers to

Union officials said the strike is also a protest against broader efforts by GE to outsource many locomotive components to nonunion plants with lower wages and benefits.

The walkout followed an October 6 announcement by GE that it may have to eliminate up to 1,500 jobs at the Erie plant over the next six to nine months. At the same time, GE officials said the company may also lay off several hundred temporary contract workers. The company claimed in an October 6 statement that the an-

nounced layoffs are due to cutbacks in orders.

The strikers were scheduled to return to work October 31. One union official said three-day walkouts may be repeated in coming weeks if bargaining with management doesn't produce results satisfying to union members.

Michael Pennock, member of Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Local 4-618 in Minneapolis, Minnesota; and Tim Rigby, member of T&GWU in Manchester, England, contributed to this column.

LETTERS

Chauvinism

This letter is in regard to Martin Koppel's answer to Ed Meredith's letter. ["No common ground with rightist groups" in the September 25 *Militant*.]

We do absolutely need to take a stand against nationalism and chauvinism. Socialists also need to guard against condemning concrete positions because they have been put in a faulty abstract context.

Human beings have the right to bear arms to protect themselves. This right may also be necessary at a future time when workers are implementing a socialist democracy and face capitalist-state repression. Humans also have the right to decide what they want to do with their own bodies — as in the questions of abortion and the right to suicide.

I was glad to see you used Mussolini as an example of a "socialist" who became a fascist. Angelica Balabanoff, who worked with Lenin in Russia, gave a fine portrait of him in her book, *My Life as a Rebel*. She states he was one of the most cowardly men she had ever known, illustrated by the fact his "war wound" was in the posterior area!

Charles Bateman
West Sacramento, California

Immigrants

I was disappointed with the "In Brief" news item "New Jersey prison guards brutally beat immigrants" in the October 30 *Militant*. The article left out details which I believe highlight the importance on reporting this abuse.

According to news reports in Miami, (the *Miami Herald* by the

way reported this as a case of "torture") the immigrants were forced to shout "America is Number One" as they ran through the gauntlet. In addition, in one case the prison guards used pliers to pull out the pubic hair of one of the immigrants.

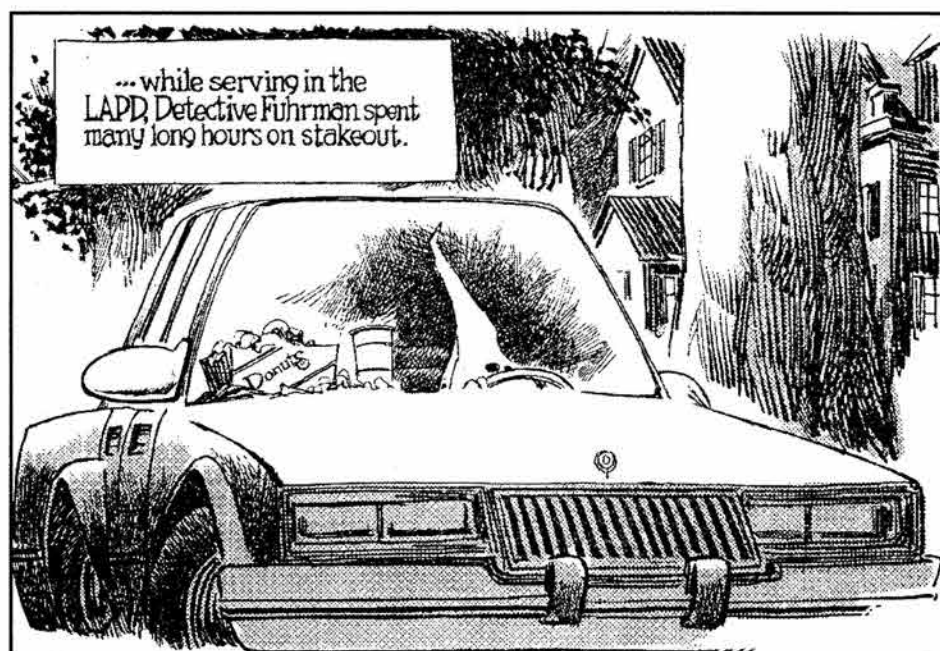
While conduct this extreme is not yet the rule, abuse of immigrant workers by the Immigration and Naturalization Service and prison authorities is widespread. I think the article deserved more facts and greater prominence in the *Militant*.

Seth Galinsky
Miami, Florida

Editors' note: We agree with the above comments and should have given more details and the space that the issue required.

Myths about Australia

For months the various 50th anniversaries of the end of aspects of the Second World War have provided the Australian government and big-business media with opportunities to bombard working people with patriotic flag-waving. Central to the view that working people in Australia had a stake in siding with their own rulers during



the second world interimperialist slaughter is the myth that the Japanese government planned to invade Australia.

I read Patti Iiyama's review of two recent books on Hiroshima (*Militant*, October 9, 1995) this way when she noted, "By the spring of 1942...[Japanese] troops were at the threshold of invading Australia."

Neither the Japanese government nor its military High Command ever backed or approved any plan to invade Australia, despite individual commanders in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific, such as General Yamashita, contemplating or favoring invasion.

The bombing of northern towns like Darwin, Broome, and Townsville was designed to prevent raids on Japanese occupied territory — especially oil-rich Su-

matra in what was then the Dutch East Indies — and to disrupt preparations for a U.S.-led counteroffensive. By mid-1942 thousands of U.S. troops were disembarking every week at ports around Australia.

Japanese moves to occupy what is today Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands weren't preliminary to an invasion of Australia either.

Tokyo's actions served a strategic goal: above all, to protect its only source of oil — taken in response to Roosevelt's 1940 oil embargo — as it strove to maintain its domination over China, Korea, and other colonial countries and compete with its imperialist rivals using military means.

Doug Cooper
Sydney, Australia

Cuba rally in Denver

On October 20, 65 people attended a rally at the U.S. federal building in Denver, Colorado, demanding an end to the U.S. economic embargo against Cuba. The rally was called by the October Cuba Coalition, which also demanded the end on travel restrictions and the right of Cuba as a sovereign nation to determine its own destiny.

The participants included Pastors for Peace, Venceremos Brigade, The Freedom to Travel Campaign, and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. A 15-year-old high school student who attended the "Cuba Vive Festival" in August was among the participants. A student at Colorado University at Boulder who was a participant on the Venceremos Brigade in August, spoke on the need to defend Cuba because of the provisions for health care, education, and housing granted to all Cuba's citizens.

MEChA, the Chicano student organization at one of the Denver area high schools, provided marshals for the rally. Several Latino workers, who were janitors in the federal building, came out to listen to the speeches.

John Langford
Salt Lake City, Utah

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.

Paris unleashes army on immigrants

BY NAT LONDON

PARIS — The French government is moving towards a confrontation with the unions concerning its plans to freeze wages of public workers and gut medical care and other social programs. At the same time, under the pretext of "combating terrorism," which Paris blames on groups of immigrants from Algeria, the government has called out the army to patrol railroad stations, airports, and frontier posts.

Prime Minister Alain Juppé says that this is in response to a series of bombings that started in July and have already claimed seven lives and injured 170 people. Bombs have gone off in crowded Paris subway cars and tourist districts. Unexploded devices have been found in street markets and on the rails of the super-fast TGV train.

The French government claims the attacks have been carried out by Algerians linked to the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), which has been fighting to overthrow the Algerian military regime in a civil war that has claimed nearly 40,000 lives. There has been little evidence, however, linking the GIA to the attacks.

An "anti-terrorist" operation, code-named *Vigipirate*, has been put into action. The plan has been previously used during the U.S.-led war against Iraq in 1991 and during an earlier wave of bombings in France in 1986. The plan allows the use of the army to patrol public areas designated by the government. *Vigipirate* prohibits parking cars in front of any public building and forbids students forming "crowds" in front of schools. The government has so far invoked only the first set of these provisions. The actual text of *Vigipirate* is classified as a state secret.

Two million identity checks

Justice Minister Jacques Toubon has proposed new measures to reinforce existing "anti-terrorist" laws passed in 1986. If his new proposal becomes law, "aiding an undocumented foreigner" will be added to the list of terrorist acts. Existing laws already allow the police to hold people accused of "terrorist acts" up to four days without a lawyer and without any charges being filed. Trials for terrorism will be held before professional judges without a regular jury. Penalties for attacks against police, the army, and other "representatives of authority" will also be increased.

Juppé has announced that nearly two million identity checks have been done by French police since the start of the bombing campaign. In addition, 10,000 people have been expelled from the country or refused admittance at the border.

These identity checks are openly done on a strictly racial basis. Workers who

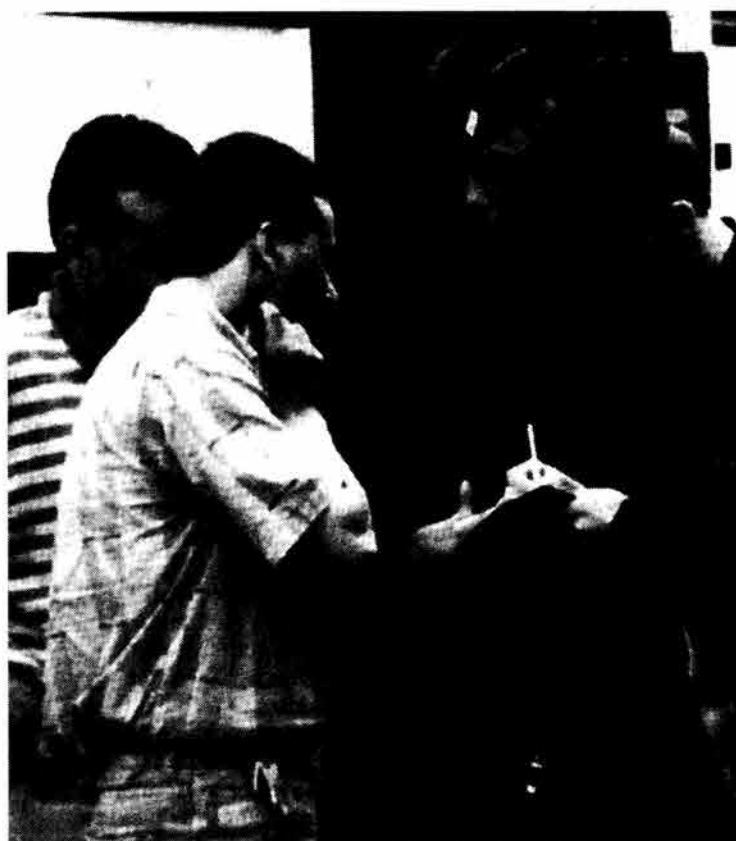
look African or North African report being stopped by police four or five times a day to have their papers examined. The checks are often accompanied by racial insults and occasionally by violence from the police. As a result, many workers of immigrant origin have stopped going out after work and reduced shopping for food and other necessities to a strict minimum. Some report being refused service at bakeries, grocery stores, and other shops.

There have also been numerous police raids throughout France on small groups associated with the main Algerian opposition group Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) and the GIA. Sometimes these have been accompanied by press conferences at which the police present large stocks of weapons, which they claim they seized during these raids. Supporters of the Salvation Front and the GIA say that the police raids in France are designed to weaken the efforts to build an opposition to the Algerian regime among more than 1 million Algerian immigrants in France.

At the same time, French president Jacques Chirac announced that he and Algerian president Liamine Zeroual would be meeting in New York just prior to the Algerian presidential elections. Many Algerian immigrants and others have accused Paris of supporting the Algerian military regime, which took power after the Algerian government refused to recognize the results of elections that resulted in a majority for the FIS in 1991.

Book bannings

On September 11, four French editors denounced the government's decision to ban a book on the current fighting in Algeria. Published in Switzerland, and entitled *White Book on Repression in Algeria (1991-1994)*, the narrative presents eyewitness accounts of arbitrary arrests, torture, and executions by the Algerian police and army.



Police check identity papers of Algerian immigrants in Paris. Some 20,000 cops and soldiers patrol the French capital now.

Last April, the French government banned another book by the Egyptian theologian Youssef Qaradawi. The official decree banning the book said it was "a threat to public order because of its clearly anti-Western tone and ideas it contained that are contrary to basic republican laws and values."

On September 13, the FIS executive committee in exile formally denounced "with the greatest energy the blind and barbarian [bombing] attacks... which have targeted innocent civilians." On October 10, FIS representative in Washington Anouar Haddam denied that either the Salvation Front or the GIA were behind the attacks. He told the French daily *Le Figaro* that a communiqué attributed to the GIA, in which the group allegedly claimed responsibility for the bombings, "was false." Haddam said that the real organizers of the bombing campaign were "without any doubt men from the Algerian government's military security."

Only hours before the scheduled meeting between Chirac and Zeroual, the Algerian president canceled the talks claiming that Chirac had intervened in Algerian internal affairs.

Police raids

Police raids were organized throughout the Lyon region on September 9 as government representatives announced that they had another suspect in one of the bombings, 25-year-old Khaled Kelkal.

Kelkal was born in Algeria, grew up in the Lyon suburb of Vaulx-en-Velin, and had recently spent two years in prison for petty theft. He had no known ties to any Algerian groups. A huge manhunt was organized. Kelkal was finally located hiding in the hills west of Lyon.

When the police caught up with Kelkal, he was shot in the leg and in one hand. Seeing that he was still moving, one of the police officers yelled, "Finish him off! Finish him off!" and Kelkal was shot dead. The entire scene was filmed and broadcast by television cameras.

The next day protests and violent clashes took place between police and young people in Vaulx-en-Velin. Hundreds took part in Kelkal's funeral and protest demonstrations of youth of immigrant origin took place in a number of other cities as well.

Minister of the Interior Jean-Louis Debré announced that the "Group Kelkal" had been dismantled and that it had been responsible for all of the terrorist bombings in France. But on the day after Kelkal's funeral another bomb was found in Paris. Several days later a bomb went off

in a train in Paris injuring 29 people.

The new bombings were followed by an increase of 4,500 in the *Vigipirate* forces — which already stood at 20,000 police, 2,500 soldiers, and 9,000 customs agents.

Protests and 'national unity'

A declaration by four trade-union confederations, including the General Confederation of Labor (CGT), the French Democratic Confederation of Labor (CFDT) and the two education unions, the FSU and the FEN, called for actions by workers on October 24 demanding that "all forces should be mobilized so that the authors of these cowardly attacks should be captured and judged." There were no reports of any actions in workplaces in response to the call.

Similar positions were taken by the Socialist Party and the French Communist Party. A general atmosphere of "national unity" and calls for increased police measures has prevailed, bringing together parties supporting the government and parties in the opposition as well as union officials and representatives of other organizations.

On October 24, soldiers armed with machine guns were called out to patrol buses and trolleys in Strasbourg after young people in several neighborhoods with large immigrant populations threw stones at the police and broke windows.

Afraid of a direct clash between the army and local youth, the Socialist Party mayor of Strasbourg, Catherine Trautmann, called for the removal of the troops and for widening the role of the police. Authorities finally withdrew the troops after two days of widespread criticism that the army was being used in a situation that went beyond the *Vigipirate* mandate. But the government continues testing the possibility of widening the use of troops to "maintain order."

Assault on students

The same day that the troops were pulled out of the buses in Strasbourg, the CRS riot police brutally assaulted a peaceful student occupation of the rectorat; the regional offices of the Ministry of Education, in Rouen. University students there have been holding large demonstrations demanding 12 million francs supplementary funding for their school. A student strike has effectively blocked the university since the beginning of the school year.

In the middle of the night, riot police entered the rectorat, which was being occupied by 300 students. The students were handcuffed, clubbed, pulled by their hair and thrown down the stairs. One of the students told France-Info radio later, "The police treated us as if we were terrorists."

The increasingly "muscle" approach by the conservative government comes at a time of deepening social tension. Paris has announced a wage freeze for 1996 for all public workers. Some three-and-a-half million strikers responded to the government's action with a one-day strike on October 10, while hundreds of thousands of workers demonstrated. Unions are now discussing plans for a second strike.

Two weeks after the public workers' one-day action, Chirac finally dropped any pretenses of backing wage increases for workers and announced a two year battle to reduce the budget deficit by reducing spending on social welfare programs. The Social Security system of public health care was at the center of his attack.

He said that he had not been elected to "be popular" but "to do a job." Financial analysts welcomed Chirac's action. Jean-François Mercier, an economist at Salomon Brothers, warned that "public opinion" could be a problem. "The next few months will be marked by labor tensions and wage demands, but the government will probably not yield to the pressures," he predicted.

The CGT and CFDT unions have already called for national demonstrations on November 14 when Chirac puts his Social Security bill to a vote in parliament.

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