

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Class struggle continues as
accord is signed in Guatemala

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Defend Social Security! Clinton panel calls for privatizing social benefits

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

A presidential federal advisory council formally presented its three-option plan January 6 to invest Social Security benefits into the stock market. The report, first floated in December as a trial balloon for privatizing Social Security, is among the various schemes being advanced by capi-

**Attack on social wage is
issue for labor movement**

— editorial, page 14

talist politicians and other bourgeois figures as part of their assault on social entitlements.

The 13-member advisory council, appointed by Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala in 1994, agreed that action must be taken "as early as possible" on their proposals. Social Security, which more than 60 percent of retirees in the United States count as their only source of pension, is portrayed by capitalist politicians and media as a fund that will be broke by 2029. By that time, they argue, payments to beneficiaries will exceed revenues paid into the Social Security Trust Fund by workers. The income, they claim, will then cover only 75 percent of benefits costs. One article in the January 8 *New York Times* did acknowledge that "in one sense the Social Security crisis is synthetic," noting that by the government's own reckoning there is no problem with funding for the next 20 years.

The investment of Social Security funds into private stocks and equities is touted in the report as a solution to the supposedly impending financial crisis. "Private invest-

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Thousands of south Korean workers protested January 6 against antilabor laws

Korean workers resume strikes

BY BRIAN TAYLOR

Striking workers in south Korea said they'd be back out after New Year's, and they are. Nearly 220,000 trade unionists are continuing the strike, which began December 26 to protest antilabor legislation adopted that day. On January 6, the first day the actions resumed, the stock market in Seoul fell 2.6 percent, to a 46-month low. The Associated Press reported that beginning January 9 Hyundai workers at 15 plants would resume work for two hours a day through Tuesday, January 14. Other auto work-

ers and shipbuilders remain out. If the government does not repeal the laws by midnight January 14, the unions have threatened to launch another general strike.

The strikers are opposing a package of laws that make it easier for companies to lay off workers and hire temporary and replacement workers, and make it possible for the government to intervene in labor disputes with binding arbitration. One provision maintains a ban on the second largest union federation

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Tel Aviv stalls on troop withdrawals

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Faced with a sharpening crisis in the occupied territories, Palestinian and Israeli officials remain deadlocked over negotiations involving Israeli troop withdrawal from 80 percent of the West Bank town of Hebron and other areas. Washington's mediator Dennis Ross, along with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, met with Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat January 5 for four hours before coming up empty. The negotiations were held at Tel Aviv's military base in Erez, a town in the occupied Gaza Strip near the Israeli border.

The talks began some three months ago after an explosion of Palestinian resistance to the occupation forces resulted in gun battles between Palestinian security forces and Israeli soldiers September 25-27. The negotiations included releasing Palestinian prisoners and moving the Zionist troops out of rural West Bank towns, but were stalled when Netanyahu refused to set dates for the last two stages of a three-part troop withdrawal scheduled to end next September.

Israeli Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon and right-wing allies of Netanyahu have loudly proclaimed outrage at the negotiations. Netanyahu's brother-in-law, Hagai Ben-Artzi, moved into a settlement in Hebron to repudiate the withdrawal. Seven of Netanyahu's 18 cabinet ministers announced their opposition to the pullout from Hebron.

The editors of London's *Financial Times* warned the prime minister on January 6 not to overestimate this "obstacle," suggesting that he "crack the whip" if he wanted to "prevent an explosion in the occupied territo-

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Clinton pushes economic war on Cuba, trade offensive against imperialist allies

Postponing section of anti-Cuba law reflects gains by U.S. rulers

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

On January 3, U.S. president William Clinton announced a second six-month postponement of a provision in the misnamed "Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 1996," also referred to as the Helms-Burton law. The provision allows Cuban-American and other U.S. businessmen whose property was expropriated by workers and peasants after the 1959 revolution in Cuba to sue in U.S. courts anyone investing in those properties.

The legislation, signed into law by Clinton March 12, 1996, substantially escalated Washington's economic war on the Cuban people. The Clinton administration's aggressive use of the law since then has already had an initial adverse impact on the Caribbean nation's economy, slowing down foreign investment and credits to Cuba.

The Helms-Burton law also registered an intensifying trade offensive by the U.S. rulers against their imperialist allies, who are also competitors, especially in Europe and Canada.

The White House decision reflects some gains Washington has made on both fronts: tightening the economic squeeze on the Cuban revolution and simultaneously defusing a confrontation with capitalist powers in Europe over aspects of the legislation, to the advantage of the U.S. government.

Defusing complaints by U.S. allies

"We must sustain our efforts to hasten the arrival of democracy in Cuba," Clinton said in a statement issued by the White House January 3, as he vacationed in the Virgin Islands. "As a result of increasing international pressure, we have never been closer to that day."

"Today we can genuinely say that it is the Cuban regime that is increasingly isolated in the Western Hemisphere and around the world, not the United States," Stuart Eizenstat, U.S. undersecretary of commerce, was quoted by the *Wall Street Journal* as

saying the same day.

Officials of the Democratic administration and the U.S. big-business press pointed to the passage of a resolution by the European Union (EU) on December 2, which assailed the revolutionary government in Havana for alleged human rights violations and lack of democracy, as a gain for Washington.

"The European Union strongly believes that a democratic system of government must be installed in Cuba as a matter of priority," stated the EU resolution. While it proclaimed willingness by the 15 EU member states to continue some trade and investments in Cuba, the statement said "full cooperation with Cuba will depend on improvements in human rights and political freedoms."

The White House had earlier indicated that some action like the passage of the December resolution would be necessary for the U.S. president to renew the waiver halting the filing of suits against companies in third countries investing in Cuba. This provision of the Helms-Burton law had provoked angry protests by governments in the European Union and Canada as an "extra-territorial reach" of U.S. legislation and an infringement by Washington on the rights of these capitalist powers to trade with whomever they choose.

Soon after the passage of Helms-Burton, the European Union passed a resolution con-

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Marxist writings are revolutionary weapons

BY SARA LOBMAN

"We just got a call from a Readers Club member in Springfield, Massachusetts," Mary Nell Bockman reported in a recent phone call. "He had just read about Pathfinder's special sale of the *Collected Works* of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels and wanted to arrange to order a set." Bockman, a volunteer at the Pathfinder

See special sales offer

— Pages 8-9

Bookstore in Boston, is helping to publicize the special offer, which also includes huge discounts on the *Collected Works* of V.I. Lenin, as well as many smaller selections of the communist leaders' writings (see ad on pages 8-9). Work is under way on a mailing to members of the Pathfinder Readers Club, a flyer to take out on literature tables, and a big window display for the bookstore, she added.

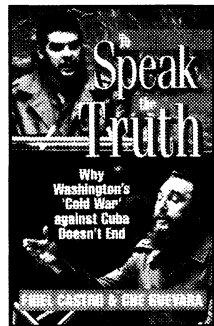
The Pathfinder Bookstore in Atlanta sent in orders for two sets of the Marx and Engels collected works, along with a note from one Readers Club member who commented, "This is the kind of offer I've been waiting

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contact bookstores, including those listed on p. 12.

Black farmers fight government discrimination — page 10



Protests explode in Guyane

Cayenne, the capital of Guyane, a French colony on the Caribbean coast of South America, erupted in protests in early November. High school students walked out of classes, angry over intolerable conditions — shortages of textbooks, supplies, teachers, and classroom space. They demanded a local school authority in Guyane instead of having to rely on the one in Martinique, another colony. Joined in the streets by unemployed youth and teachers, the students were violently attacked by the colonial police.

On November 12 two youths were shot by cops; seven were arrested and sentenced to several months in juvenile prison. Coming on top of 25 percent unemployment and racist abuse by French authorities, this government brutality touched off a bigger revolt, as furious youth chanting "Colonial justice!" poured into the streets. They attacked symbols of power like the prefecture and homes of government officials, sacked stores, barricaded streets, and threw molotov cocktails at the cops. The General Union of Guyanese Workers called a general strike in support of the students. Thousands of workers demonstrated November 13 and 20, according to the pro-independence newspaper *Asé Pléré An Nou Lité*. They chanted, "Touchez pas à la jeunesse!" "Don't touch the youth!"

After a three-week student strike, the youth returned to the classrooms November 18 when the government of Jacques Chirac in Paris backed down and promised added funding for Guyanese schools. The international big-business media has largely blacked out the events in Guyane.

Colombian natives score victory

After two years of protests by indigenous Colombians the government conceded to scale down its plans to build river dams that would have flooded 175,000 acres of rain forest and left 6,000 Indians homeless. Environmentalists say the Urra dams, as the project is known, would destroy the balance of the complex ecosystem in the region where the Embera tribe resides. The Colombian government launched the dam project to siphon energy from that country's rivers. Francisco Birry of the Organization of In-



"Guyane: L'Explosion" (Guyane: The Explosion) the headline read in the December Guyane pro-independence paper *Asé Pléré An Nou Lité*. A three-week student strike was joined by workers from the General Union of Guyanese Workers.

digenous Cultures said, "There was little or no study of the environmental impact."

Central Africa troops rebel again

French forces attacked a base held by rebel soldiers in Bangui, capital of the Central African Republic, on January 5. The soldiers, who are demanding the resignation of President Ange-Felix Patasse and an increase in pay, had held part of the city for six weeks. It is the third such rebellion in less than a year. The Associated Press reports that the week before the French assault, troops loyal to the government dispersed thousands of demonstrators by firing into the air.

The French Defense Ministry, which intervened twice before in 1996 to put down rebellions in the former French colony, said 10 rebel soldiers were killed, 30 were taken prisoner, and the city is now under government control. Residents in the area told the

BBC that many more people were killed, and that they have seen some of the rebels regrouping. Paris is sending hundreds more soldiers to supplement the 1,300 already based in the Central African Republic.

19 Tamil rebels killed in attack

Ending January 1, Sri Lankan troops armed with warplanes and artillery, waged a two-day assault on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, killing 19 rebels. In an attempt to clear rebel forces out of the east part of the country, troops seized a camp at Rukam, situated along a military supply route. The Tamil Tigers are fighting for self-determination. They represent an ethnic minority in the north and east regions of the island. The government places the number of casualties from this 14-year struggle at 50,000; the Tigers say it is much higher.

Turkish gov't attacks Kurds

Ankara unleashed an offensive against Kurdish rebels in Iraq on December 30, killing 101. The offensive followed a guerrilla attack on a military outpost in Turkey. No casualties were reported from the Turkish outpost. Jets, helicopter gunships, and ground troops went into Sinath, six miles inside Iraq and leveled three Kurdish bases. The Kurdish people have been fighting for independence for over a decade.

Hundreds die frozen in Europe

At least 228 people in Europe have died in an 11-day cold wave as of January 3. A Siberian cold front set into the continent December 24, causing Europe's deepest freeze in a decade. It is primarily claiming the lives of the homeless, elderly, and those with sub-

standard housing. Forecasters say there will be more bitter cold in this region the following week. Countries like France, England, and Spain, where people are dying mostly due to lack of shelter, are among the wealthiest developed nations in the world.

Court considers 'no knock' cop searches

The U.S. Supreme Court is considering granting cops the blanket power to conduct unannounced searches when the stated object of the search is illegal drugs. Less than two years ago the high court said cops are generally required to identify themselves before barging into homes to serve warrants, but said individual exceptions could be made. The court has now decided to review a Wisconsin Supreme Court decision that police "do not have to knock and announce" when serving a drug-related warrant.

F.A.A. cited for hiring too few air traffic controllers in New York

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) officials have failed to hire the 355 workers necessary to safely control the skies in New York. Instead union officials say workers are being increasingly overworked, causing a serious safety problem. FAA officials deny that safety is an issue. They will say however that they spend too much on overtime pay. Only 281 people work as controllers at present, 51 of whom are trainees. While the FAA says it will be able to meet the 355 employee goal by 1998, union officials contend that that is unlikely at the current pace.

The dramatic shortage is controllers comes from the hole created in 1981 when striking members of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization were fired on the orders of the Reagan administration. Workers were demanding better working conditions and higher pay.

Less access means less abortions

Federal health officials reported a 5 percent decrease in the number of legal abortions performed in 1994, the latest year for which figures are available. At 321 abortions for every 1,000 live births, the 1994 rate the lowest since 1976. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the number of abortions increased annually between 1972 and 1980, then remained basically unchanged for the next ten years, then "peaked in 1990." Since then there has been a steady decline. A Reuters article cites as its first reason "reduced access to abortion services," among other reasons given.

— BRIAN TAYLOR

THE MILITANT

Support Palestinian self-determination

The continued refusal of Tel Aviv to leave the West Bank city of Hebron highlights the nature of the colonial-settler state. The 'Militant' provides ongoing coverage of the fight for Palestinian self-determination. Don't miss a single issue!



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Editor: NAOMI CRAINE

Business Manager: MAURICE WILLIAMS

Editorial Staff: Megan Arney, Hilda Cuzco, Martin Koppel, Argiris Malapanis, Brian Taylor, and Maurice Williams.

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'Peace' accord is signed in Guatemala

BY FRANCISCO PICADO

NEW YORK — On December 29, in a ceremony attended by representatives of 40 countries and 10 heads of state, as well as thousands of Guatemalans, president Alvaro Arzú and commanders of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) signed the final agreement of the "Accord for a Firm and Lasting Peace," thus ending a process of negotiations that began in 1991.

In a country where capitalist rule has been enforced by one of the most brutal armies of Latin America, and after more than 100,000 killed, 40,000 "disappeared," and more than 200,000 orphaned, the agreement ends more than three decades of armed confrontation in Guatemala.

The settlement, made up of 11 accords, grants legal status to the URNG "in conditions of security and dignity," putting into effect the demobilization of thousands of URNG guerrillas.

The 45,000-strong Guatemalan army is now "redefined," with the option to have a civilian minister of defense as its head. The pact commits the government to reduce the size of the army by one-third by 1997. The military's budget is to be slashed by one-third by 1999. Leading up to the signing of the accord, Arzú dismissed 13 of the army's 23 generals, including some who were accused of human rights violations during the war.

The government is to create a 20,000-strong "National Civil Police" that is to assume the "civil duties" currently assigned to the army by 1999. It also pledges to increase spending on health and education by 50 percent by the year 2000, along with a 50 percent tax increase.

Opposition to blanket amnesty

The accord grants amnesty to those accused of political crimes. The section of the accords that deals with pardons is so broad that it would grant impunity to government soldiers for common crimes—such as kidnapping and murder—that were committed during the war.

The agreement stipulates the formation of a three-person "truth commission" to investigate human rights violations committed during the civil war. This panel will lack any legal authority, however, and is forbidden to name those who committed the offenses.

Although most people in Guatemala sup-

port the end of the armed conflict, there is broad opposition to the amnesty.

In a document called "We reject the amnesty," the Association of Relatives of the Disappeared Detainees in Guatemala (FAMDEGUA) stated, "As a human rights organization made up of families who felt and feel in our own flesh the murder, kidnapping, and disappearance of one of our own, we cannot, under any circumstance, accept the enactment of a new amnesty for those responsible directly and intellectually for the crimes committed during more than three decades of dirty war. The Guatemalan state does not have the right to pardon itself.

"The necessity of reaching a peace accord," the document continues, "couldn't allow the government to forgive and forget, and much less so us."

"Respect for human rights has to be the foundation of everything, and I don't see that has been achieved," said Rolando Rodas, an accountant whose brother was killed by pro-government forces.

At a protest of 75 people December 17 in Guatemala City, Miguel Angel Albizu, spokesperson of the Alliance Against Impunity, insisted "that no legal formula promoting further impunity can be allowed in Guatemala."

"If there are members of the army that committed violations of human rights, they must be punished," said Indian rights activist and Nobel Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú at Hostos Community College in New York during a recent visit here.

But not everyone shares this opinion. "This accord is making peace viable," said Guatemala's Chamber of Commerce president, Jorge Briz.

The agreement also promises to outlaw discrimination against the Indian population of Guatemala, pursuing constitutional recognition and protection of their nationalities. "Recognition of the identity and rights of the indigenous peoples is essential for building a nation based on multiethnic, multicultural, and multilingual national unity," the accords declare.

With some 60 percent of the Guatemalan population belonging to one of the 23 Mayan tribes in a country of 10.7 million, the Indian population is by far the most exploited and discriminated sector of society. Entire Indian villages were wiped out during the "scorched earth" operations of the Guatemalan army in the 1980s.



Protest by Alliance Against Impunity condemns amnesty for Guatemalan military

Life expectancy among Indian men is 47 years, compared to 64 for those of European and mixed ancestry. Illiteracy rates average 77 percent, running as high as 90 percent among Indian women, in comparison to a nationwide average of 50 percent. About one of every three Guatemalan children suffers malnutrition, but the average among Indians is three out of every four, according to a report by the Minority Rights Group International.

More political activity among Indians

But with the failure of the government to crush Guatemalan working people, there has been increased political activity among the Indian population in recent years. With questions like bilingual education, land rights, and constitutional recognition up for discussion, many Indians are taking advantage of the expanding political space.

Since the elections in November 1995, Indian candidates have won mayoral races in an estimated 40 urban areas, including Guatemala's second-largest city, along with 10 percent of congressional seats. Of the 40 newly elected Indian mayors, 21 were nominated through newly established local civil committees and ran without any ties to the national political parties. This was previously barred.

Pedro Iboy Chiro, a 30-year-old school teacher and the new mayor of Solola, a small town about 70 miles west of Guatemala City, talked about experiences reminiscent of the experiences of Blacks under Jim Crow segregation in the southern United States. "They tell me, 'be careful, don't go on the road at night.' I take precautions, but it is psychological war," he said in reference to the death threats, smear campaigns, and racial slurs that are painted on the walls.

There have been other struggles by workers and farmers in Guatemala as well. In the capital city a mid-December strike by transportation bosses, who were trying to increase basic fares, was met with outrage by workers, who burned some of the buses.

Last July 12 some 1,000 peasants occupied the Costa Rican embassy in the Guatemalan capital to press their demand for housing. They also demanded legal title to the land they had occupied on the cliffs overlooking the city. "We want the government to meet our demands because people are starving and freezing to death on the cliffs," said one of their spokesmen. "Where is the peace" that the government is talking about, he asked.

In April, the head of the Immediate Reaction Force of the Guatemalan National Police was killed in an ambush by peasants who were resisting government attempts to remove them from land they had taken.

In October the General Federation of Guatemalan Workers issued a statement protesting government moves to privatize social services and calling on Arzú to regulate prices on basic goods.

The roots of the war that the recent ac-

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Puerto Ricans protest U.S. military

BY RON RICHARDS

GUAYNABO, Puerto Rico — Several hundred people gathered here December 22 at the front gate of Fort Buchanan to protest the proposed expansion of the U.S. military presence in this colony. Fort Buchanan is the headquarters of the U.S. Army in Puerto Rico.

The Hostos National Congress, a coalition of groups and individuals who support independence for Puerto Rico, called the protest in response to two recent announcements. The first is that the Pentagon is considering transferring the U.S. Army

South — the army component of the U.S. Southern Command — from Panama to here. The second is that after a year of inaction the Navy is moving forward on plans to build a giant radar system in Puerto Rico. The rally also commemorated the 101st anniversary of the Puerto Rican flag.

After years of opposition to the U.S. military presence in their country, the people of Panama forced Washington to sign the Panama Canal Treaty, which requires that the U.S. bases in that country be closed by June 1997. The Southern Command, the high-level officers who plan U.S. military

interventions in Latin America, will be moving to Miami. There was competition between governments in Puerto Rico, Florida, and other areas over who could offer the Southern Command more concessions to influence the Pentagon's decision.

The current debate is over the location of the Army South, and the Pentagon is once again considering a number of sites in Puerto Rico and the southeastern United States.

The Relocatable Over-the-Horizon Radar is planned to track aircraft throughout the region. The military claims that its sole function will be to track drug smuggling ships and planes. The current proposal is to locate the radar transmitter on the island municipality of Vieques and the receiver on Puerto Rico in the town of Juana Díaz. Vieques, two-thirds of which is occupied by the U.S. Navy, is located off the east coast of Puerto Rico. Both sites are on existing U.S. military bases. A previous plan to put the receiver on farmland in Lajas was rejected after protests over the impact on agriculture and the environment.

Speakers at the December 22 rally also drew attention to the campaign both here and in the United States to free 15 Puerto Rican political prisoners held in U.S. jails.

The protesters ranged in age from university students to elderly and came from across Puerto Rico.

Roberto Rabin of the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques said that the next protest around the radar will be held January 12 in Vieques. The following day is a holiday in honor of Eugenio Maria de Hostos, a nineteenth-century fighter against Spanish colonialism.

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

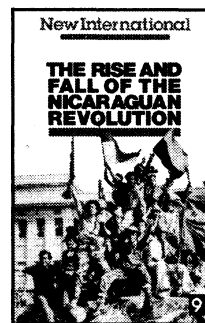


Members of Antifascist Youth group at rally outside military base in Guaynabo

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U.S. attack on Cuba

Continued from front page

demning the legislation. "It is particularly unacceptable that a third country would tell us how to conduct our trade," stated Jean-Pierre Leng of the EU at the time. Subsequently, the EU passed retaliatory measures against Washington, including countesuits in European courts against U.S. citizens taking legal action under Helms-Burton. The EU also filed a complaint against implementation of aspects of the U.S. legislation with the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The Canadian and Mexican parliaments passed their own legislation that will supposedly shield corporations in these countries from sanctions under Helms-Burton.

To defuse the outcry, Clinton announced July 16 a moratorium on filing lawsuits against companies in third countries, allowed under Title III of the "Cuban Liberty" act. The U.S. president also made it clear at the time Washington would not budge under pressure by its competitors. "I must do what I think is in the national interests of the United States and what is likely to bring democracy to Cuba," he said in a July interview.

A White House statement issued at the time exhorted U.S. allies, "Join us now in the effort to confine Cuban communism to the trash bin of history where it belongs. Join us in bringing the kind of pressure to bear on [Cuban president] Fidel Castro and on that system that will bring about market economics."

The Clinton administration then dispatched Eizenstat to Europe to push for a political campaign of condemnation of Havana, which in and of itself would discourage foreign investment and take the focus off the condemnation of Helms-Burton.

As soon as the European Union passed the December resolution Washington welcomed the move.

An editorial in the December 16 *Wall Street Journal* said the EU statement "takes some of the edge off of the EU's bitter dispute with the U.S. over the Helms-Burton act."

The editors of the financial daily described the move as a shift in favor of Washington. "To appreciate the shift here, you also have to consider the state of affairs a little over a year back," the editorial said. "Recall, for example, how during his first

visit to France Mr. Castro was greeted with trumpets and drums and feted at the Elysee in March 1995.... Then Spain assumed the EU's rotating presidency in July, amid a promise by then-Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez [of the Socialist Party] that 'strengthened relations' with Cuba would be high on the agenda."

Now the new conservative government of Spain has begun leading the chorus of political attacks on Havana, the *Journal* editors said.

When he made the January 3 announcement, Clinton indicated the waivers of Title III may continue under Washington's terms. "I would expect to continue suspending the right to file suit so long as America's friends and allies continue their stepped-up efforts to promote a transition to democracy," he stated.

Interimperialist rivalry lingers on

EU officials worked hard to give the impression that their December statement was not a concession to Washington. "It's an expression of EU policy," said a spokesman for Irish foreign minister and EU president Richard Spring. The resolution doesn't include any changes to that policy, he said.

Following Clinton's announcement of a second extension of the waiver on Title III, European Union representatives said they welcomed the decision but expressed their displeasure that Washington continues to hold the possibility of sanctions as a threat.

Hugo Paeman, EU ambassador in Washington, called Clinton's waiver "a step in the right direction." With the same breath, however, he expressed his dissatisfaction with the "extraterritorial reach of the law itself. We note that today's decision does not guard against a potential future application" of the measure.

Paeman also noted that a separate provision of the law, barring executives, shareholders, and principals with a controlling interest in companies that "traffic" in confiscated properties in Cuba from getting U.S. visas, remains in effect and applies to corporations in Europe and elsewhere. So far,



Militant/Brian Taylor

A panel of Cuban-Americans from the New York/New Jersey area held a press conference January 7 near the United Nations to condemn the Helms-Burton law. Spanish-language television broadcaster Telemundo and the *Jersey Journal* covered it. Later that day about 25 people held a picket line outside the United Nations, demanding an end to Washington's economic war on the Cuban people.

Washington has applied this provision twice. It has banned from the United States top officials and their family members from the Canadian-owned Sheritt International mining company and the Mexican telecommunications conglomerate Grupo Domos.

Eizenstat said the Clinton administration will continue to enforce this provision vigorously. The first week of January, Eizenstat stated, an Israeli company identified as BM Group, a sugar and citrus processor, was warned its executives may be sanctioned under this section of the Helms-Burton act. Another 12 companies are under investigation.

Eizenstat also said Washington has "rejected all the EU's claims" in the European Union WTO complaint. "We believe that this is not fundamentally a trade dispute," Eizenstat said. "It is a political and policy dispute and the WTO is an inappropriate vehicle." The U.S. government insists its legislation is consistent with the world trade organization's rules. The Clinton adminis-

tration spent a lot of time working on the language of the bill before its passage to make it extremely difficult for its competitors to make such a legal case stick.

The Canadian government was more blunt than EU officials about its disagreement with its neighbor to the south. Arthur Eggleton, Ottawa's international trade minister, accused Washington of "continuing to hold this sword over the heads of other countries," following Clinton's January 3 announcement.

"I think [Clinton's] decision is disappointing," Eggleton stated. "It continues to be unacceptable behavior by the United States in foisting its foreign policy onto Canada and other countries, threatening Canadian business, threatening anyone who wants to do legal business with Cuba."

In a report to a conference held in Sitges, Spain, in July 1996, president of *Cuba Business* Gareth Jenkins had already outlined how Washington would use the embargo-

Continued on Page 14

Strikes in Korea

Continued from front page

in south Korea. Also included in the laws are provisions that give extended powers to the secret police. These cops are particularly used against students and workers fighting for the reunification of Korea.

The bulk of those out in the second round — auto and shipbuilding workers — were joined January 7 by 3,000 nurses and other unionized workers in 24 hospitals and 7,500 broadcasting workers from four national broadcasting stations. In all, workers from 191 companies have joined the strike. Students have also joined in on the pro-union activities.

Upwards of 20,000 workers, students, and their supporters rallied in Seoul Park January 6, calling for the ouster of south Korean president Kim Young Sam and the repeal of the antilabor laws. The following day 5,000 nurses, doctors, and other professional workers held an action at that same park, while 15,000 striking workers and supporters rallied in the southern city of Ulsan.

Workers held a special "Day of solidarity with the people" January 8. Nurses gave free checkups and mechanics offered complimentary tune-ups, while appealing to others for solidarity.

Seoul says \$1.4 billion has been lost in production as a result of the strike, with export profits being cut by \$244 million. The regime continues to try to downplay the strike by claiming only 64,000 workers are out, less than a third the number the unions report.

An article in the January 7 *Financial Times* reported, "Employers are urging the government to take stern measures, including arresting union leaders and demanding compensation from unions for losses caused by strikes." On January 7, the government summoned 50 union leaders for questioning. Unionists said strikes would intensify if arrests took place. None have been arrested so far.

Belgrade concedes election result in Nis

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

In another effort to defuse the unyielding protests against Belgrade's anti-democratic measures, the Stalinist government of Slobodan Milosevic acknowledged on January 8 that the opposition coalition Zajedno (Together) had won municipal elections in Nis, Serbia's second largest city.

Opposition leaders, however, rejected ending their protests until Milosevic concedes throughout the republic. "The government is trying to work out a compromise, but that is unacceptable to us," said Aleksandar Krstic, an opposition leader in Nis. "This decision is a clear admission by the government that it carried out fraud during the vote in 13 voting stations. This is one small step forward in our drive to get the government to honor the election results in Nis and the rest of Serbia."

"On the basis of documents inspected by the Justice Ministry, the Zajedno political organization won 37 seats, the Socialist Party 32 and the Serbian Radical Party 1 seat in Nis local council," reported Tanjug, the state news agency.

Opposition leaders in Nis say the Socialist Party won only 16 seats with 41 for Zajedno, 1 for the rightist Serbian Radical Party, and 12 that remain in dispute.

"We will not negotiate about these elections," said Miroljub Labus, a Zajedno spokesperson. "The total electoral decision of the people must be accepted."

The Milosevic regime annulled results of the November 17 ballot, when Zajedno claimed it won majorities in 14 of the Yugoslav republics 19 largest cities, including Belgrade. A day later protests erupted demanding the reinstatement of the election results. Since November 18, demonstrations organized by Zajedno and separate marches by students at Belgrade University have brought tens of thousands to the streets of Belgrade and 30 other Serbian cities virtually on a daily basis.

Nis, where the opposition claimed that supporters of the ruling Socialist Party falsified the ballot tallies, was where the protests first erupted. Unemployment of 50 percent and high inflation has fueled anti-gov-

ernment sentiment in this industrial center and among workers in other cities. In Nis, Zajedno appears to enjoy support among the army and local police, making it harder for Belgrade to stick with its electoral fraud. According to reports in the big-business media, soldiers often applaud opposition demonstrators as they march by the barracks.

On December 25, Belgrade issued new restrictions on street demonstrations, saying police would not tolerate blocking of traffic in the capital and other cities. Thousands of police in riot gear have blocked access to the central square in downtown Belgrade and have often pushed demonstrators onto the sidewalks.

The government, however, has refrained from carrying out a head-on crackdown. Students and Zajedno have continued to or-

ganize marches and protest rallies, often finding creative ways to avoid police restrictions. On January 5, for example, tens of thousands paralyzed traffic in Belgrade through a snaking parade of cars. A few days later, thousands of police officers blocked opposition supporters from driving their cars into the center of the city and prevented 3,000 students from marching there. So the tug of war continues.

Meanwhile, Belgrade appears to be preparing to cede control of municipal councils without losing control of state-owned companies that are now under the direction of city halls. According to the *New York Times*, the Milosevic regime is taking steps to give the central government in Belgrade control of all decision-making in local print and broadcast companies.

Struggle in Guatemala

Continued from Page 3

cord formally ended go back to the 1954 coup organized by Washington against President Jacobo Arbenz. The Arbenz government had instituted a series of labor and agrarian reforms that included the expropriation of United Fruit and other foreign plantation owners. Washington backed a series of military regimes over the next three decades.

In June 1996 a White House panel was forced to admit a few details of the CIA's involvement in the widespread atrocities committed by the Guatemalan regime in more recent years. The panel's report stated that since 1984 "several CIA assets were credibly alleged" to have been involved in serious human rights violations, including "assassination, extrajudicial execution, torture, or kidnapping." The word "asset" is CIA lingo for agent.

The ongoing struggle against the Guatemalan regime got a big impetus in the 1980s from the revolutionary developments taking place throughout Central America, especially the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua. With the political retreat of the

Sandinista leadership and decline of the Nicaraguan revolution in the late 1980s, struggles in Guatemala and El Salvador also drew to a stalemate. Talks between the government and the URNG began in 1991.

Reflecting the weakening of the military, a 1993 coup attempt was turned back when thousands of trade unionists and others poured into the streets. The regime had been forced the year before to sign an agreement that paved the way for the return of 45,000 refugees who had lived for years in Mexico. They received a hero's welcome from a crowd of their compatriots at the border when they began their return in January 1993.

Washington, which bankrolled the regimes that ruled Guatemala for decades, has not been overly eager to jump into funding the terms of the accord. To carry out measures stipulated in the agreement, the Arzu government has said it needs \$2.3 billion in assistance over the next four years. In response the Clinton administration has pledged just \$40 million, less than half of the amount of "aid" Washington provided in 1991.

SELL THE BOOKS WORKERS OF THE WORLD NEED

Join the campaign to sell Pathfinder books and pamphlets

Collected works of Marx, Engels, Lenin are revolutionary weapons

Continued from front page for."

So far 33 sets of the collected works have been ordered—22 of the Marx and Engels and 11 of the Lenin—at the special discount price of \$399 for Marx and Engels and \$199 for Lenin. The regular prices are \$1100 and \$500 respectively. Thirteen customers have taken advantage of the layaway plan, which enables Readers Club members to reserve a set of the collected works with a down payment of 25 percent of the price with full payment due by March 31.

The majority of orders are from individuals who participated in setting up Pathfinder's new distribution center in New York over the past several weeks, indicating that there are still many more opportunities for sales around the world. So far, orders have come in from eight U.S. cities, as well as from the United Kingdom and Canada.

45 volumes of revolutionary weapons

The 45-volume collected works of Marx and Engels, or the similarly-sized collection of Lenin's writings, might seem a little in-

timidating at first. But each of the articles, letters, and speeches that are in these books were prepared by Marx, Engels, and Lenin for people just like many readers of the *Militant*—workers and young people disgusted by capitalism and ready to dedicate their lives to its overthrow and the construction of a socialist society. Many of the most important lessons of the last 150 years of working-class struggle can be found in their pages.

"On the History of the Communist League," for example, by Engels, is in volume 26 of the *Collected Works*. It describes the formation of the first organization of the modern communist movement on the eve of the revolutions of 1848. Engels explained how he first came to know and learn from revolutionary workers from across Europe who were living in London, including veterans of a workers uprising in Paris in 1839.

Heinrich Bauer, a shoemaker from Germany; Karl Schapper, a German compositor who had lived in Paris and was then trying to make a living as a language teacher; and Joseph Moll, a watchmaker from Cologne, made a particular impression on the young Engels. "They were the first revolutionary proletarians whom I had seen," he noted, recalling how Schapper and Moll would often "victoriously defend the entrance to a hall against hundreds of onrushing opponents."

Engels goes on to explain how he and Marx, who were just formulating a scientific explanation of the place of the working class in the fight for communism were able to hook up with these fighters, prepare the Communist Manifesto, and enter the battles around the bourgeois revolutions of 1848 as the conscious voice of the working-class vanguard.

An earlier piece in the same volume "Marx and the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* (1848-49)" is about the newspaper that Marx edited for almost a year at the height of the revolution



The articles and letters in each volume were written for working-class fighters. Above, a scene from 1848 revolution in France. At left, workers delegates debate politics in soviet, or workers council, in Russia, 1918.



means solemn," Engels adds. "We had altogether contemptible opponents and treated them, without exception, with the utmost scorn."

Another piece, again just in this one volume, includes Engels' preface to a pamphlet Marx wrote on protectionism and free trade.

Other smaller selections of writings by Marx, Engels, and Lenin are also available at a 50 percent discount. Readers who are not in a position to get the collected works may want to consider the 3-volume *Selected Works of Lenin* or the *Selected Correspondence of Marx and Engels*. Both contain writings by the revolutionary leaders on a wide range of topics.

Socialist workers and youth around the country can take advantage of the sale to organize classes on some of the writings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. Readers interested in participating in such discussions can contact the addresses listed on page 12.

Pathfinder sells well at rally in Puerto Rico

GUANYNABO, Puerto Rico — This supporter of the *Militant* and Pathfinder Press sold 10 copies of the Spanish-language magazine *Perspectiva Mundial* and 23 books and pamphlets at a December 22 rally to oppose the U.S. military presence here. (See article on page 3.)

The best-selling books were by and about Che Guevara. *Women's Evolution* by Evelyn Reed sold in both English and Spanish. Books about women's liberation are steady sellers in Puerto Rico because this type of information is not widely available here. Participants also bought several issues of the Spanish-language edition of *New Internationalist* magazine.

Other sales included Spanish-language editions of *In Defense of Marxism* by Leon Trotsky, *Maurice Bishop Speaks*, and *Understanding History* by George Novack.

— RON RICHARDS

in Germany. It emphasized "in every point the specific proletarian character which it could not yet inscribe once for all on its banner."

"We began on June 1, 1848, with very limited share capital, of which only a little had been paid up and the shareholders themselves were more than unreliable," he reports. In fact, the very first issue, "which mocked at the inanity of the Frankfurt parliament, the pointlessness of its long-winded speeches, the superfluidity of its cowardly resolutions," lost them half their shareholders.

"The tone of the newspaper was by no

To follow Cuban revolution, read 'Granma International'

BY SARA LOBMAN

One good way to follow the Cuban revolution is to subscribe to *Granma International*, the weekly international newspaper of the Cuban Communist Party.

Over the last few months, issues of the paper have printed the full text of resolutions, documents, and speeches discussed by millions of Cubans as they fight to revive the economy, defend the socialist revolution, and confront and overcome new problems that develop in the process — from inequalities resulting from legalization of the dollar to the reappearance of prostitution.

The Oct. 30, 1996, issue, for example, included the text of a document on "Party work in the current circumstances" that was discussed and debated in local units of the Communist Party and Union of Young Communists (UJC) at the end of 1995. Beginning with the failure in 1970 to harvest 10 million tons of sugar and the subsequent errors made in imitating the bureaucratic methods of planning and management of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the document evaluates the progress that has been made in "putting men and women back as the center of attention."

While the majority of Cubans do not see a return to capitalism as the solution to the country's problems, the document says, "significant numbers of persons doubt the efficiency of socialism" and social planning. Members of the party must lead the effort to explain that there is no "form of capitalism with a human face; capitalism with social justice; capitalism with advantages for all," it emphasizes.

Noting favorably the efforts of many in the Cuban community in the United States to normalize relations between the two countries, the document stresses that "there has been no variation in the objective of U.S. policy toward Cuba, which continues to be

the disappearance of the Cuban Revolution."

The discussions held by members of the Communist Party and UJC helped prepare a series of detailed discussions held in virtually every workplace in Cuba in the first half of this year. These culminated in the 17th Congress of the Central Organization of Cuban Workers. *Granma International* published the full text of the speech given by Cuban president Fidel Castro to the closing session of that meeting in April 1996, as well as the report presented a month earlier to a meeting of the national committee of the Cuban Communist Party by Raúl Castro on behalf of the party's Political Bureau.

Cuba defends its sovereignty

When the Cuban government shot down two pirate aircraft that had invaded Cuban territory from the United States in February 1996, *Granma International* published statements each week by Fidel Castro, Cuban Foreign Minister Roberto Robaina, and Ricardo Alarcón, president of Cuba's National Assembly, answering the imperialist propaganda campaign point for point.

The Cuban leaders explained the long history of violence against the Cuban revolution carried out by so-called civilian aircraft. "It was the government of the United States, from whose territory the aggressions originated," that had the power to prevent the violations of international law, Robaina explained in a presentation to the United Nations General Assembly published in the paper. *Granma International* also reprinted the full text of the comments made by U.S. ambassador Madeleine Albright to the United Nations.

Subscriptions to *Granma International* are available for US\$40 a year through Pathfinder, 410 West Street, New York, NY 10014, or at any Pathfinder bookstore listed on page 12.

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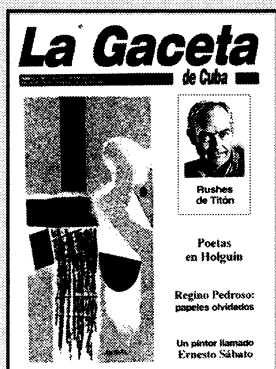
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Tonga journalists fight royal repression

BY TERRY COGGAN:

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — "There's a new wave of repression in Tonga that's trying to shut down all opposition," *Taimi 'o Tonga* (Times of Tonga) editor Kalafi Moala told a December 13 Militant Labor Forum here. The government claimed to be acting to uphold Tonga's cultural traditions, Moala said, "But there's just no way things are going to remain the same."

In September, Moala, along with fellow journalist Filokalafi 'Akau'ola and Pro-Democracy Movement member of parliament 'Akilisi Pohiva, was jailed for 30 days after *Taimi 'o Tonga* published an impeachment motion against a government minister that Pohiva was going to present in parliament.

The jailing drew widespread protests from international media organizations and civil rights groups. Amnesty International called the three men "prisoners of conscience." A court in Tonga ordered that the three be released before the completion of the sentence.

The case was part of a pattern of harassment directed against pro-democracy campaigners. Moala told the forum audience that he has himself been hauled before the courts three times in the past three months, on charges ranging from contempt of court to holding two passports.

"I didn't set out to be a pro-democracy activist," he said. "All I wanted to do was to start a newspaper. Until then, all media was controlled by the government or the church. After three months, our circulation had passed that of the government's newspaper. Since then, the government has been doing everything possible to shut us down. When you function as a normal newspaper, you can't help but be persecuted."

King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV rules over the Pacific Island nation's 104,000 people with near absolute power. Only nine of the 30-member parliament are popularly elected. The king and the holders of the country's 33 noble titles choose the rest among themselves. The king appoints the 12 cabinet ministers, all nobles, for life. He can dissolve parliament at will. In these circumstances, commented Moala, "It seems a joke for parliament to even conduct a vote."

Most of the nine "people's representatives" in parliament are aligned with the Pro-

Democracy Movement (PDM), founded in 1986 to press for political change. PDM has drafted a new constitution that calls for all members of parliament to be elected, and for an end to the political privileges of the king and the nobles. There is still discussion among pro-democracy campaigners about the future political role, if any, of the king.

PDM has wide support in Tonga, according to Moala. "Every village has an action committee or a movement contact," he told the forum.

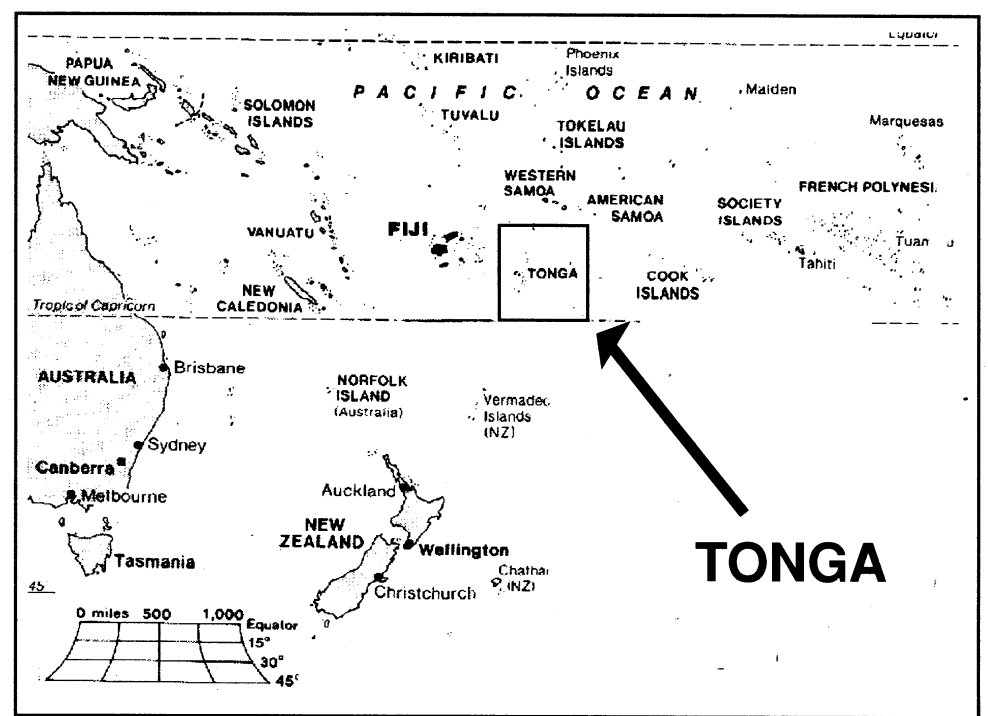
In an interview published in the November 6 *Taimi 'o Tonga*, PDM member of parliament Teisina Fuku said, "There will not be any progress economically, socially, or politically in this country until those in authority are elected by the people." Fuku has been charged with sedition and defamation.

An underdeveloped country

Like most small Pacific Island nations, Tonga is kept underdeveloped by the world imperialist system. There is little industry. A garment factory set up by New Zealand capitalists to take advantage of Tonga's low wages has closed. Until the 1960's or 70's, Moala explained, most Tongans were subsistence farmers on their own small plots of land, the distribution of which was controlled by the nobles.

Now most agricultural production is carried out for the market, by small farmers on their plots, or increasingly by larger producers who employ wage workers on farms of up to 100 or more, put together by leasing land from the nobles or other landowners.

The largest crop is squash, which earned T\$15 million (T\$1 = US\$0.80) on export markets in 1995. The industry is in difficulties this year as Tongan growers are being forced to accept lower prices, especially on the Japanese market. Tourism brought in T\$13 million in 1995, and fisheries exports T\$6-7 million, but by far the biggest contribution to the national income, amounting to about T\$50 million annually, comes from remittances from Tongans who have traveled overseas in search of work. The largest concentrations of Tongan immigrant workers are in Auckland and San Francisco. Moala told the forum audience that his family in Auckland regularly sends parcels of grocery items like tinned food, toilet paper,



and soap powder to relatives in Tonga.

In an article in the September/October issue of the Tongan publication *Kele'a*, 'Akilisi Pohiva asked "are these nobles carrying out their duties to the people? Are they living among the people in their estates or have the people been abandoned by some of the nobles and moved elsewhere to look for a living? Are they justly dividing the land among the people so that the people may find a living from the land, or are they using the land for themselves to seek their own individual wealth?"

Would-be capitalist entrepreneurs are generally supportive of democratic reforms, according to Moala, because of the stranglehold the king and the nobles maintain on business opportunities. "Several applications for duty-free licenses were recently turned down by the government," he said, "yet the government granted the King's daughter Princess Pilolevu the exclusive rights to import cigarettes, spirits, and other duty-free goods into the country." The Princess also holds 60 percent of Tongasat, a company that rents Tonga's orbital slots — its rights to satellite space — to international telecommunications companies. "Forbes magazine has put her personal wealth at \$25 million," said Moala, "half the government's annual budget!"

Government corruption has been a particular target of the pro-democracy forces. Moala cited the relatively huge expenditure on unnecessary foreign travel by government

ministers. The recent jailing of pro-democracy campaigners arose from their protests over one such junket.

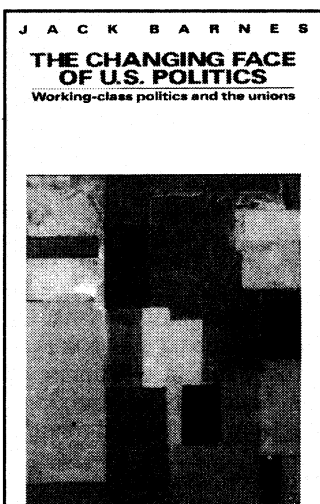
Role of imperialism

The imperialist rulers of Australia and New Zealand have long regarded the islands of the Pacific, including Tonga, as their special sphere of influence. Three-quarters of Tonga's foreign trade is with Australia and New Zealand. Tonga's dependence on Canberra and Wellington is perpetuated through "aid," which amounts to a quarter of the government's annual budget. The Australian and New Zealand rulers are above all concerned to preserve the stability of the region, and to ensure the conditions for future exploitation. King Tupou cannot count on their unconditional support. An editorial headed "Slow Burn in Tonga" in the October 3 big-business daily *New Zealand Herald* warned, "It may take longer in Tonga than elsewhere but it is only a matter of time before the system is challenged. The King has the power to allow how peaceful that progress will be."

A questioner at the Militant Labor Forum asked Moala if he thought the Tongan people were intimidated by the recent government repression. "I don't think so," he replied, "rather it has made them more angry."

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

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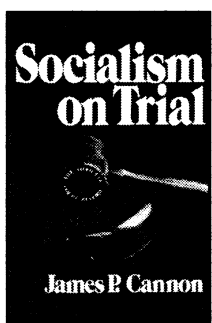
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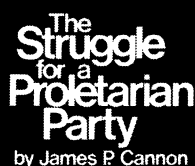
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Environmental agency files suit against U.S. meatpacker

BY CANDACE WAGNER

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) filed suit against Smithfield Foods, Inc. December 16 for up to \$125 million. The company is accused of dumping illegal levels of hog waste into the Pagan River from their Virginia plants. The Pagan river flows into the Chesapeake Bay, a major focus of area environmentalists.

The suit charges Smithfield with chronic violations of discharge limits for a number of pollutants, including fecal coliform, phosphorus, ammonia, cyanide, oil and grease. The company is accused of 5,000 "Clean Water Act" violations since 1991.

The suit is limited to five years, but pollution from the Smithfield plants was also blamed by EPA officials for the high levels of coliform in the Pagan river that led to a ban on shellfish harvesting in 1970.

The plants discharging the waste are Smithfield subsidiaries Smithfield Packing Company and Gwaltney of Smithfield, Ltd. Both operate hog slaughtering and processing plants in Smithfield, Virginia. The parent company is the largest East Coast pork processor with revenues of nearly \$4 billion per year.

Three days before the EPA suit was filed, the Virginia attorney general received a court order to force Smithfield to report wastewater spills and perform daily inspections of their waste-water containment facilities. These measures are already required by the

company's operating permit with the state Department of Environmental Quality.

This action was taken after an inspection of the company's plant December 11 revealed that a waste spill outside of the plant limits had occurred earlier in the day and had not been reported. During the inspection another spill occurred.

Smithfield is appealing the court order for daily inspections of its waste water treatment plant. The company claims that the December 11 spills were exaggerated and not serious since they did not reach state waters.

The EPA launched the federal suit after accusing Virginia governor George Allen of minimal enforcement of state and federal environmental laws, particularly against Smithfield.

The meatpacking company contributed \$125,000 to Governor Allen's 1995 effort to elect state legislators, making it the largest donor.

On December 9, a Virginia legislative audit was released that accused Allen of protecting corporate polluters and allowing the worsening of water quality in the state. The report specifically cited the lax enforcement of environmental laws against Smithfield Foods.

Candace Wagner is a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 27 at Smithfield Packing in Landover, Maryland.

Tel Aviv's stalling heightens tension

Continued from front page

ries." The *Economist* called on Arafat to "proclaim Palestine independent" noting that "outside opinion has shifted" his way.

The Clinton administration, which has tacitly backed Netanyahu's policies, publicly chided Tel Aviv for reviving subsidies and tax breaks for Israeli settlers in the West Bank. The White House has also been annoyed by Netanyahu's stance on Hebron, seeing the question as crucial to stability in the occupied territories. "We need to get the Hebron agreement over and behind us," Clinton stated December 17. He invited both Arafat and Netanyahu for a meeting in the White House in January.

Under pressure from Washington, Netanyahu has offered a few sops, including dates to release Palestinian women inmates and to begin discussions on a Palestinian airport, seaport, and a transit route between the West Bank and Gaza, Israeli media reported January 5. Another concession involved the Israeli military reopening the Islamic University in Hebron December 28, which had been closed for 10 months. Earlier in December 300 students occupied the university and won the reopening of a polytechnic college.

Under a 1993 agreement made in Oslo, Norway, the Israeli occupation forces were due to leave some 80 percent of Hebron last March, making it the eighth major West Bank city from which Tel Aviv would withdraw. The remaining troops would provide "security" for an enclave of about 450 Israeli settlers who live in the center of the city, which has 120,000 Palestinian residents. Some 30,000 Palestinians in Hebron would remain living under Israeli military occupation.

Palestinian leaders reached an "interim" accord in 1995. In it the previous Israeli government of Yitzhak Rabin was to release 30 Palestinian women prisoners and establish a "safe passage" corridor between the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinian officials are demanding a broader release of the 2,200 Palestinian inmates held in Israeli prisons.

Under the 1995 deal, Tel Aviv also agreed to begin moving occupying troops out of small West Bank towns and rural areas after the initial redeployment from large towns was complete. Currently, Palestinians control just 3 percent of West Bank territory and a little more than half of Gaza.

While the capitalist media has praised the former Rabin government for placing restrictions on expansion of settlements, their numbers actually rose from 100,000 in 1992 to today's 145,000 under a "freezing" settle-

ment policy of the Labor Party regime. Rabin, who was assassinated by a rightist in 1995, led Israel's armed forces in 1967 when it seized the West Bank and other territories from neighboring countries.

Zionists advance outrageous demands

In addition to balking on previous accords, Zionist demands are also a major obstacle to reaching any agreement with the Palestinian leadership. Tel Aviv has demanded the right of its troops to "hot pursuit" of Palestinians into any areas that are to be controlled by Palestinians. The regime is also calling for wider buffer zones between Palestinian areas and Israeli settlement compounds and restrictions on weapons for Palestinian police in some areas.

Right-wing opposition to the withdrawal from Hebron has led to a number of violent assaults, including when an Israeli soldier opened fire on a crowded Palestinian market January 1, wounding six Palestinians. The gunman, Noam Friedman, said he acted to derail the agreement on an Israeli troop pullout from Hebron.

Right after the attack, Palestinian youth set up barricades of rocks and burning tires and threw stones at Israeli army vehicles zooming through the streets. Israeli soldiers charged the market place in the first minutes after the shooting and beat about a dozen Palestinians, including a seven-year-old boy. The troops rushed in reinforcements while armored personnel carriers took up positions on a hill overlooking the settler enclave in Hebron. They placed a curfew on Palestinians in the city.

Israeli officials "have been arguing with us for four months over the security of the settlers," said Jibril Rajoub, head of the Palestinian security service in the West Bank. "Now it is clear who is in danger."

The soldier's attack was preceded December 28 by an armed march of Zionists in



Palestinians block Israeli settlers' bulldozer in Jordan Valley, West Bank, December 10. Over 100 protested Israel's land confiscations.

Hebron who were joined by 1,000 supporters. Earlier, on December 21, settlers attacked Palestinian schoolchildren in Hebron. Israeli troops, with their guns cocked, kicked and punched Palestinians trying to defend the children. In another incident two days later, Palestinians pelted Israeli troops with stones to defend themselves. Many of the settlers are reserve soldiers, including several who seized a West Bank hilltop January 3 and installed seven mobile homes on private land owned by Palestinians. They agreed to remove the mobile homes January 6 after meeting with Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai.

Unionists hold protest strike over cuts

Tensions are mounting inside Israel as well. The Histadrut labor federation organized a one-day general strike against cuts

in social services. The cuts will cost working people \$800-\$900 a year, according to Histadrut leader Amir Peretz. Some 250,000 workers stayed home December 30 to protest the austerity measures of Netanyahu's first budget. On December 20 Arab and Israeli demonstrators marched against plans to build a new settlement in the Arab district of East Jerusalem. The Jerusalem District Planning Commission had approved plans for 132 homes on a plot supposedly owned by a Miami businessman.

Meanwhile, as Netanyahu conducted negotiations for "peace" with Palestinians, Israeli warplanes bombed southern Lebanon January 5 after Hezbollah guerrillas wounded three Israeli soldiers in three days of battles. Hezbollah has been fighting to drive the Israeli military out of southern Lebanon, which it has occupied since 1985.

Activists protest cop harassment in Britain

BY DEBBIE DELANGE
AND AGGY PARTASIS

MANCHESTER — Defenders of democratic rights here have been waging a protest campaign to push back police harassment against a political and union activist, Paul Galloway. They scored a partial victory when police returned his impounded car, but he still faces an order to submit to the police.

On November 30 Galloway, a Commu-

nist League member and well-known union fighter, was stopped by police as he drove his car near his home, accompanied by his 12-year-old son Lee and his son's friend. The police examined the car and said they thought it was stolen. Galloway offered to show them the bill of sale, which proves he had bought it. This receipt also shows Galloway had made an extra payment at the time of purchase for the police to check all the vehicle documents. He was not allowed to get the receipt. Instead he was arrested and his car impounded.

At the police station, the cops grilled him about his job at Case-owned Fermec's plant, organized by the Amalgamated Engineering & Electrical Workers Union, which assembles mechanical diggers. There, the police said, he would have learned how to stamp chassis numbers and attach identification plates, and insinuated that he had illegally changed these on the car.

Galloway's son was taken by police to the home where his mother was visiting, less than ten minutes' drive away. The journey took an hour, during which the 12-year-old was interrogated on where his father got the car.

A flurry of phone calls by friends, who were alerted by his son, forced the cops to release Galloway in the early hours of the morning on unconditional police bail. (Unlike in the United States, this does not require the detainee to pay money.)

No charges were laid. Galloway was ordered to surrender to the police on January 22. His car was held, causing major inconvenience to his family and people Gallo-

way takes to work.

Concerned that the cops could try to frame-up or otherwise victimize the trade unionist, Galloway and supporters organized a protest campaign demanding the police release his car. Galloway was informed December 24 that bail was dropped and he could collect his car. It took a further three days to get the car released. He is still fighting to get written confirmation that bail will be dropped. Until that happens he is required to surrender himself to the police at 10:00 a.m. January 22.

As part of the protest campaign, Galloway spoke at a Militant Labor Forum December 20. "Its routine for cops to harass working people," he said. "At times they hot it up — like in a strike or when workers seek asylum in a new country." He described what had happened to him in this case.

Participants at the Manchester forum pointed to action of the British police in arresting and harassing hundreds of fighters for Irish unity in recent weeks both in Northern Ireland and Great Britain. Nationalist community leaders who recently toured Britain were detained returning to Belfast.

Forum participants were asked to protest the treatment of Galloway and call for his car to be returned. The first person who did was Tim Rigby, a chemical worker and member of the Transport and General Workers Union. Rigby got a notice at his home two days later from the same police station asking for details of a *traffic accident he knew nothing about*.

A number of trades union and campaign activists were contacted to join the protest. Among them, some members of Troops Out Movement, an organization campaigning for British withdrawal from Ireland, said they would phone the police in protest. At Galloway's workplace many workers expressed outrage and recounted their own experiences of police harassment.

Debbie Delange is a member of the Rail Maritime & Transport Union. Aggy Partasis works at Fermec and is a member of the Amalgamated Engineering & Electrical Workers Union.

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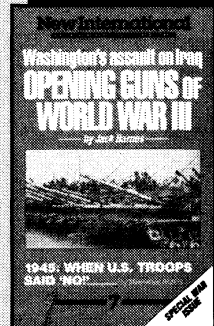


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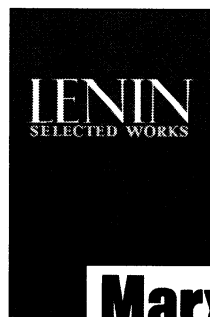
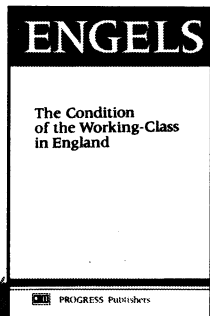
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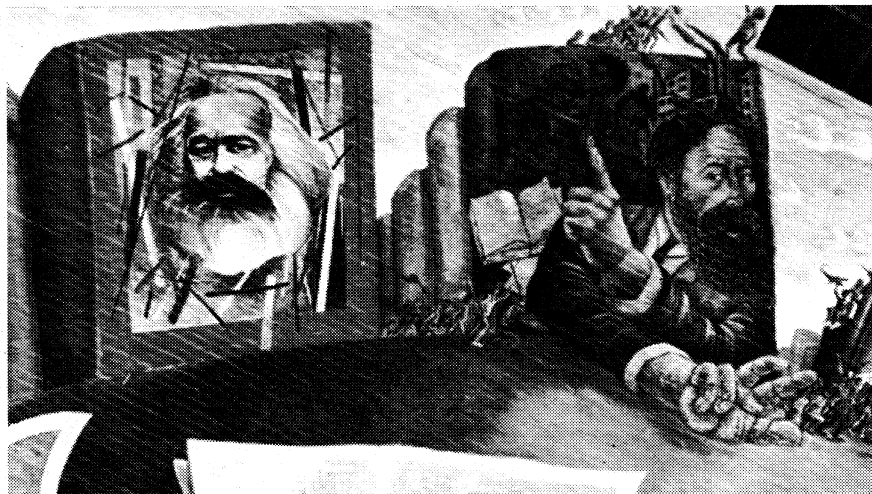
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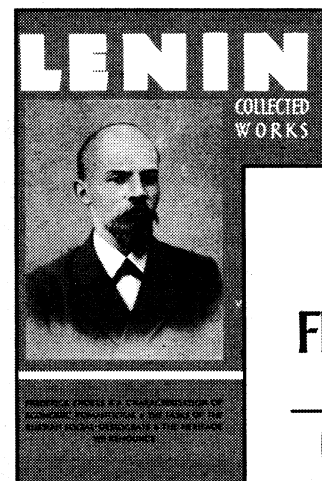
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Black farmers fight gov't discrimination

BY STU SINGER

WASHINGTON, DC — Fifty Black farmers and supporters from the National Black Farmers Association — coming from Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas — demonstrated in front of the White House December 12 to protest racist discrimination by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The discrimination has been going on for years and many cases are acknowledged in USDA reports showing unjust denials and stalling of loans to Black farmers.

The demonstration received quite a bit of coverage in the news media and an editorial in the *Washington Post* chided the USDA for giving Black farmers "the runaround and a hard time because of their race." U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Daniel Glickman met with some of the farmers a few hours after the demonstration and announced December 18 a temporary halt to foreclosure sales on delinquent farm loans.

In a December 30 interview with the *Militant*, National Black Farmers Association president John Boyd said that the halt in foreclosures is a first step but doesn't go far enough. "We want to go back to 1968. Everyone with complaints filed with the USDA since then should be compensated, not just those facing foreclosure right now. This moratorium is temporary and leaves out most farmers. If these cases are not settled in 90 days we'll be back to protest."

Boyd raises chickens on a farm in Baskerville in southeast Virginia. He says there have been numerous discrimination cases filed by Black farmers with the USDA since 1968, without a single case settled.

Since the demonstration outside the White House and the news media coverage of it, Boyd has received dozens of phone calls and visits from white farmers facing foreclosure and wanting to work with the Black farmers. A December 30 article in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reports that according to the Virginia office of the Farm Service Agency (FSA), 1,001 farm loans in Virginia are delinquent, 29 percent of its 3,444 loans. White farmers hold 87 percent of the delinquent loans and Black farmers 13 percent. Black farmers make up just 3 percent of all farmers in Virginia.

It's small farmers who face foreclosure

"The white farmers being foreclosed on are the small, disadvantaged farmers. I haven't talked to any, white or Black, with a thousand acres who's been foreclosed on," Boyd said.

The Department of Agriculture, which has 90,000 employees, has been hit by a number of suits charging widespread racial and sex discrimination within the department itself.

Farmers at the demonstration explained that they were repeatedly denied loans both by private banks and by the County boards of the USDA. For example, another Baskerville farmer, Willie Crute, had to wait one year for approval of a \$119,000 USDA loan, while equally qualified white farmers

got approval in two to three months. A USDA investigation determined that white farmers waited an average of 84 days for loan decisions while Black farmers had to wait an average of 222 days, and that 84 percent of white applicants' loans were approved compared to 56 percent of Black applicants.

Two other demonstrators, André Richardson from Windell, North Carolina, and Griffin Todd, Jr. from Zebulon, North Carolina, pointed out that few Black farmers they know actually own their land. They said that hard as it is to get crop loans, it is almost out of the question to get loans to purchase land. The land they farm is rented or leased. Government studies show that from 1982 to 1992 the number of Black farmers dropped by 43 percent from 33,250 to 18,816 — a rate about five times faster than the decline in numbers of farmers who are white.

Welchel Long, a demonstrator who came from Elbert County, Georgia, described some of the changes he's seen in his many decades of farming. "There are two Black farmers left in the county now. In 1952 there were 324, most of them sharecroppers."

Long, who taught agriculture in the local Black high school, tried to help sharecroppers buy their own land in the 1960s with the rise of the civil rights movement. But with almost no sources of credit from either local banks or the federal government, few sharecroppers were able to make the transition to becoming farmers. Long is the president of the NAACP in his county. In response to their protests over the years, "Washington has sent investigators, but all it did was put me on the shit list," he said.

Today he grows only vegetables, unable to get the loans necessary for equipment or to plant more profitable cash crops. Long participated in the demonstration along with his son Tim. Tim Long said that when he got out of high school he tried to get a loan to buy some land but was turned down while equally qualified whites were approved.

Long history of discrimination

Tim Pigford lost his 350-acre farm and his home in Riegelwood, North Carolina, last year in a foreclosure after the USDA denied him a loan. "That's why they call the Department of Agriculture the last plantation," he told the *Washington Post*.

Pigford told the *Militant* that he had been the head of the Black Students Association at the University of North Carolina in



Militant/Stu Singer

Picket protests discrimination by U.S. Department of Agriculture outside White House December 12. Blacks have been driven out of farming at five times the rate of whites.

Wilmington in 1968 and had been active in civil rights activity.

"We want the USDA to settle all the discrimination complaints in the farm program and employment," he said. "We never got the 40 acres and a mule" — the land reform proposed by some Radical Republicans after the Civil War to distribute some of the slave holders' land among the freed slaves. "The government never wanted Afro-Americans as land owners," Pigford explained.

Gary Grant and Doris Davis came to the demonstration from Tillery, North Carolina. Grant's family got land in Tillery in the 1940s through a New Deal program for landless rural people. A fact sheet distributed by Grant describes the discrimination against the Black families involved in what was called the Tillery Resettlement community from the very beginning. "African American farmers were given the opportunity to buy land in the flood plain of the Roanoke River, while whites had land made available to them out of the river's reach," it stated.

After 20 years of fighting foreclosure proceedings by the Farmer's Home Administration (FmHA), the home and farm of Gary Grant's brother Richard were auctioned off on the steps of the Halifax, North Carolina, courthouse.

Shirley Cofield, Lesie Joyner, and Lola Williams were also part of the demonstration. Cofield and Joyner, both from farm families, worked at the Purdue chicken processing plant in Lewiston, North Carolina and were both fired after contracting carpal tunnel syndrome. "Purdue preys on people

pushed off farms," Cofield explained.

She worked at Purdue 14 years and was making \$6.95 an hour when she was fired. She hasn't been able to find another job because of her injuries and has been denied unemployment pay.

The women have all been involved in trying to win recognition for the United Food and Commercial Workers union at the Purdue plant. The union has lost two representation elections so far but they hope to get another election soon.

Williams, who works with the Center for Women's Economic Alternatives in Ahoskie, North Carolina, explained that eastern North Carolina is one of the poorest regions in the country. She pointed out that the same FmHA that foreclosed on the Grant family farm had loaned Purdue \$4 million to open their plant.

Charles Wright, a retired railroad brakeman and United Transportation Union member who lives near Washington joined his brother Harold, a farmer from Bladensburg, North Carolina, at the demonstration. Harold grows tobacco, corn and soybeans on his farm near Wilmington.

Many of the loans the Black farmers had applied for that were denied or stalled were to set up the chicken growing operations to tie in with the expansion of poultry processing by Purdue and other companies.

For more information call John Boyd, president of the National Black Farmers Association at 804-447-7825.

Stu Singer is a brakeman on Conrail and a member of UTU Local 454.

Canadian Airline unions ratify cuts

BY KATY LEROUGETEL

MONTREAL — On Dec. 20, 1996, members of Canadian Airlines' three major unions completed their cross-country voting on concessions demanded by the company. Members of the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) approved the package by 81 percent, the International Association of Ma-

chinists (IAM) voted 88 percent in favor, and the flight attendants, members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, ratified the wage cuts proposal by 89 percent.

Under the agreement, workers earning less than \$25,000 a year will be exempted from the cuts. A graduated percentage will be slashed from wages, reaching a 5 percent maximum cut for CAW members. The wages will stay frozen until the year 2000.

The 3,900 CAW members held their vote under the cloud of the federal government's decision to force a vote over the heads of the union officials. While decrying the government's threat, CAW president Basil Hargrove refused to challenge the government move, saying to do so would open the way for more sweeping government legislation harmful to all unions.

Larry Johnston, a cleaner at Canadian Airlines and member of IAM Lodge 764, voted against the concessions. He told the *Militant*, "The majority voted yes because there was no alternative. People are dissatisfied with the offer despite the high vote."

The CAW officialdom's stance throughout negotiations was in the framework on how to "save" the airline industry. Speaking to a December 6-8 meeting of the national CAW Canada Council, Hargrove stated that he was trying to "find a solution that will end the predatory pricing in the airline industry. He added that union negotiators "won the support of the vast majority of CAW members for our union's refusal to cut wages one more time with no guarantees."

Part of the package Hargrove recommended to the membership includes guaranteed establishment of a committee made up of union, business, and government forces to study the airlines industry. The CAW has been campaigning for reinstating regulations that were phased out in the 1980s.

He pointed to the "valuable" assistance of British Columbia premier Glen Clark, of the New Democratic Party, in giving Canadian Airlines \$11 million. Robert Rae, a former NDP premiere in Ontario, also served as a legal representative for the IAM in negotiating the concessions deal.

Meanwhile, restructuring of regional airlines has provoked other conflicts in the industry recently. Two hundred Air BC flight attendants struck for three weeks in December. As she walked the picket line, Lesley Wasylyk said, "What's at issue is deteriorating working conditions for us.... I stood 100 percent with the Canadian Airline workers against the cuts. That's never the answer."

Nine hundred pilots are threatening to strike against four of Air Canada's regional carriers on January 10. Wages are a key issue in that dispute.

Air Canada's 3,500 ticket agents, members of the CAW, ratified a new contract in December. It calls for an 8 percent wage hike over the next two and a half years, the first wage increase for these workers since 1991.

Katy LeRougetel is a member of CAW Local 187 in St. Eustache.

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Railroad bosses to blame for fatal wreck

BY BARRY FATLAND

LOS ANGELES — The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) issued a report December 11 blaming the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), the railroad industry as a whole, and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad in particular, for the deadly Feb. 1, 1996, train crash in the Cajon Pass, an hour and a half east of here.

The February 1 crash resulted in the death of two union members, conductor Gilberto Ortiz, and brakeman Kevin Williams. The engineer, Lester Foster, was seriously injured before being rescued by residents in the area of the crash.

Forty-five of the 49 cars in the train derailed, with several of them exploding into flames. The resulting fire lasted for days and forced the closure of nearby Interstate 15 for 30 hours due to the smoke and toxic fumes from hazardous materials in several of the tank cars. Residents in the sparsely populated area were evacuated for days.

The NTSB report stated that the derailment occurred because the FRA and the railroads, including BNSF, had failed to require the use of a *functioning* two-way radio device on the rear of the train. This would have allowed the engineer to stop the train after its main braking system failed.

BNSF had installed two-way end-of-train devices (ETD) that were not completely compatible with the equipment in use at that time and frequently did not function because of this.

In 1989 the NTSB recommended to the FRA that it mandate the immediate installation of the end-of-train devices. The FRA failed to act.

In an NTSB accident report dated Dec. 14, 1994, regarding a similar accident in the same area, the NTSB again



Militant/Lisa Hickler

NTSB had to admit that the policies of the FRA and the BNSF were to blame for the California crash. Rail workers were pressured to work with defective equipment.

"...recommend(ed) the use of two-way end-of-train telemetry devices on all caboosless trains by March 31, 1996." That deadline was two months too late to prevent the February 1 fatal accident. Both the FRA and the NTSB placed the short-term profits of BNSF above the safety of the train crews and the public in general.

miles east of the pass. At the time of the crash, the big-business media implied that the crew members were at fault. They said that "no one pushed the button at the back of the train that activated the [two-way ETD] system before the train started down the hill."

In fact, the crew had made numerous at-

tempts to activate the ETD before leaving the Barstow yard. But until the February 6 FRA order requiring *functioning* ETD's, it was standard practice for those in charge of the Barstow yard to tell crews to "highball" — ignore — the malfunctioning ETD and move the train.

According to reports in the San Bernardino *Country Sun* at the time of the accident, the crew members tested the brake system three times before starting down the hill.

Rail bosses cry sabotage

The BNSF railroad's response to the February 1 accident was to immediately raise the specter of sabotage. Trying to place the blame on others, the company offered a reward for the capture of those responsible.

Within months, to give credence to its "sabotage" theory, it went to great lengths to build what railroaders call "Fort Summit" at the top of the Cajon Pass. High, prison-like fencing stretching for more than a mile, along with high-intensity lighting and twenty-four hour guards, are supposed to "protect" the trains waiting to descend the pass from alleged terrorists who might try to sabotage a train's braking system. Few railroad workers, however, believe the company's propaganda about sabotage.

Barry Fatland is a member of the UTU and works for the BNSF in Los Angeles.

New Zealand

Continued from Page 16

controversy with remarks targeting "wealthy Asians," attacking them as investors taking over the country and scapegoating Asian and other immigrants as the cause of the social crisis. Peters calls for cleaning up "crime" through tougher "law and order" policies and ending "welfare dependency."

In the recent election campaign Peters focused his fire against the National Party government and its leadership, proclaiming New Zealand First as the only party that could get rid of National. Following the election, as he sought to prepare his supporters for the coalition deal he was about to strike, Peters demagogically proclaimed that his campaign had succeeded in ousting the National government. Most commentators had expected Peters to go into coalition with the Labour Party, with Labour leader Helen Clark as prime minister.

The National Party treasurer, Michael Cox, resigned his post following the coalition deal, citing Peters's attacks on prominent business figures. "I have led fundraising teams that have collected several millions of dollars in donations from both individuals and corporates," he said. "Many of these entities have been abused and maligned, often behind the skirts of parliamentary privilege, by Mr. Winston Peters." Cox said he could not remain "and look these people in the eye."

At the center of Peters "antibusiness" image has been his campaign, beginning in the early 1990s, to uncover and scandalize alleged tax evasion by a number of prominent New Zealand companies, some state owned. These companies used tax haven deals channeled through the Cook Islands.

Documents presented by Peters in parliament in a winebox, forced the National government to set up a commission of inquiry in 1994, commonly referred to as the Winebox Inquiry. Its hearings are scheduled to conclude in the first half of 1997. Peters' campaign, and the subsequent Winebox hearings, have been a prominent feature of national politics. As part of his coalition deal with National, Peters has secured backing for the establishment of an "anticorruption commission" to further investigate companies, institutions, and government departments accused of corruption.

Michael Tucker is a member of the United Food, Beverage & General Workers Union in Auckland, New Zealand.

Farm workers call national action

BY NICK SANDS

SAN FRANCISCO — The United Farm Workers Union (UFW) has called a national march and rally for April 13 in support of strawberry pickers who are fighting to win union recognition and a contract. The UFW is urging trade unionists and other supporters from around the country to attend the event, which will be held in Watsonville, California, in the heart of this state's strawberry fields.

The UFW has also called a student conference for February 7-9. That meeting, which will be held at the union's headquarters in La Paz, California, will provide information on the union's history and its current effort to organize strawberry workers. It is projected as a launching pad for organizing student contingents for the April march and rally.

Thousands of strawberry pickers work from 10 to 12 hours a day during the six to eight month California growing sea-

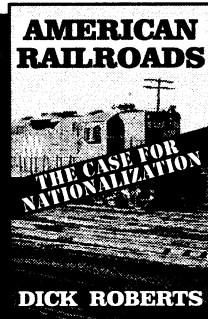
son. They mostly work stooped over to pick the berries that ripen close to the ground.

Some 270 growers own the strawberry farms in this region, which produce 70 percent of the strawberries grown in the United States. Just eight companies market the produce and they often dictate the conditions under which the berries will be raised, including providing financing for the growers.

The growers have formed a group of their own, dubbed the Strawberry Workers and Farmers Alliance, and hired a public relations firm to counter the union's organizing efforts.

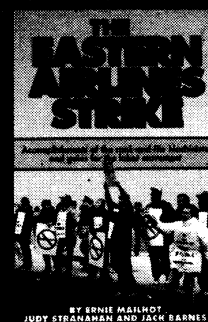
For more information on the coming march and rally and the student conference contact the United Farm Workers of America at P.O. Box 62 La Paz, Keene, CA 93531 or phone (408) 763-4820. The union can be faxed at (408) 7238-4590.

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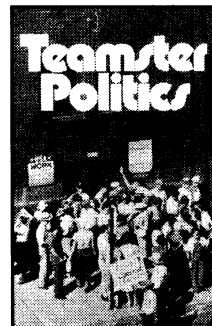
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Miami

Democratic Resistance in Yugoslavia Deepens. Fri., Jan. 17, 7:30 p.m. 137 N.E. 54th St. Donation: \$4. Translation into Spanish and French. Tel: (305) 756-1020.

MASSACHUSETTS

Boston

Safety vs. Profits: The Truth About the Crash of TWA Flight 800. Speaker: Nancy Rosenstock, Socialist Workers Party, TWA worker and member of International Association of Machinists Local 1056 at JFK Airport. Fri., Jan. 17, 7:30 p.m. 780 Tremont St. Donation: \$4. Tel: (617) 247-6772.

MINNESOTA

St. Paul

The Fight for Reproductive Rights — From Margaret Sanger to Today. Speakers: Ashley Sovern, education director, Midwest Health Center for Women; Ginny Oliphant, sexuality educator, Planned Parenthood; Becky Ellis, Socialist Workers Party; Amy Roberts, Young Socialists. Fri., Jan. 17, 7:30 p.m. 2490 University Ave. Donation: \$4. Tel: (612) 644-6325.

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General Strike in South Korea. Speaker: Nell Wheeler, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Jan. 17, 7:30 p.m. 87A Halsey St. (1 block west of Broad, 2 blocks north of Raymond). Donation: \$4. Tel: (201) 643-3341.

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The Fight for Women's Rights Today. Fri., Jan. 17, 7:30 p.m.
The Politics of Chicano Liberation. Speaker: Olga Rodríguez, editor of the Pathfinder book on the foundations of the movement for Chicano rights. Fri., Jan. 24, 7:30 p.m.
Both events held at 1906 South St. Donation: \$4. Tel: (215) 546-8218.

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Video Presentation of Land and Freedom. Fri., Jan. 17, 7:30 p.m. 209 East 300 South. Donation: \$4. Tel: (801) 355-1124.

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Solidarity with the Teamsters Strike against

Giant Foods. Fri., Jan. 17, 7:30 p.m. 1930 18th St. NW. (At 18th & Florida, entrance on Florida). Donation: \$4. Tel: (202) 387-2185.

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Crisis in Peru. Speaker: Beverly Bernardo, Communist League. Fri., Jan. 17, 7:30 p.m. 3967 Main St. (Between 23 and 24 Ave.) Donation: \$4. Tel: (604) 872-8343.

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The Upsurge in Yugoslavia: Behind the Protests in Belgrade. Speaker: Brendan Gleeson, Communist League. Fri., Jan. 17, 7 p.m. La Gonda Arcade, 203 Karangahape Road. Donation: \$3. Tel: (9) 379-3075.

Washington probes privatizing Social Security

Continued from front page

ment is the key to bolstering the return on workers' very substantial tax payments," declared panel member Carolyn Weaver, director of Social Security and pension studies at the American Enterprise Institute. Weaver said the "proposal could produce larger retirement incomes for workers" and retirees would get a higher rate of return than from U.S. treasury securities. Under current law Social Security assets not used for paying benefits are invested exclusively in government bonds.

While the big-business media has been promoting the privatization plan, they acknowledged that pouring retirement money into stocks could inflate a financial bubble, and leave many retirees facing financial ruin if the bubble bursts and the value of their investments drops. "The Social Security system — or its beneficiaries, depending on who bore the brunt of declining stock prices — would be worse off than ever," wrote Floyd Harris of the *New York Times*.

Politicians press bipartisan assault

Eager to press forward, Republican Rep. Gerald Solomon introduced legislation January 7 to allow the government to invest Social Security assets in the stock market. Sensing the powder keg involved in going directly after an entitlement that so many view as their basic right, the Clinton administration has been cautious in backing the advisory panel's recommendations. The president "is not wedded to any of the suggestions made by any of the separate groups of members of the council itself, but agrees that many of these ideas will have to be discussed further," stated White House press secretary Michael McCurry.

The bipartisan report, described by the *Times* as "a turning point in the history of Social Security," represents the U.S. rulers' furthest probe against these entitlements yet.

The Social Security Act of 1935 codified gains won from labor struggles in the 1930s. It was expanded through the civil rights battles in the 1950s and '60s. Some 44 million people currently receive monthly cash benefits, including 31 million retirees, 7 million survivors of beneficiaries, and 6 million disabled people.

The three top union officials participating on the advisory council are among a group that had initially proposed investing 40 percent of Social Security funds into private stocks. They retreated slightly in the final report, calling for a study of such a scheme instead. Gerald Shea, assistant to the president of the AFL-CIO; George Kourpias, president of the International Association of Machinists; Gloria Johnson, director of social action for the International Union of Electronic Workers; and three other council members are promoting the so-called "Maintain Benefits" options in the advisory council plan. This plan includes cutting benefits and diverting funds from Medicare to Social Security. Other recent government moves have already targeted Medicare for spending cuts.

The "Personal Security Accounts" scheme backed by Weaver and four others is the most direct in attempting to privatize Social Security. Under this variant each worker would be required to invest their Social Security taxes into a personal retirement account, tying a major portion of their income to the fluctuations of the stock and bond markets. Guaranteed benefits would drop to \$410 a month, below the poverty

line, and the retirement age would be increased from 65 to 67 in 2011.

The "Individual Accounts" option, supported by council chairman Edward Gramlich of the University of Michigan and one other panel member, imposes an additional 1.6 percent tax on workers' wages, establishes a mandatory savings account, and cuts benefits. It would also lift the retirement age to 67 in 2011.

The Senate Budget Committee scheduled a hearing January 29 on the three recommendations.

Other schemes to lower social wage

Sen. Patrick Moynihan, the top Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee, which has legislative authority over Social Security, pooh-poohed the panel's report. He is instead pressing Clinton to adopt a proposal for a cut in cost-of-living adjustments for Social Security, based on a December 4 report claiming the government overstated inflation by 1.1 percent for at least a decade. Doing so would not only lower Social Security payments but also affect — to the detriment of working people — a broad range of benefits and taxes that are pegged to the consumer price index.

As capitalist politicians debate schemes to lower the social wage of working people, federal Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI) benefits were cut off January 1 for recipients in California who are disabled by alcohol or drug addiction. The Social Security administration in California is sending out one million letters to legal immi-

grants informing them of a cutoff of their SSI benefits as well, under the "welfare reform" law Clinton signed last year.

Social Security administration spokesman Philip Gambino said the agency had beefed up security in its offices around the country, anticipating confrontations with those inquiring about their loss of benefits. "Some people will be quite upset about the possibility of losing their only income," he stated.

Meanwhile, Republican Newton Gingrich was narrowly reelected as Speaker of the House of Representatives January 7. Gingrich admitted December 21 that he provided misleading information to a congressional committee over the financing of a college course he taught to promote his right-wing views. He still faces a hearing on ethics charges. Several prominent Republicans had publicly called for him to step down prior to the vote, and 11 refused to vote for him, reflecting strains in the party. "Step aside, Newt," was the advice of conservative columnist William Safire.

Former vice presidential candidate Jack Kemp weighed in on the Speaker's side the morning of the vote, with a get-out-the-vote column in the *Wall Street Journal* praising Gingrich as "among the most honorable and conscientious men I have known."

Gingrich had been the foremost advocate of the Contract with America and the so-called Republican revolution that sought to push through broad assaults on social entitlements in 1995, many of which failed to gain majority support among the U.S. rulers at that time.

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A happy new year — “The Red Cross is to distribute food parcels in Britain for the first time in nearly 50 years. It says new government immigration controls have reduced



Harry Ring

refugees to the poverty levels of famine-stricken Third World countries.” — *The Times of London*.

Warms your heart — Western companies have contributed gener-

ous humanitarian aid to Bosnia — like, a batch of birth control pills with a 1986 expiration date, weight-loss pills from Britain, a U.S. mouthwash, and anti-leprosy pills from Norway. All, we assume, tax-deductible.

Pillgate? — At a Democratic fund-raiser last spring, Aiawah Qi, a \$12,500 donor, posed for a picture with the prez, holding a bottle of pills in her hand. But then it was reported that Qi, a bogus doctor, was peddling the pills (aspirins) as a \$160-cure for liver cancer and hepatitis. She paid New York City a \$1,000 fine. Meanwhile, the White House ordered the photographer to surrender the picture.

Dig this — In *Jerry Maguire*, Cuba Gooding plays a football pro who hungers to do a Reebok endorsement. Taken with the idea, the company says it invested \$1.5 million in a feel-good commercial for Gooding, who disses Reebok during the film but, at the end, wins the coveted prize. Sony's TriStar Pictures decided the ending didn't “fit creatively” and snipped it. Reebok is suing Sony for \$120 million.

You want to learn? We'll learn you — Some college students decide to switch majors. Others opt for a second major. Now, officials at public colleges in Texas want such “career” students to pay up to four times the current \$2,150 annual tu-

ition fee.

A deal — From the Hammacher Schlemmer catalog, an authentic 1986 London taxicab. Seats driver and up to six passengers. \$43,000 plus delivery. H&S's usual unconditional guarantee “does not apply.”

Speedup continues — Called the Hypoxic Room, it's a plastic chamber where the oxygen is reduced to 15 percent, about the same as if you were 9,000 feet above sea level. They say if you exercise in the thin air for 15 minutes, you get the equivalent of a 30-minute workout. \$32,000.

If it's 3 o'clock, this must be... — Reservations for next fall

still available. An around-the-world trip on a Concorde jet that cruises at twice the speed of sound. \$52,800 per person, double occupancy.

Cultural revolution — They're sleek and feature designer colors. Marketed by the Miele company in Germany, they're vacuum cleaners that sell for \$700 to \$1,000. “Our goal,” declares the U.S. distributor “is to redefine the way Americans think about vacuum cleaners.”

Bullets by Beefeater — As a fund-raiser, the City of London is considering having cops' uniforms and squad cars bear the logos of corporate sponsors. Discreetly placed, we're assured.

Lenin on the dictatorship of proletariat

Those who take advantage of Pathfinder's special sale on the *Collected Works* of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, and V.I. Lenin, and on other selected titles by the working-class leaders, will find a wealth of material that includes the basic programmatic conclusions of the communist movement.

In *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, written in 1918, Lenin explained the basic strategy of the Bolsheviks, the first party to lead the working class to seize and hold state power. The pamphlet was written in answer to Karl Kautsky's *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, which attacked the Soviet revolution. Kautsky was the foremost

BOOK OF THE WEEK

leader of the Social Democracy in Germany prior to World War I. With the outbreak of the imperialist war, he abandoned internationalism and was an opponent of the Russian revolution.

In his book Kautsky counterposed the “dictatorial methods” of the Bolsheviks with the “democratic” approach of the petty-bourgeois Menshevik and Social Revolutionary parties. The excerpt below is from the section of Lenin's pamphlet titled “Subservience to the bourgeoisie in the guise of ‘economic analysis.’” The entire pamphlet appears in Lenin's *Collected Works*, volume 28. Subheadings and footnotes are by the *Militant*.



BY V.I. LENIN

The question which Kautsky has so tangled up was fully explained by the Bolsheviks as far back as 1905. Yes, our revolution is a bourgeois revolution as long as we march with the peasants as a whole. This has been as clear as clear can be to us; we have said it hundreds and thousands of times since 1905, and we have never attempted to skip this necessary stage of the historical process or abolish it by decrees. Kautsky's efforts to “expose” us on this point merely expose his own confusion of mind and his fear to recall what he wrote in 1905, when he was not yet a renegade.

Beginning with April 1917, however, long before the October Revolution, that is, long before we assumed power, we publicly declared and explained to the people: the revolution cannot now stop at this stage, for the country has marched forward, capitalism has advanced, ruin has reached fantastic dimensions, which (whether one likes it or not) will demand steps forward, to socialism. For there is no other way of advancing, of saving the war-weary country and of alleviating the sufferings of the working and exploited people.

Things have turned out just as we said they would. The course taken by the revolution has confirmed the correctness of our reasoning. First, with the “whole” of the peasants against the monarchy, against the landowners, against medievalism (and to that extent the revolution remains bourgeois, bourgeois-democratic). Then, with the poor peasants, with the semi-proletarians, with all the exploited, against capitalism, including the rural rich, the kulaks [rich peasants], the profiteers, and to that extent the revolution becomes a socialist one. To attempt to raise an artificial Chinese Wall between the first and second, to separate them by anything else than the degree of preparedness of the proletariat and the degree of its unity with the poor peasants,

means to distort Marxism dreadfully, to vulgarise it, to substitute liberalism in its place. It means smuggling in a reactionary defence of the bourgeoisie against the socialist proletariat by means of quasi-scientific references to the progressive character of the bourgeoisie in comparison with medievalism.

Soviets are ‘higher form of democracy’

Incidentally, the Soviets represent an immensely higher form and type of democracy just because, by uniting and drawing the mass of workers and peasants into political life, they serve as a most sensitive barometer, the one closest to the “people” (in the sense in which Marx, in 1871, spoke of a real people's revolution), of the growth and development of the political, class maturity of the people....

At first, the Soviets embraced the peasants as a whole. It was owing to the immaturity, the backwardness, the ignorance of the poor peasants that the leadership passed into the hands of the kulaks, the rich, the capitalists and the petty-bourgeois intellectuals. That was the period of the domination of the petty bourgeoisie, of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries (only fools or renegades like Kautsky can regard either of these as socialists). The petty bourgeoisie inevitably and unavoidably vacillated between the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie (Kerensky, Kornilov, Savinkov) and the dictatorship of the proletariat; for owing to the basic features of its economic position, the petty bourgeoisie is incapable of doing anything independently. Kautsky, by the way, completely renounces Marxism by confining himself in his analysis of the Russian revolution to the legal and formal concept of “democracy”, which serves the bourgeoisie as a screen to conceal their domination and as a means of deceiving the people, and by forgetting that in practice “democracy” sometimes stands for the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, sometimes for the impotent reformism of the petty bourgeoisie who submit to that dictatorship, and so on....

The vacillations of the petty bourgeoisie, of the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries, helped to enlighten the people and to repel the overwhelming majority of them, all the “lower sections”, all the proletarians and semi-proletarians, from such “leaders”. The Bolsheviks won predominance in the Soviets (in Petrograd and Moscow by October 1917); the split among the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks became more pronounced.

The victorious Bolshevik revolution meant the end of vacillation, meant the complete destruction of the monarchy and of the landlord system (which had not been destroyed before the October Revolution). We carried the bourgeois revolution to its conclusion. The peasants supported us as a whole. Their antagonism to the socialist proletariat could not reveal itself all at once. The Soviets united the peasants in general. The class divisions among the peasants had not yet matured, had not yet come into the open.

That process took place in the summer and autumn of 1918. The Czech counter-revolutionary mutiny roused the kulaks.² A wave of kulak revolts swept over Russia. The poor peasants learned, not from books or newspapers, but from life itself, that their interests were irreconcilably antagonistic to those of the kulaks, the rich, the rural bour-

geoisie. Like every other petty-bourgeois party, the “Left Socialist-Revolutionaries” reflected the vacillation of the people, and in the summer of 1918 they split: one section joined forces with the Czechs... while the other section, ... remained with the Bolsheviks.

The growing food shortage in the towns lent increasing urgency to the question of the grain monopoly (this Kautsky the theoretician completely “forgot” in his economic analysis...).

The old landowner and bourgeois, and even democratic-republican, state had sent to the rural districts armed detachments which were practically at the beck and call of the bourgeoisie. Mr. Kautsky does not know this! He does not regard that as the “dictatorship of the bourgeoisie” — Heaven forbid! That is “pure democracy”, especially if endorsed by a bourgeois parliament!....

The whole point is that a bourgeois state which is exercising the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie through a democratic republic cannot confess to the people that it is serving the bourgeoisie; it cannot tell the truth, and has to play the hypocrite.

But the state of the Paris Commune type, the Soviet state, openly and frankly tells the people the truth and declares that it is the dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasants; and by this truth it wins over scores and scores of millions of new citizens who are kept down in any democratic republic, but who are drawn by the Soviets into political life, into democracy, into the administration of the state. The Soviet Republic sends into the rural districts detachments of armed workers, primarily the more advanced, from the capitals. These workers carry socialism into the countryside, win



Factory workers voting on resolution in Russia during early years of revolution.

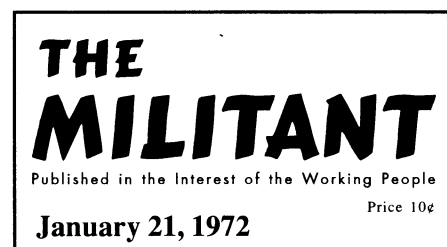
over the poor, organise and enlighten them, and help them to suppress the resistance of the bourgeoisie.

Notes

1. Alexander Kerensky was a leader of the Social Revolutionary party who played a central role in the bourgeois governments between the February and October revolutions in Russia in 1917. Lavr Kornilov was a czarist general who led counterrevolutionary forces before and after the Bolshevik revolution. Boris Savinkov was a government official under Kerensky who also led counterrevolutionary forces after the revolution.

2. The Czech Legion of the former czarist army launched a revolt against the Soviet government in May 1918, which was turned back by September of that year.

—25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



JANUARY 12 — The revolutionary offensive on major fronts throughout Indochina once again testifies to the indomitable strength of the liberation struggle in Southeast Asia despite eight years of Washington's murderous counterrevolutionary warfare.

There is still no piece of land on the war-ravaged subcontinent that the imperialist-backed forces hold with certainty. Not only do the revolutionaries control most of Laos and Cambodia but Washington is worried that they may be planning a significant offensive in South Vietnam itself.

An unusual glimpse of the results of U.S. bombardment in Laos was provided by Southeast Asia expert T. D. Allman in the *British Manchester Guardian Weekly*, January 1. Allman had been permitted to fly over the Plaine des Jarres just before the new revolutionary offensive.

“Until recently the area provided a living for a population of more than 20,000,” Allman wrote. “Now it is empty and ravaged, a striking example of what less than three years of intensive U.S. bombing can

do to a rural area.”



January 25, 1947

Faced with rapidly spreading sympathy strikes in support of the demands of 15,000 London truck drivers, the British Government agreed to set up a Joint Industrial Council, charged with bringing in recommendations on the workers' grievances. On this basis the strikers agreed to go back to work until January 26, and the government withdrew its strike-breaking troops.

The truck drivers went out on strike despite orders of union heads to stay on the job. The men decided that only strike action could bring an end to the delay of the Government Wage Board in setting the contract negotiated last May. With wages about \$20 a week, the truck drivers demanded they be paid for over-time in cash instead of in time off. They insisted on legal holidays and two-weeks vacation with pay, and a 44-hour week.

The government mobilized crack regiments to smash the strike. This brazen action so incensed British workers that within a few days more than 50,000 dock workers, bargemen, food warehouse workers and others joined the picket line. Strikes and stoppages occurred in 15 other cities.

Labor's stake in Social Security

The fight to maintain and extend social entitlements is a burning question for the labor movement. A recent article in the *New York Times* asserted that "unless the economic pie grows far more rapidly than predicted," Social Security benefits will only be possible by "transfer[ring] trillions in income throughout the 21st century from the young to those who will be old." This is a classic example of the way bourgeois propaganda is used to sow divisions among working people.

The "big baby boom generation" is owed several trillion more than the next generation is obliged to pay in Social Security taxes, the big-business politicians and bourgeois economists cry. So something must be done, like privatizing the system, raising the retirement age, cutting cost-of-living raises, and increasing Social Security taxes. Their proposals are really probes to grind down workers' expectations of the right to a decent living after decades of toiling for a wage. Why don't Clinton and Congress cut interest payments to government bondholders to balance their budget, instead of slashing labor's flimsy safety net, workers can ask.

Working people shouldn't buy any of the bosses' schemes, which only break down human solidarity. For the wealthy class, workers who are elderly, disabled, or too young to labor are useless animals. When the capitalists rulers set the age requirements to draw Social Security benefits in the 1930s, they thought most workers would die before reaching the age of 65. Now their spokespeople are proposing to raise the age of eligibility to 67, since many more working people live a decade or more beyond retirement. Only a society run entirely in the interests of a tiny minority could call that a problem!

As their system continues its decay and their profits sink, the capitalists are driven to squeeze more and more out of workers — in the United States and every other capitalist nation. The new coalition government in New Zealand, for instance, is pushing to impose an additional 8 percent tax on workers' wages for a "compulsory savings" scheme that would replace the current retirement pension program. This comes on top of already deep attacks on workers' living standards and rights.

Workers and farmers produce all wealth in society, but under capitalism have no voice on how it is distributed. The portion of wealth called Social Security is part of the social wage won by the working class through decades of struggles. The bosses seek to put a greater share of this wealth into their pockets and eliminate any conception of social entitlements for working people.

The bosses know as they push us to the wall, social conditions become more volatile. So they step up their ideological campaigns to justify these attacks and attempt to confuse, demoralize, and isolate workers and youth who begin to resist. The employers also beef up their repressive apparatus to intimidate fighters. In New Zealand, the government granted cops more powers to spy on "criminals and gangs." The U.S. Social Security administration announced it was increasing the number of security guards at its offices across the country as the agency begins eliminating benefits — for 1 million legal immigrants and tens of thousands of disabled recipients in California alone.

The working class must resist the employers' offensive on our dignity and our moral right to these social entitlements. That's why it's important for the labor movement to fight to defend Social Security — not sit on government panels to dismantle it, as several union tops are doing today.

The capitalist rulers have no way out of their social crises and economic depressions short of a massive onslaught to lower the value of our labor power, in the process paving the way to armed conflicts to redivide the world among themselves. The defensive battles of the working class to defend itself against these assaults will lead to a struggle to replace the political rule of the capitalists with a workers and farmers government.

No justice, no peace in the Middle East

The stalling tactics of the Netanyahu government in Israel, and Washington's continued backing of the Zionist regime, will not stop Palestinian resistance to the Israeli occupation force. Nor will the Palestinian people stop struggling until they have won their battle for land and self-determination. When the rightist Israeli soldier opened fire on Palestinians in a crowded market in Hebron, scores of Palestinian youth mobilized to defend themselves against Tel Aviv's military. This action at the barricades was a smaller version of last September's gun battles between Palestinian security forces and the Israeli army of occupation.

The provocations by Israeli settlers and acts of violence by "extremists," supposedly with mental problems, are a direct result of the expansionist policies of the current government, as well as the previous Labor Party regimes. Netanyahu is following his predecessors, Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin, albeit in a more in-your-face fashion.

In fact, Rabin the "peacemaker" participated in driving 50,000 Palestinians out of their homes at gunpoint during the Zionist army's 1948 war of conquest against Palestine. As Israel's army chief of staff, he led the 1967 war against Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, and Syria, which seized the Golan Heights, the West Bank, Gaza, and a large part of the Sinai Peninsula.

Israel, set up by London and Washington as a colonial-settler state to police and subjugate the toilers in the Middle East, will continue to confront rising resistance from Palestinians fighting occupation and Hezbollah guerrillas fighting to push the Israeli military out of southern Lebanon. Hallelujah! As the polarization deepens inside Israel, the rulers have, and will face more actions involving Israeli and Arab workers protesting against austerity measures and expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.

There will be no peace in the Mideast until the Zionist army is withdrawn from all the occupied territories and Palestinians win self-determination. Working people around the world should demand Tel Aviv remove its military forces from the West Bank, Gaza, the Golan Heights, and southern Lebanon. We should also protest the bombing of Lebanon and demand Washington end all aid to the Israeli regime now.

Washington pushes its economic war against Cuba and trade offensive on allies

Continued from Page 4

tightening legislation to accomplish its objectives. *Cuba Business* is a monthly published in London that focuses on reporting foreign investment and other economic developments in Cuba.

"The sponsors of H-B [Helms-Burton law] have been candid about their objective," Jenkins said. "They aim to overthrow the government of Fidel Castro first by economic means, and should that not succeed, through military invasion. In the process they are prepared to trample on the legitimate interests of non US companies and governments in Cuba, not to mention those of Cuban citizens themselves."

He continued, "The vague and confusing nature of H-B is not an obstacle to this objective. In fact this contributes to its effectiveness through creating a climate of uncertainty which is causing companies to think twice before doing business in Cuba. President Clinton's postponement of the right to file suits under Title III perhaps even enhances this uncertainty.... The Cuban government is probably not exaggerating when it describes H-B as annexationist."

In his report Jenkins documented how foreign investment in Cuba had already become more costly last summer as a result of the threatened sanctions under the U.S. law. Companies that invest in Cuba, for example, usually buy insurance to protect their capital from possible nationalization. Lloyds of London, which provides such insurance, is now requesting that investments in the Caribbean island do not involve "trafficking in stolen property."

"Since even with full due diligence it appears impossible for most companies to know with complete certainty whether they are in breach," Jenkins said, "this effectively throws the political risk associated with H-B onto the investor."

Adverse impact on Cuban economy

Media reports said earlier that two large banks — the Dutch bank ING and Spain's Banco Bilbao Vizcaya — have discontinued contracts to finance credits for the sugar cane harvest in five Cuban provinces. In addition, two European companies that sell Cuban sugar stopped doing business with Havana.

Sugar is Cuba's top export crop and one of the country's main sources of hard currency, which is now badly needed for imports since the Caribbean nation lost trade in favorable terms with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Nelson Torres, the Cuban sugar minister, said in December that these financial institutions have not backed out, they have simply restructured their loans to circumvent Helms-Burton. Torres said that his government had secured loans needed to buy 1997 harvest imports, like fertilizer, of about \$300 million, the same as in 1996 and \$30 million short of this year's goal. Torres also indicated that the Helms-Burton law meant some new lenders had to be found, causing delays in some imported supplies.

An article in the December 19 *Miami Herald* states that as a result Havana has to pay higher interest rates, which now reach up to 20 percent.

Next year will be "complex and tough," Carlos Lage, vice president of Cuba's Council of Ministers, told a meeting of Cuban enterprise directors in mid-December. "This is going to create very large tensions for us from the first days of the year."

Presenting the 1997 budget and economic plan to Cuba's National Assembly at the end of December, Minister of the Economy José Luis Rodríguez, said the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew 7.8 percent in 1996. This builds on previous GDP increases of 0.7 percent in 1994 and 2.7 percent in 1995. Nickel exports hit a record 55,000 tons in 1996 and costs of sugar cane production are expected to be lower this year.

Rodríguez stated at the same time that this growth rate is expected to slow down this year,

because of pressures from international financial institutions. He put the GDP growth forecast for 1997 at 4-5 percent.

The gyrations of the capitalist market adversely affect the Cuban economy, Rodríguez pointed out. Although Cuba's exports grew by 33 percent in 1996, he said, imports increased by the same amount, more than double the forecast and further widening the country's trade deficit estimated \$1.2 billion in 1995.

World market prices for sugar and nickel, Cuba's main exports, are lower than last year. Sugar's drop from roughly 12 cents per pound during the 1996 harvest to less than 11 cents today may wipe out the effect of any increase in the sugar harvest this year. Cuban government officials say the goal for the 1997 harvest is slightly higher than the 4.45 million tons reached last year.

Oil prices in the world market also rose from about \$17 per barrel in November 1995 to about \$23 a year later. Cuba imports most of its fuel at an annual cost now estimated at \$1.12 billion.

Rodríguez said such rising prices in the world capitalist market already added an extra \$226 million to Cuba's oil and food import bill last year. The country's foreign debt in the meantime has grown from \$9.7 billion in 1994 to \$11 billion in mid-1996.

Response of Cuban government

The solution to Cuba's financial problems, Lage said in December, "must be found within our economy, not in one shot or in one year. We must... create conditions to begin progressively diminishing it."

In 1996, a major mobilization by broad sections of the Cuban working class succeeded in reversing the decline in the country's sugar harvest, leading to an increase of 30 percent over the previous year. This change in direction, which was extensively discussed at the 17th congress of the Central Organization of Cuban Workers (CTC) last spring, also registered forward motion in the morale and management role of hundreds of thousands of Cuban workers and farmers.

The leadership of the Cuban Communist Party and the government are working to build on that accomplishment within the adverse international conditions expected for this year.

The Cuban government also launched a political counterattack against the Helms-Burton legislation. The December meeting of the National Assembly adopted the Law of Reaffirmation of Cuban Dignity and Sovereignty.

The government was given broad mandates, including the transfer of interests and investment funds, in an effort to shield foreign investors from threatened sanctions under U.S. legislation by restructuring operations.

The Cuban law also declared "null and void" any claims made under Helms-Burton. It also declared the right of the Cuban government and the country's citizens to claim compensation for damages caused by the 37-year-old U.S. policy of a trade and economic embargo.

The Cuban government estimates that the Washington's economic war has cost the country damages of some \$40 billion. Potential claimants include victims of acts of violence and sabotage in Cuba carried out by counter-revolutionaries and orchestrated by Washington.

Such claims for compensation could be made to special commissions that will be created by Cuba's Justice Ministry.

Cubans will also be able to present claims for damage and losses, according to the draft text of the document, "caused by thieves, swindlers, corrupt politicians, mafiosi, torturers and killers of the Batista tyranny [overthrown in 1959], for whose actions the U.S. government has made itself responsible by promulgating the Helms-Burton law."

Steelworkers in Canada fight attacks on union

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

"If you accept this there won't be a next contract because there won't be a union," said Paul Cooper, a striker who has worked at Armstrong for 18 years. Many of the strikers at Armstrong

1995.

At their morning pickets the workers explained they were demanding that their employer, the Crown Health Enterprise (CHE) known as Canterbury Health, enter negotiations over their contract. They have rejected a contract modeled on the one that covers those laboratory staff members who have resigned from the union in the last couple of years — roughly half of the workforce.

Strikers say the contract would particularly affect the shift workers in the department, which operates around the clock. Rosie Hawes told the *Militant* that "they want to call us in whenever they like." Another striker, David Wisternoff, said that the proposed contract states that "the final decision on hours of work will be management's."

Part of the backdrop to the strike is a series of major changes in the public health system that has occurred over the last eight years. The CHEs and their funding body, the Regional Health Authority (RHA) have been expected to operate under a "profit motive."

One side of these and other "reforms" is an escalation of waiting lists for operations. The other side is a series of tussles over staff conditions. In 1996 cleaning and catering work at major hospitals in Christchurch was contracted out in spite of picket lines mounted by cleaners. The pickets said that there is widespread support for their case in the transfusion center. "We are a representative group, but others will be affected" said one young striker, Lia Kubala.

Hexcel strikers 'won't go back unless we all do'

WEST VALLEY CITY, UTAH — In mid-December, by a vote of 86 to 7, striking members of Oil, Chemical, and Atomic



Militant/John Steele

Mass picket to stop scabs at S.A. Armstrong in Toronto on October 8, 1996.

Workers Union (OCAW) Local 2-591 voted to continue their strike against Hexcel Corp. The 93 percent "no" vote was motivated by the company's proposal that five strikers not return to work. Becky Mower, a striker with 13 years' seniority at the plant said, "The company says the five participated in picket line misconduct, but they only tell part of the story."

The company hired goons from out of state shortly before the strike began November 2. Among other things, they have video-taped the picket lines. Early in the strike, before a judge ruled against more than five pickets per gate, there were some altercations between scabs and strikers.

John Harvey, a striker with 16 years' seniority, told the story of Gavino Agauyo, one of the five on the company's list not to return to work. Harvey explained, "Gavino, a very calm, soft-spoken kind of person, was walking the line, when he was hit by a scab's car coming into the plant. In response, Gavino hit the car with his picket sign."

"The company held hearings explaining why the five, including Gavino, were fired," Harvey continued. "They showed video tapes of the incidences. The tape concerning Gavino just showed him hitting the scab's car with the picket sign, but excluded what happened seconds beforehand — the scab's car hitting Gavino. All the cases were

like this — editing of the tapes by the company."

The rejected company proposal included a \$1.75 raise over the company's original proposal. However, this would still amount to a pay-cut since Hexcel cut workers wages by 33 percent after buying the plant from Hercules last July.

Faye Anderson, a striker who has been laid off a few times in her three years at the plant said, "We'll never go back unless we all go back."

Based on a letter the company sent stating that all workers had been replaced, strikers received notification that they will begin receiving state unemployment benefits.

Thirty out of the 143 OCAW members at Hexcel have crossed the picket line. "The majority are maintenance workers," said Mower, "who were offered a better contract than the production workers." The company has hired 43 workers since the strike began.

Harvey said, "Union members from Kennecott Copper, Mailhandlers Union members and OCAW members from Alliant have been helping regularly in picket duty."

Susan Berman, a member of USWA Local 5338 in Toronto; Patrick Brown, a member of the Engineers Union in Christchurch; and Dan Fein, a member of USWA Local 4347 in Salt Lake City, contributed to this column.

ON THE PICKET LINE

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 other workplaces in your area, including interesting political discussions.

TORONTO — Seventy-six members of Local 6917 of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) have been on strike against S.A. Armstrong here for eight months. Armstrong, a producer of industrial pumps, forced the union out on strike in a drive for concessions that has turned into an attempt to bust the union. Armstrong has been running the plant with strikebreakers, making this one of the first industrial strikes in Ontario where strikebreakers have been used since Conservative Party premier Mike Harris lifted provincial anti-scab legislation.

The company's demands have included instituting an incentive program; paying overtime premiums only after workers have put in 40 hours in a week (as opposed to premiums kicking in after eight hours on a shift), and extending probation to six months without benefits or union protection. The company refuses to guarantee seniority rights and insists that there would be no floor to the incentive program — in other words, workers who don't make incentive goals would see their wages drop below the minimum for their job classification.

Armstrong is now saying even if agreement is reached on contract issues it refuses to bring union members back to work based on seniority. The company insists it will keep some of the replacement workers and bring back union members based on their "productivity" before the strike and general aptitude. Armstrong says it will require workers to take an English, math, and general aptitude test before deciding who can come back to work.

are near retirement age, and many of the older workers are foreign-born. "Why do they want us to take a language test? To push people like him out the door," said Wayne Glover, pointing to one of the most senior strikers — a skilled worker who has been running machines in the plant for over 20 years. "They don't want to have to pay him all of his vacation pay and benefits."

Mike Novak, a younger striker, explained the impact new job classifications would have on his wages. "I was making around \$18-19 an hour. They want us to take this test. For my classification, the highest level they would pay is about \$15.87 an hour. I could be making under \$12 an hour. I think it stinks."

The strike has remained solid. Strikers do daily picket duty. Video cameras are rolling 24-hours a day on the pickets and plant property. The company union-busting effort has been backed by the police, who have a constant presence in the area. They have come out en masse to help the company usher in the scabs during every solidarity rally organized at the plant. Two strikers are currently facing charges on strike-related issues.

Armstrong strikers have made it a point to hook up with other workers on strike. Several workers walked picket lines at Shopper's Drug Mart, during the General Motors strike, and at a strike by workers at an auto parts distribution center organized by the Canadian Auto Workers.

Lab workers in New Zealand hold walkout

CHRISTCHURCH — Sixteen members of the Medical Laboratory Workers Union at Canterbury Health Laboratories here struck for three days around Christmas. The workers are from the transfusion medicine center that provides blood products to all the health services in the Canterbury region. More than 100 people work in the laboratories. The 16 strikers, 15 of whom are women, have been working without a collective contract since April

LETTERS

Coarsening of politics

Writing about the socialist conferences recently held you state (December 23, p.8): "Widespread allegations of corruption and sexual misconduct by public officials have also become a permanent feature of bourgeois politics, the SWP leader pointed out. This coarsening of politics, which reaches new heights during the election campaign, fuels resentment in the middle classes. If workers pick up on it, social solidarity among working people is undercut."

First, unless you mean something other than what you wrote, you seem to state allegations of corruption and sexual misconduct by public officials undermines working-class solidarity. I do not understand that.

Second, the scandalous and corrupt nature of American bourgeois politicians has been recognized for at least 100 years. I do not understand why you think it is a bigger element now.

Third, I do not think crudity in bourgeois politics has reached new heights. Weren't the crude attacks

of the McCarthy era worse than today? Wasn't LBJ's campaign ad attacking Goldwater, showing a nuclear bomb going off behind a girl with a flower? Wasn't Bush's use of Willie Horton in the 1988 campaign against Dukakis worse?

However, years ago, unlike today, Presidents and candidates had some moral vision. The dead Kennedys stood for liberal ideas, the free world, civil rights, fighting poverty, and for vision "ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." "Some ask why, I ask why not." Then came McCarthy the peace candidate, followed by Jimmie "Human Rights" Carter.

Their moral vision was for public consumption only; in part, a bone thrown to the lesser evil crowd. But today one cannot associate the word moral with Clinton or Dole, even though the Kennedys were worse

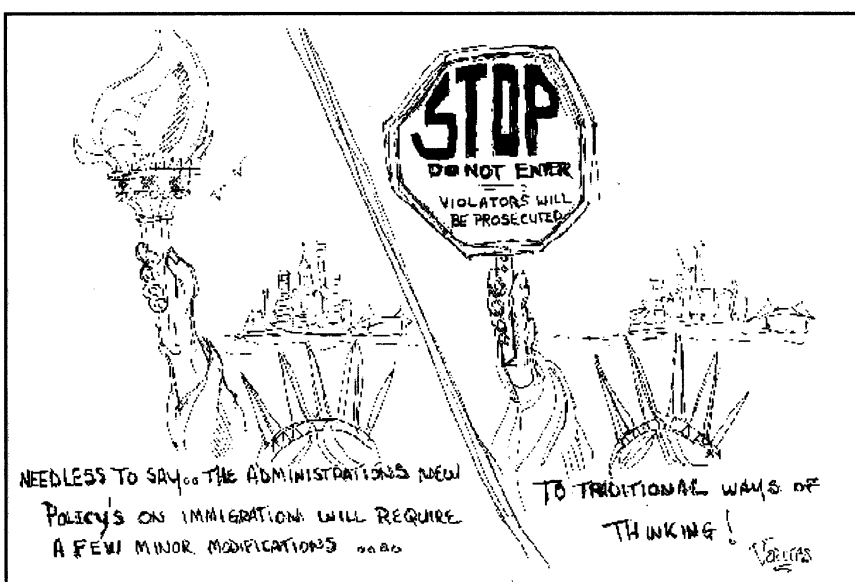
sex maniacs and came from dirtier backgrounds. As U.S. imperialism has gone into economic decline since the early 1970s, what Bush called "the moral vision thing" has been stripped from bourgeois politics. Now capitalist presidential campaigns focus on whose underwear is dirtier and whose cutbacks

will be worse. Isn't that what underlines your unclear term "the coarsening of politics?"

Stan Smith
Chicago, Illinois

Why upper-case 'B'lack?

Here is my check for six months'



renewal plus \$15 for reporting trips so that I can continue to read the news that's omitted and/or distorted by the commercial press and TV and most of the radio "news."

One suggestion I do have: Why not use a lower-case "b" for "black"? Every time I see it I feel that it's patronizing, especially since you use lower-case "w" for "white". Not that "white" should have a big "W" — no, it's just that capitalizing that "B" looks as if "being good to colored folks." To me, it almost suggests elitism, which I know is no part of the *Militant's* thinking. Well, at least you don't say "African-Americans!" (I'm white, so it's not a matter of hurt feelings.) Thanks again for a great paper.

Patricia Maynard
New Hope, Minnesota

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of general interest to our readers. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

New Zealand gov't marks shift to right

BY MICHAEL TUCKER

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — After two months of behind doors negotiations following October 12 elections to parliament, a government was formed in this country December 10. A coalition between the National Party, the main capitalist party, and New Zealand First, led by rightist politician Winston Peters, the new government registers a further shift to the right in capitalist politics.

National Party leader James Bolger continues in office as prime minister. Winston Peters is deputy prime minister and holds the newly-created senior financial post of treasurer. New Zealand First fills another four of the 20 cabinet positions — increasing to eight over the next two years.

National holds 44 seats in the new 120-seat parliament. The social democratic Labour Party holds 37, and New Zealand First 17. The election illustrated the accelerating disintegration of the system of two-party rule, which for the past six decades saw governments formed by either the National or Labour Party.

Policies announced as part of the coalition agreement indicate the rightward course of the new administration of Bolger and Peters. The policies signal new attacks on the social wage, tougher "law and order" measures, and a sharper nationalism. These include:

- A "compulsory savings" scheme to replace the existing retirement pension known as superannuation. It will be decided by a referendum to be held before Sept. 30, 1997. Tax cuts promised by the previous National Party administration have been deferred.

- The proposed "compulsory savings" scheme would impose a tax of up to 8 percent on wages. If adopted, it will mark a major new inroad against the social security entitlement that was won by workers as a universal right in the 1930s and expanded in the 1970s. This follows previous moves by both the National Party and Labour Party that reduced superannuation payments and raised the retirement age from 60 to 65.

- A "work for the dole" workfare scheme that will force those on unemployment benefits to work or train up to two days a week or lose their entitlements. This will include programs to be run by the military. The unemployment benefit will be replaced by a "community wage." Other benefits, such as the Domestic Purposes Benefit paid to single parents, will also be reviewed.

- New immigrants will be subject to a four-year "probation." A conference will be held to formulate a "population policy."

- An increase in the police force by 500 and granting the cops greater powers to use electronic surveillance to target suspected "criminals" and "gangs."

- The introduction of forced labor 48 hours a week for prisoners. Income will be paid to the state or to victims as compensation.

- A review of the few remaining protective labor laws to bring these in line with the anti-worker Employment Contracts Act introduced by the National Party government in 1991.

- A clampdown on overseas patients receiving public hospital care in New Zealand. This primarily affects patients from Pacific Island countries, principally Western Samoa, Tonga, and Fiji. Pacific Island countries lack the facilities to provide many advanced medical services, such as heart surgery and cancer treatments.

- The health system will continue to be required to run "in a business-like" manner.

- A continuation of "bulk funding" of schools, the course implemented by previous Labour Party and National Party governments to partially privatize state schools, leading to underfunding and teacher shortages in many schools in working class and rural areas.

Peters plays major role in new gov't

In his first public announcement as treasurer December 19, Winston Peters ordered



March and rally against attacks on immigrants in Auckland, in April 1996. Scapegoating of immigrants has been a hallmark of Winston Peters's New Zealand First party.

a review of all government spending to identify potential cuts. "Peters sets tone for austere budget," the *New Zealand Herald* headlined the report. The formation of the National-New Zealand First coalition government was largely welcomed by business leaders and editorial writers. The "outcome for the country is far and away preferable," declared the *National Business Review*. "Business breathes sigh of relief," reported the *New Zealand Herald* in its business section. The *Herald's* editorial writers, however, long a target of demagogic attacks by Peters, wrote of a "lamentable coalition" and a "wretched coalition agreement."

"Mr. Peters will have to be watched closely," they cautioned. Pointing to the conservative composition of the new cabi-

net and to the senior posts acquired within it by Peters, the *Herald* noted, "Every day it looks more like his Government."

Peters' role as a Bonapartist figure in politics was illustrated by his actions following the elections. For two months Peters was the focus of attention as he held secret talks in turn with the National Party and the Labour Party in what he described as a "bidding war" for the support of New Zealand First to form a government.

"And, like a true virtuoso, he has played both National and Labour right through the negotiation, keeping both engaged, and each believing that it will ultimately be the chosen partner," noted veteran political commentator Ian Templeton in the December 1, *Star Sunday Times*.

Australia miners defend social gains

BY DOUG COOPER

SYDNEY, Australia—Some 12,000 coal miners waged a successful strike throughout New South Wales from November 28 to December 2 blocking attempts to cut their workers' compensation payments by 25 percent.

The United Mine Workers strike came in the context of a broadside attack by the state Labor government on workers' compensation entitlements and cost the coal bosses an estimated \$A50 million (\$US40 million) in lost revenue.

The Labor government of state Premier Robert Carr, with support from the opposition Liberal and National parties, as well as other, smaller capitalist parties and independents, passed legislation November 26 to "rescue" the deficit-ridden WorkCover state workers' compensation system.

Key parts include cutting workers' lump-sum payments for work-related injuries or illnesses by 25 percent, putting the burden of proof on workers to show that their job was a "significant contributing factor" to an illness or injury, and an automatic review of weekly entitlement payments every two years where workers will have to prove they should continue to receive compensation. Most workers fall under the WorkCover system.

Coal miners would have been exempt from the cuts because they are covered by a separate insurance system, known as the Coal Mines Insurance fund, with its own benefit payments, inspectors, and costs to coal companies. But the opposition parties

succeeded in passing an amendment to the government's legislation that forced the changes on all workers whether they fall under WorkCover or not.

Militant action by United Mine Workers members over the years has won significantly higher benefits than other workers. For example, miners receive an average \$A830 a week for the first 39 weeks of total disability compared to an average \$A550 for workers with a similar disability in other industries covered under WorkCover.

In the face of an indefinite strike, independent and third-party members of parliament backed a December 3 government resolution overturning the opposition amendment that would have subjected miners to the same cuts as other workers. Moves to also exempt forestry, construction and other workers involved in high-risk industries failed.

The action in state Parliament was the immediate spark for the four-day strike, but the deaths of four UMW members two weeks earlier at the Gretley Colliery near Newcastle, in the worst coal mining disaster in thirty years in this state, lay behind miners' anger. The amendment to the government's bill was passed as 400 people packed a November 27 union-sponsored Newcastle memorial service for Mark Kaiser, John Hunter, Damon Murray, and Edward Batterham. Miners were particularly outraged at the presence of the leader of the state opposition, Peter Collins, at the service.

New facts are emerging on the Novem-

Much of the negotiation was over what posts Peters and his party would obtain in the new government. "It seems like both parties are prepared to sell their souls" to become the government, remarked New Zealand First member of parliament Tutekawa Wyllie.

When a conflict arose between National and Labour over who should represent New Zealand at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) conference in the Philippines in November, it was Peters, not the National government, who declared that Prime Minister James Bolger would be the official delegate. It was Peters, not Bolger, who addressed the nation December 10 to announce the outcome of negotiations and the composition and policies of the new coalition government.

Demagogy of New Zealand First leader

Peters spent most of his adult life as an active member of the National Party before forming New Zealand First in 1993. He was first elected to parliament on the National ticket in 1978 and soon gained notoriety for his anticommunist statements and other reactionary views. In particular, he gained a following among conservative middle class layers for his outspoken attacks on Maori rights activists. Peters himself is Maori.

Except for three years, Peters has remained a member of parliament since. When Bolger's National Party government took office in 1990, Peters joined the Cabinet as Minister of Maori Affairs. His grandstanding and demagogy soon led to conflict with Bolger and the following year he was dumped from Cabinet. A year later, in 1992, he was expelled from National's parliamentary Caucus.

Peters resigned and was reelected to parliament as an independent in April 1993. He then launched New Zealand First to contest the 1993 elections. The new party was marked by its sharp nationalism.

Over the past several years, Peters has become identified with his denunciations of the sale of land and assets to "rich corporations" and "foreign owners" and for his attacks on corruption and conspiracies at the top of business and government.

In 1996 he sparked widespread political

Continued on Page 11

ber 14 Gretley Colliery disaster. The four miners were killed operating a continuous miner, the standard mining machine, after breaking through into a disused shaft flooded with hundreds of tons of water. Four other miners, who were nearby on break, narrowly escaped as the flood came within a meter of the roof of the shaft.

Robert Martin, the minister for mineral resources in the Carr government, was forced to drop a Department of Mineral Resources inquiry and order an inquiry by a district court judge following assertions by Jack Tapp, the UMW Northern District's chief safety inspector, that maps supplied by the department were mislabeled and inaccurate. "The integrity of the government is at stake," Martin told ABC radio.

Gretley Colliery is owned by Oakbridge Pty Ltd, a subsidiary of Cyprus, a U.S. mining company.

Tapp is part of a nearly completed separate inquiry being conducted by the UMW division of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union. He told the *Militant* that the safety requirement to test drill before carrying out mining operations within 35 meters of other seams or shafts would not have come into play at Gretley, since the four miners were using maps that indicated they were 150 meters away.

The judicial inquiry is scheduled to begin January 9.

Doug Cooper is a member of the Australasian Meat Industry Employees' Union.