

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Cuban leaders discuss Che's work to deepen revolution

— PAGES 8,10

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 61 NO. 40 NOVEMBER 17, 1997

## Washington steps up threats against Iraq

BY MEGAN ARNEY

Washington is preparing the ground for a new assault against the Iraqi people, after Baghdad barred entry to three U.S. officials who were part of a United Nations opera-

### U.S. hands off Iraq!

— editorial, page 14

tion inspecting weapons production in Iraq. White House representatives have explicitly left open the option of a military strike. "This is a very serious matter," State Department spokesman James Rubin said October 30. "We are not ruling out any option at this time." An unnamed U.S. Clinton administration official told the *New York Times* that Washington may try to declare the Iraqi government in violation of the cease-

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## Young Socialists in Canada hold first convention

BY VICKY MARSHAL AND MARIA ISABEL LE BLANC

MONTREAL — The day after the founding convention of the Young Socialists in Canada, held here from October 31 to November 2, YS members joined a student action in Quebec City to protest massive cuts in the education system. Others headed back to the picket lines of the 126,000 teachers in Ontario who are entering their second week of strike action against the provincial government for the same reason.

The convention registered the progress the YS has made in consolidating a revolutionary communist youth organization in Canada. Today, the YS in Canada is made up of 27 members with three active chapters in Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver, along with individuals in Quebec City and

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## Amtrak and maintenance union reach tentative pact

BY RUTH ROBINETT

NEW YORK — On November 2, officials of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMWE) and Amtrak announced a tentative settlement, averting a November 6 strike deadline. The maintenance union represents some 2,300 workers at the national passenger railroad.

The central issue in the dispute has been the union's proposal for wage increases of 3.5 percent in 1995, 1997, and 1999. The

# Teachers say no to gov't cuts in Ontario

## Court refuses to call walkout by 126,000 illegal

BY JOHN STEELE

TORONTO — The Ontario government's drive to brand the strike of 126,000 primary and secondary school teachers as "illegal" failed November 3, when Ontario Justice James MacPherson turned down the government's application for a court injunction ordering the teachers back to work.

MacPherson rejected the government's argument that the strike at this point was causing "irreparable harm" or flouting the law. "The record demonstrates that they [teachers] made the decision in a careful, concerned, and reluctant fashion," he said. "The strike has been remarkably peaceful ... [and] the teachers do not believe that they are disregarding the law." He said that the government's move in the court was "significantly premature" and stated it was up to the local school boards, who employ the teachers, to go to the Ontario Labor Relations Board for a ruling on the legality of the strike.

Teachers hailed the ruling as a "moral victory." They have been on a massive "political protest" since October 27 against Bill 160, the Conservative government's proposed education "reform" legislation. Despite the strengthening of the strike, the government of Premier Michael



Striking teachers in front of Inglenook Community High School in Toronto wave to passing motorists who honked their horns in support November 3.

Harris says it will not cave in to the Ontario Teachers Federation (OTF) demand to gut Bill 160 or withdraw it altogether.

Cheers went up on picket lines around the

province when the court decision was reported. Students, teachers, and parents on the lines chanted "we won't back down" and

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## Capitalists press for more austerity to calm currency turmoil in Asia

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

A detachment of cops armed with automatic weapons guarded the Indonesian Bank Harapan Santosa from hundreds of depositors who came to looking for their money after it was shut down November 1. "You might as well all go home, we have no more announcements to make," a bank security guard told them through a bullhorn. The regime carried out similar actions at branches of 16 banks in other cities. Just three days earlier, police attacked 200 students in Bandung who were protesting Indonesian president Suharto's candidacy for reelection in 1998.

In Thailand, Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh announced his resignation

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**Come to the  
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- How working people and their unions confront capitalist offensive
- Renewed struggles for Maori rights
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CELEBRATE THE 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF CHE GUEVARA'S COMBAT IN BOLIVIA

Friday, November 14, 7:30 p.m.

Speakers:

**Marcella FitzGerald**, a leader of the Communist League in the United Kingdom

**Michel Prairie**, a leader of the Communist League in Canada

Both speakers recently visited Cuba to take part in events and meetings marking the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Che's death in combat

### Worker-bolsheviks in the 21st Century

CELEBRATE THE 80<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Saturday, November 15, 7:30 p.m.

Speakers:

**Sam Manuel**, member of United Transportation Union, and leader of the Socialist Workers Party in the U.S.  
**Joshua Carroll**, a leader of the Young Socialists in the United States

Convention and forums to be held at the People's Centre, 33 Wyndham St. (top floor), Auckland City. Donation for each forum: \$3. For more information, call (09) 379-3075 or see listings on page 12.

Special Militant Labor Forums in New Zealand and Australia — see page 3.

Truckers strike in France for better wages, benefits — page 3

### Thousands protest in Algeria

Tens of thousands of people marched in the Algerian capital of Algiers October 30. They called for the resignation of the prime minister and cancellation of recent local elections, which consolidated the power of the National Democratic Rally, the ruling party that was created six months ago by the army-backed government. There were other demonstrations and sit-ins around the country. An array of organizations opposing the regime called the October 30 protest, alleging fraud in the local elections. According to the *Financial Times* of London, young unemployed men made up the largest group of protesters. More than 60,000 Algerians have been killed since the revolt that began when the army canceled an election in 1992.

After a deep-going revolution in 1962, under the leadership of Ahmed Ben Bella, a workers and farmers government came to power in 1963. In June 1965, Houari Boumedienne led a military coup that toppled Ben Bella's revolutionary regime. The army has controlled power since then.

### Israeli troops gas protesters

On October 25 Israeli troops fired tear gas and rubber bullets at Palestinian youth protesting in the West Bank. The 400 demonstrators, some of whom threw stones in retaliation, demanded the release of Palestinian prisoners. Eleven protesters were hospitalized. Tel Aviv is holding some 3,000 Palestinian political prisoners — one-third have not been tried. About 1,500 people also demonstrated in Nablus in addition to protests in Hebron and East Jerusalem. The Palestinian protests are fueled by continued Israeli government policies of expanding new Zionist settlements.

Meanwhile, about 200 Israeli activists held vigils in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem October 25, and called for the ouster of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Calling the prime minister by his nickname, signs read: "Bibi is leading us to war," and "Bibi is dividing the people."

### Russians demand back wages

Thousands of people in the far eastern city of Vladivostok, Russia, joined thousands of others across the region on October 30 in

demanding immediate payment of back wages. This past summer, miners in the region went on strike for six months demanding their back pay. The Far East region in Russia has been racked by power shortages due to the ending of government subsidies to coal and other energy plants. Last winter power cuts lasted for 15 hours a day.

### Puerto Rico cops attack unionists protesting Telefónica sell-off

Protesting plans to sell the state telephone company, hundreds of public employees and others rallied in front of a hotel in Isla Verde, Puerto Rico, where governor Pedro Rosselló was staying October 30. The police and the governor's escort hit demonstrators with sticks and pushed them around while Rosselló ran away through a back door. Just minutes before he asserted that he would go ahead with his privatization program.

Alfonso Benítez, president of the Independent Union of Telephone Employees, and coordinator of the Broad Committee of Trade Unions (CAOS), said, "They are trying to prevent us from having access to public places." He added that protesters "will stay here and wherever we have to go to denounce the policy of privatizations of this government."

Benítez pointed out that the police started the attacks, "The government of Rosselló has closed the doors to a dialogue with us and now wants to use the police to intimidate us." On October 1 a coalition of unions organized a demonstration that drew over 100,000 people — one of the largest actions ever in Puerto Rico — against the planned sell-off of Telefónica.

### Workers, cops clash in Venezuela

On October 30 public employees and the police clashed for the second consecutive day in the oil-producing city of Maracaibo during a demonstration by workers demanding payment of back wages. Representatives of some 40,000 public employees in that state, a northwest region of the country, pointed out that the debt the authorities owe them adds up to \$70 million.

The protesters planted themselves in front of the government palace. They were dispersed by the cops who used tear gas bombs

and water hoses against them. Some injuries were reported, along with burned tires, and damaged cars. Jesús Esparza, the governor's spokesperson, said that the employees claim had been fueled by the opposition party Acción Democrática (Democratic Action) and he regretted that students had also joined in the labor action.

Néstor Yancén, however, who spoke in the name of the demonstrators, blamed the police attack on Francisco Arias, the governor of the state, who was a former military officer and a leader of the coup d'état of Feb. 4, 1992.

### Brazil: Abortion rights bill gains

On August 20 a committee of the Chamber of Deputies in Brazil approved a bill by a one-vote margin that would require public hospitals to comply with a law that allows abortions in cases of rape or if a woman's life is in danger. The bill may go on to the full Congress later this year.

Abortion is banned in that country, though a growing women's movement has petitioned the government for a referendum on the issue. Brazil is an overwhelmingly Catholic country, but 76 percent of Catholics in the Greater Rio de Janeiro area favor the law under consideration.

At least 22,000 women in the state of Rio de Janeiro are hospitalized each year after undergoing abortions, according to the Rio daily *O Globo*. The World Health Organization announced that throughout Latin America about 5,000 women die each year from abortion complications. Some 1.4 million women in Brazil annually seek out clandestine clinics to perform abortions.

### Court rules fetus is person

In a move that sets a precedent against a woman's right to abortion, South Carolina's highest court upheld the criminal prosecution of pregnant women who use drugs. The supreme court found that a viable fetus is a "person" covered by the state's child-abuse laws. The October 27 ruling runs contrary to every other state court decision on

## Auto workers strike in Korea



Auto workers at Kia Motors in south Korea struck for ten days in late October. The 22,000 auto workers earlier walked out September 29 – 30. They are protesting company bankruptcy proceedings that would lead to job losses, after having already given many concessions to Kia. The most recent strike was opposing a government takeover of Kia.

women's rights. The decision reads: "The consequences of abuse or neglect which takes place after birth often pale in comparison to those resulting from abuse suffered by the viable fetus before birth. This policy of prevention supports a reading of the word 'person' to include viable fetuses."

Reproductive rights lawyer Lynn Paltrow responded, "If fetus is a person, everything a pregnant woman does is potentially child abuse, abortion [would be] murder, and women lose the right to make medical decisions on their own behalf during pregnancy." Since 1990, prosecutors in at least 30 states have used a variety of criminal laws to bring charges against pregnant women. So far, only South Carolina has upheld such charges. At least five other state supreme courts have stuck them down, ruling that a fetus was not a person.

— MEGAN ARNEY

# THE MILITANT

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# Truckers in France strike demanding better pay, benefits

BY MARCELLA FITZGERALD  
AND SHELLIA KENNEDY

CALAIS, France — Higher wages, better working conditions, union rights, and genuine negotiations with the employers are among the demands listed on the leaflets striking truck drivers are giving out in this port city. The truckers have been appealing to their fellow drivers from Europe and elsewhere, with flyers in French and English, asking them to understand their demands and refuse to go to France.

A 12-day truckers strike in November 1996 tied up France, disrupted shipping throughout much of Europe, and won some important gains. This included a lower retirement age and recognition of loading and unloading as paid work time. The drivers are now blockading some of the main highways again, demanding a raise in their near-minimum wages and that the bosses and government live up to bonus and pension promises from last year.

"This year we told all the other drivers in advance so they had time to leave, because some people got stuck on the roads last year," Jean Michel Delary said. "Many of the English drivers understand and are in solidarity with us." Delary was one of several members of the French Confederation of Democratic Labor (CFDT) on the barricade here who explained to these reporters the reasons for the work stoppage and the effects it is having on the bosses. "As you can see, nothing is moving," he noted.

Among the strikers are also members of the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) and Workers Force (FO), as well as many drivers who do not belong to a union.

A last minute agreement reached on November 2 between officials of several truckers unions and one of the bosses federations was rejected by the rank and file, who began the strike the same day. The main demand by strikers is for guaranteed monthly and hourly wage rates.

## Demand for higher wages

Frederic Thienpont explained, "What we want is 10,000ff [\$1,730] for 200 hours work a month, or 48,15ff [\$8.32] per working hour. At the moment, we get 8,212ff [\$1,421] for 200 hours and that is before paying taxes, which amount to 23 percent of the wage. You can work 230 hours and be paid for 200 hours, because we are not paid for waiting time. Sometimes you can wait for 12 to 14 hours without being paid for it." He added, "In the last strike, we won the right to retire at 55 on 75 percent of the gross wage, but it's difficult to live on that."

Under the November 2 proposal, wages for one category of long-haul drivers would rise to 10,000ff a month by July 1, 2000. But this would only affect between 7,000 and 10,000 of the 220,000 salaried truckers. Others would be given more limited wage increases. The main trucking bosses association, the Union of Transport Federations (UFT), which represents 80 percent of the employers, left the negotiating table before the agreement was reached.

When asked how long the fight would continue Delary said, "That depends on the bosses."

As of the third day of the strike, the truckers had put up some 150 barricades on major highways and around important economic targets throughout France. By contrast, last year's strike began with only 25 barricades, though the number grew to 250 by the end. Two days into this strike, 12 of France's 13 gas refineries were blockaded and gas was already being rationed in some regions. Some automobile plants had partially shut down. On highway blockades, strikers were stopping trucks but letting cars through.

## Pressure on Jospin government

When asked how this strike compared with last year's, Mickael Verlet explained that it was stronger this time because last year they started with fewer barricades. Delary added that there had been a change of government. Socialist Party prime minister Lionel Jospin would have more sympathy with the workers, he said.

Even before the blockades went up, the British and Spanish governments and the European Commission began to pressure Paris to guarantee "safe corridors" for the transport of goods from other European countries in the case of a truckers strike. Jospin also came under fire from conservative French president Jacques Chirac, whose office issued an official statement saying it was up to the government "to take the necessary measures to assure the free movement of traffic."

Since the beginning of the dispute, the police have pulled down a few barricades at sites bordering Germany and Spain. On November 4 riot police broke up the barricades set up by strikers picketing the Channel Tunnel to Britain. Strikers said they didn't feel overly concerned about this, though, that Jospin was just trying to set the other governments at ease. Trucks were entering France through the tunnel, but this is a costly crossing for the bosses, they said.

The government has hesitated to interfere more broadly with the striker's actions, fearing to affront the truckers' determination and public support for the strike. "Strictly speaking, any barricade is illegal," Gilles Bouilhaguet, prefect for Atlantic Pyrenees department, told the national daily newspa-



When negotiations on wages and working conditions broke down November 2, truck drivers went on strike. Above strikers block a highway November 3 near Senlis, France. Similar barricades have caused huge traffic jams across the country.

per *Le Figaro*. But he added, "Maintaining order is not an exact science. Under the pretext of reestablishing order, you obviously have to avoid provoking chaos."

Minister of Transportation Jean-Claude Gayssot, of the Communist Party, was trying to convince the UFT bosses federation to resume negotiations with the unions, while at the same time warning the strikers, "When conflict lasts, you're never sure it will finish in the best way."

There is widespread support for the truckers' fight among other working people. Several workers interviewed at the GEC-Alsthom plant in Saint Ouen, near Paris, all expressed their backing for the strike.

"They're determined those guys. I hope they win something," said Nantharath Bounnong, 37.

"They're just defending their livelihood," explained Raymond Bourgeois, 28. "When you see the hours they put in and the wages they get you understand them. What they have going for them is that they have the means to make an impact."

*Shellia Kennedy is a member of the Rail, Maritime and Transportation Union in London. Derek Jeffers, a member of the General Confederation of Labor union at GEC-Alsthom in Saint Ouen, contributed to this article.*

# Prime minister is ousted in New Zealand

BY PATRICK BROWN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — "[I was] advised the moment I stepped off the plane [from an overseas trip] that the numbers had been gathered," said New Zealand prime minister James Bolger November 4. He was describing that day's "bloodless coup" executed by the parliamentary caucus of the National Party, in which he was replaced as party leader by cabinet minister Jennifer Shipley. Negotiations have begun between the two parties in the coalition government, the majority National Party and its New Zealand First partner, from which Shipley is expected to emerge as prime minister.

Bolger had tried in vain to undercut the looming challenge with a series of statements that began with a speech on October 3 dubbed "springtime for the coalition," in which he advocated a greater private sector role in health, education, welfare, and accident compensation — policies which Shipley and her cabinet supporters "had been advocating behind the scenes," as one commentator wrote.

The reaction to the coup from business circles was immediate and favorable. Profiles of Shipley in the big-business media touted her "strength," "determination," and "unwavering self-belief." One article in the *New Zealand Herald* noted that Shipley made her name as a "fiscal conservative ... from her stint as Minister of Social Welfare during which she implemented benefit cuts" in 1991.

Stating recently that "New Zealand First has too much influence," Shipley is widely seen as being less inclined than Bolger to make concessions to the weaker coalition partner. The New Zealand First leader, the demagogic Winston Peters, aimed a populist thrust at Shipley as he prepared for negotiations on November 4, saying that his party "will not become captive to any new right-wing agenda."

The leadership challenge came after a week of turmoil on the New Zealand stock market. Share prices first fell by 12.5 percent in one day and then regained 9.9 percent the next, as investors reacted to falls in values on Asian exchanges and related slumps on Wall St. and other major stock and bond markets. Capitalists in this country are increasingly nervous about the currency and stock market crises in a number of economies in Asia, which took nearly 40 percent of New Zealand's exports in 1996. Over the last week some high-profile New Zealand firms announced layoffs. The most prominent was Levene & Co., a furniture store retail chain that employs 600 people. On October 31 the company was placed in receivership.

With her takeover, Shipley is attempting to halt the slide in support for the government. From its first days at the beginning of this year, the coalition government has been marked by a series of scandals and divisions, particularly among the Members of Parliament (MPs) of the rightist New Zealand First Party.

In August the government's authority reached a low point in a referendum on a proposal by the treasurer, New Zealand First leader Peters, for a compulsory savings scheme to replace the present state-funded retirement pension. Shipley was prominent among a number of National Party MPs who campaigned against the proposal, advocating reductions in the pension rather than its replacement.

The trade unions also campaigned against the compulsory savings scheme, while Bolger supported a Yes vote. The referendum was voted down by a crushing 92.4

percent.

A typical opinion poll, conducted in October of this year, recorded that the disapproval rating for the coalition government stood at 90 percent. Thirty percent of those polled said they would vote National, while a mere 2 percent indicated support for New Zealand First. In contrast, the same poll showed the Labour Party as having the support of 52 percent of decided voters, compared with the 28 percent vote it received in the October 1996 parliamentary elections.

The support for Labour reflects the widespread unpopularity of the coalition government. This has been expressed in protests over recent weeks, particularly in response to the cutbacks in the public health system. The health protests have involved thousands in many provincial centers, and they are ongoing. Students recently organized national actions against proposals to reduce the public provision of tertiary education.

## Special Militant Labor Forums in Australia and New Zealand

### Union and Popular Resistance in North America and Europe

*Prospects for building the revolutionary movement*

#### Speakers:

Sam Manuel, National Committee member of the Socialist Workers Party in the United States; Joshua Carroll, National Committee member of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party and of the Young Socialists

#### Christchurch, N.Z.

Wednesday, November 19, 7 p.m.  
199 High St.  
(Corner High and Tuam).  
Donation: \$3. Tel: (03) 365-6055

#### Sydney, Australia

Friday, November 21  
66 Albion St., Surry Hills,  
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### Growing Labor Resistance and Fight for Quebecois Independence in Canada

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Michel Prairie, member of the Central Committee of the Communist League in Canada

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# Pathfinder Fund over the top!

BY PETER THIERJUNG

NEW YORK — Supporters of Pathfinder Press from around the world have put the \$125,000 international Pathfinder Fund over the top! From Auckland, New Zealand, to Reykjavik, Iceland, and in more than 18 U.S. cities, supporters have campaigned for eight weeks raising \$134,330.

"Thank you to everyone who contributed to the fund," said Luis Madrid, director of the Pathfinder Fund and an editor at the New York-based publishing house. "The generous contributions of many supporters will not only cover this year's expenses of publishing 10 new titles and issuing more than 60 reprints, but are a down payment on three more new titles we plan to publish in the next few months."

In an interview from Cleveland, where he is currently on a promotion tour for Pathfinder, Madrid reported that there have been

positive results from visiting libraries and campus and commercial bookstores.

"The sharpening volatility of the capitalist system brought home by the recent stock market dive and the increased resistance by workers and farmers evidenced today by the fight of truckers in France — these events are generating increased interest in Pathfinder titles among workers and youth.

"The funds raised keep the publishing pipeline open for the more than 300 titles by revolutionary and working-class leaders. This is an invaluable arsenal for those who are resisting the effects of the capitalist crisis. Just think of it," Madrid said, "French truckers can now pick up a copy of *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics: Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions* in French. Workers and youth who read Spanish can now read the book in their language.

"With increased interest generated by the

30th anniversary of Cuban revolution Ernesto Che Guevara's death, Pathfinder's titles by and about Guevara are indispensable contributions to the debates and discussions surrounding his legacy," he added.

"Having a fund meeting right at the beginning of the drive helped us focus and start collecting money," Nan Bailey, the local fund coordinator in Seattle reported. "The meeting had a panel that included trade unionists and a leader of farm workers in the state. It was organized professionally and helped motivate a broader layer of Pathfinder supporters to not only contribute but work together to help raise funds."

Ted Leonard from Boston reported that Pathfinder supporters there went way over their goal of winning 24 new contributors. "We won 50 first-time contributors to Pathfinder. Our success hinged on following up on their interest in working-class politics."

## Thousands protest poisoning of water for bosses' profits in Sweden

BY INGE HINNEMO

STOCKHOLM, Sweden — "First they took our water. Then they injected poison into the hill. There are no words hard enough for devils ravaging like that," dairy farmer Gösta Gustavsson told the daily *Dagens Nyheter*, describing the effects of a railway tunnel being built through the small mountain Hallandsåsen on the Bjäre peninsula in southern Sweden. The environmental disaster has sparked protests of up to 5,000 people.

The project became a public scandal in early October when another farmer's cows were paralyzed by highly poisonous acrylamide in water being pumped out of the tunnel project. Meanwhile, it was reported that the 150 workers building the tunnel had been exposed to levels of acrylamid in the air 10 times those considered safe.

Acrylamide and methylolacrylamide, another toxin, are components of Rhoca-Gil, a substance used to seal the tunnel walls from leaking water. A representative of the French chemical company Rhône-Poulenc "convinced us that the mixture was totally harmless," construction worker Peter Carlsson told *Dagens Nyheter*. "It wouldn't be harmful to the environment, and we would absolutely not need any protective mask working with it, just gloves and oil-skin clothes. She asserted that you are exposed to greater risks if you put too much salt on your food."

Carlsson is one of the workers who injected Rhoca-Gil into the tunnel walls. Like many of his co-workers, he has symptoms of being poisoned: smarting pain on the skin,

a prickling sensation in the legs, dizziness, and nausea. Twenty of the 77 workers examined showed signs of damage to their nervous systems. So far only 10 workers have been tested with blood samples. Of these, the tests from seven workers who were exposed to Rhoca-Gil contained levels of acrylamide 100 times higher than the tests from three workers not exposed. Besides hurting the nervous system, acrylamide can cause cancer and genetic damage.

According to the farmers organization LRF, the water supplies of five full-time farmers and about 20 part-time growers are directly affected by toxins from the tunnel. But products from the whole Bjäre area has become unsalable.

Hundreds of people demonstrated October 5 demanding that construction on the tunnel be stopped. The company halted work on the project October 7.

About 5,000 people marched from the small town of Båstad October 12 to the northern end of the planned tunnel. Båstad and the surrounding area have only 3,000 inhabitants. Some of the demonstrators came from the larger city of Helsingborg, where excavated earth from the tunnel had been dumped close to a water reserve. The same day 30 farmers blocked roads to stop an attempt to return this earth to the building site.

The tunnel is being built by the Swedish firm Skanska for the state organization Banverket. It is intended to allow the use of trains with 30 percent greater weight. Together with having two tracks instead of one, this would make the railroad more competitive in meeting the needs of industries that

have adopted "just in-time" production systems as part of cost-cutting measures.

The difficulties in building a tunnel through Hallandsåsen were well known before the project was started in 1993. A first attempt to drill through the mountain was made by a subsidiary of the state-owned Vattenfall company. Using a machine 150 meters long, the project progressed only 20 meters in two months.

In 1996 Skanska started to dig the tunnel from both ends. They also dug a tunnel straight down from the ridge of the mountain, causing several wells to go dry. Skanska had to pay damages and drill new wells — which are now poisoned. Last February, the board of Banverket decided to use Rhoca-Gil as a way to solve the problem of ground water leaking into the tunnel. But the water flow didn't allow the injected substance to harden properly as some of it leaked back into the tunnel, and was pumped out into the surrounding area.

Banverket and the Swedish government have promised to fully compensate those directly affected by the poison. But they refuse to make any promises to growers who lose income because they cannot sell their products.

The scandal is a big embarrassment to Swedish capitalists and government, who claim to have a good record on environmental protection. The front page of daily *Svenska Dagbladet* October 19 ran the head-

### \$125,000 Pathfinder Fund September 1 – November 1

CITY/COUNTRY	GOAL	PAID	%
<b>United Kingdom</b>			
Manchester	600	690	115%
London	900	960	107%
<b>U.K. Total*</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>1,650</b>	<b>110%</b>
<b>France</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>106%</b>
<b>United States</b>			
Boston	5,500	6,887	125%
San Francisco*	11,000	13,080	119%
Des Moines	2,400	2,756	115%
Detroit	4,000	4,324	108%
Los Angeles	10,000	10,755	108%
Twin Cities*	7,750	7,961	103%
Atlanta*	4,624	4,719	102%
New York*	13,500	13,719	102%
Chicago*	12,000	12,185	102%
Washington, D.C.	3,000	3,031	101%
Philadelphia	4,000	4,031	101%
Pittsburgh	5,000	5,030	101%
Seattle*	9,000	9,040	100%
Houston	5,500	5,503	100%
Birmingham	3,500	3,500	100%
Newark	8,500	8,129	96%
Miami	3,000	2,427	81%
Cleveland	2,400	1,880	78%
<b>Other</b>	<b>2,919</b>	<b>3,656</b>	<b>125%</b>
<b>U.S. Total</b>	<b>117,593</b>	<b>122,613</b>	<b>104%</b>
<b>New Zealand</b>			
Auckland	2,100	2,130	101%
Wellington	130	130	100%
Christchurch	640	640	100%
<b>N. Z. Total*</b>	<b>2,870</b>	<b>2,900</b>	<b>101%</b>
<b>Canada</b>			
Montreal	1,650	1,650	100%
Toronto	2,500	2,500	100%
Vancouver	1,150	1,150	100%
<b>Canada Total</b>	<b>5,300</b>	<b>5,300</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Iceland</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Australia</b>	<b>750</b>	<b>582</b>	<b>78%</b>
<b>Other Int'l</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>INT'L TOTAL:</b>	<b>129,273</b>	<b>134,330</b>	<b>107%</b>
<b>SHOULD BE:</b>	<b>125,000</b>	<b>125,000</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>* Raised goal</b>			

line "An Untimely Environmental Scandal." The article asserted, "This affair is untimely and not at all representative."

Inge Hinnemo is a member of the metal-workers union.

## 1,000 attend anti-China rally in Washington, D.C.

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Some 1,000 people attended a rally in Lafayette Park across the street from the White House on October 29 in opposition to the Chinese revolution and the policies of the ruling Communist Party there. The protest was called to coincide with Chinese president Jiang Zemin's meeting with President William Clinton. The gathering had a clearly rightist focus to it, though it was billed as a protest against human rights violations in China. Groups sponsoring this event included the right-wing Family Research Council, the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights, the AFL-CIO, Amnesty International, Committee to Protect Journalists, the Sierra Club, and International Campaign for Tibet. Prominently displayed at the rally site was a sizable banner held up by several people stating, "Since Oct. 1, 1949 over 36,950,000 Chinese People have died from persecution. What is there to celebrate?" Among the signs displayed on placards were many identifying the AFL-CIO, one of which read, "Made in China = Slave Labor."

John Sweeney, president of the AFL-CIO, was one of the keynote speakers. "The Chinese government violates every standard of human decency," he charged. It "deprives people of its religious freedom, is destroy-

ing the environment, and denies its people freedom of association, including the right to form unions." He claimed that China "has the largest system of forced labor camps on the earth" and called for Washington to end its Most Favored Nation trade policy with Beijing.

Sen. Paul Wellstone, a Democrat from Minnesota, demanded that "the president of China lead his country for human rights and democracy." He also urged Clinton to call for international inspection of prisons in China and Tibet.

Actor Richard Gere, representing the International Campaign for Tibet, told the audience, "I'm sending greetings on behalf of the 1.2 billion Chinese who have no voice." A number of the protesters displayed "Save Tibet" stickers and signs.

"The media says this is an unusual coalition," stated Gary Bauer, president of the Family Research Council, a conservative Christian organization that opposes abortion rights and gay rights. But, "I'd rather be part of this unusual coalition than the one across the street — the Man from Hope and the Butcher of Beijing," he stated. "We're here today because we're standing for American values," continued Bauer. He called for "American elites to stand for American values like those who died for them at Tiananmen Square."

### Haitians in Miami: 'We won't go'



Militant/Angel Lariscy

"No, no we won't go; if we go we'll be back," more than 3,000 people chanted in Creole October 22 as they picketed the INS building in Miami. This was the second action of its size in a week demanding legal status for Haitian immigrants. Rally organizers said they will be sending a busload of activists to Washington D.C. to protest outside Congress. They are also considering picketing the offices of Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart, who drafted a law that gives residency to Nicaraguan, Guatemalan, and Salvadoran immigrants, excluding Haitians.



# SELL THE BOOKS WORKERS OF THE WORLD NEED

Join the campaign to sell Pathfinder books and pamphlets

## 'Communist Manifesto,' Che Guevara top sales list

BY SARA LOBMAN

"Our book sales have been great," Linda Harris reports from Sydney, Australia, noting that events to celebrate the life and ideas of revolutionary leader Ernesto Che Guevara have been particularly fertile ground for sales of Pathfinder books and pamphlets. "It was common in October to have two, three, four young people in the bookshop," Harris added. "Three people have joined the Young Socialists and they and four other youth have been participating in classes on *The Communist Manifesto* that are held at the bookshop twice a week.

"The *Manifesto* has been our best seller, with books by Guevara close behind. In fact, even though we keep reordering, we have sold out of Guevara's *Episodes of the Cuban Revolutionary War* and *Bolivian Diary* once or twice during the month," Harris said.

In Paris, sales of revolutionary literature to industrial workers was a highlight in October. "One of my co-workers at the Renault auto plant bought *Dernier discours* and *Oser inventer l'avenir*, the French-language editions of speeches by Malcolm X and Thomas Sankara," says Nat London. "After making a contribution to the Pathfinder Fund, he decided to get *Socialism and Man in*

*Cuba* by Che Guevara and *Che Guevara and the Fight for Socialism Today* by Mary-Alice Waters." Pathfinder supporters in Paris sold a total of 119 books in October.

Michel Prairie reports that six books and two memberships to the Pathfinder Readers Club were sold at a November 3 demonstration in Quebec City of several hundred people, most of them high school and college students, against government cuts on social services.

Sales include several books and pamphlets on the Cuban revolution and *The Communist Manifesto*. Six copies of the *Militant* were sold to the predominantly French-speaking protesters.

"Our bestsellers this month were *Malcolm X Talks to Young People*, *New International nos. 8 and 10*, and *February 1965: The Final Speeches* by Malcolm X," states Kristin Meriam from Birmingham, Alabama. Pathfinder supporters there sold 49 books, going over their monthly goal of 45.

All told, the nearly 30 Pathfinder bookstores around the world reported sales of more than 2,800 books and pamphlets in October. Michael Baumann, who organizes Pathfinder's editorial work, remarks that *Europe and America* by Leon Trotsky was the

best seller, with 298 copies sold to Pathfinder bookstores and other customers. The pamphlet includes two speeches on imperialism that Trotsky gave in the early 1920s. It was just reissued and is available for the first time in more than a decade. Thirteen of the top 15 titles in October were by Che Guevara or about the Cuban revolution.

In addition to *Europe and America*, Pathfinder has just reprinted with new type *Socialism on Trial*, by James P. Cannon, and the third volume of Trotsky's *Challenge of the Left Opposition*, which covers the years 1928-29.

## 'Changing Face of U.S. Politics' is launched in French at YS convention

BY KATY LEROUGETEL

MONTREAL — A crowd of 75 people, many of whom were youth in town to attend the Young Socialists' founding convention, gathered here November 4 to celebrate the publication of Pathfinder's newest book, *Le visage changeant de la politique aux États-Unis*. This is the French-language edition of *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics — Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions*, by Jack Barnes.

Four panelists took delight in quoting the book in French for the first time and in urging the audience to use this handbook designed for workers reacting to the brutality of capitalism on the eve of the 21st century. The book grows out of the experience of the working class over the last two decades, and reflects the hard-earned lessons drawn from the activity of the organized class-conscious and revolutionary-minded section of that class. It shows how, as political resistance grows, workers will revolutionize themselves, their unions, and all of society.

Vicky Marshal, a unionist from Toronto, described a teachers rally against government cutbacks and antiunion attacks that she participated in October 6. "The teachers had spilled out onto the street, and all of a sudden I heard Franco-Ontarian teachers speaking French to one another. On September 27, at the same time as teachers and other unionists were demonstrating in North Bay, Ontario, against provincial government cutbacks, thousands of Quebec unionists were doing the same thing in Quebec City. It is so important to be making this book available in French. Now is the time to be reading this book and making the links."

"During the big labor upsurge in France at the end of 1995, we sold lots of Pathfinder titles and issues of the Marxist magazine *Nouvelle Internationale*," the French-language sister publication to the Marxist magazine *New International*, explained Rafik Benali, a construction worker and Young Socialist from Paris. "And we still meet people today who bought and read them at that time, who tell us how much they appreciate these publications. Over the past two months we have sold at least 400 Pathfinder-distributed titles, of which 60 were Pathfinder's French-language edition of *Socialism and Man in Cuba* by Che Guevara."

Panelist Ryan Kelly, who works in Pathfinder's New York printshop, said, "The drive to produce this book on time was quite



Militant/Elssa Martínez  
Young Socialists convention participant thumbs through a copy of *Le visage changeant de la politique aux États-Unis*.

intense over the past few weeks. We began every day with a discussion on where the Pathfinder projects were at and the necessary steps to get the book here for the Young Socialists convention."

Michel Prairie, editor of *Le visage changeant de la politique aux États-Unis*, underlined, "This book is aimed at the Quebecois and other French-speaking youth in Canada who reject the chauvinism, the discrimination, the injustice, and the hypocrisy that are imposed on them. It explains the kind of party that workers will have to build in Canada to make this possible and join the international struggle for socialism."

Prairie explained that *Le visage changeant* was produced by an international team of more than 30 volunteers — workers and students from Brussels, London, Miami, Mon-

tréal, Paris, and Toronto — who translated, corrected, and proofread the whole book. He made an appeal for volunteer translators for both Pathfinder's next French-language and Spanish-language titles.

By the end of the convention weekend 17 people bought *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics* in French, and two others bought English copies. Pathfinder supporters in Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver have adopted initial goals to sell a total of 71 copies of the book in English, French, or Spanish by the convention of the Communist

### Book Sales from Pathfinder Bookstores

Countries/Cities	October			Previous months		
	Goal	Sales	%	Sept.	Aug.	July
ICELAND	5	24	480%	100%	520%	120%
FRANCE	30	119	397%	533%	280%	228%
AUSTRALIA	36	112	311%	108%	178%	178%
GREECE	13	27	208%	223%	77%	69%
SWEDEN	55	72	131%	89%	224%	136%
UNITED STATES						
Philadelphia	55	139	253%	105%	149%	134%
Los Angeles	120	253	211%	128%	160%	81%
Washington, D.C.	70	130	186%	223%	205%	150%
Houston	65	114	175%	49%	60%	109%
Chicago	77	117	152%	121%	178%	148%
San Francisco	200	282	141%	89%	94%	119%
Boston	65	91	140%	166%	192%	137%
Des Moines	50	66	132%	64%	144%	154%
Detroit	45	58	129%	142%	106%	61%
Miami	60	77	128%	120%	172%	80%
Atlanta	48	56	117%	88%	123%	69%
Birmingham	45	49	109%	103%	170%	75%
Twin Cities	104	112	108%	60%	83%	108%
Newark	171	173	101%	129%	184%	42%
New York	245	242	99%	115%	183%	122%
Pittsburgh	63	57	90%	100%	73%	235%
Seattle	80	68	85%	60%	80%	115%
Cleveland	50	40	80%	32%	56%	38%
U.S. Total	1613	2124	132%	96%	123%	95%
Goal/Should be	1800	1800	100%			
CANADA						
Montreal	68	82	121%	64%	83%	65%
Toronto	80	82	103%	78%	88%	84%
Vancouver	41	26	63%	88%	100%	95%
Canada Total	189	190	101%	75%	111%	74%
UNITED KINGDOM						
London	230	221	96%	153%	185%	168%
Manchester	56	43	77%	71%	113%	61%
U.K. Total	286	264	92%	87%	166%	139%
NEW ZEALAND						
Auckland	49	28	57%	73%	129%	140%
Christchurch	28	10	36%	54%	100%	171%
Youth Festival					78	
N.Z. Total	77	38	49%	66%	214%	154%

### PATHFINDER BOOKS SOLD IN THE UNIONS

Unions	October			Previous months		
	Goal	Sales	Total	Sept.	Aug.	July
AUSTRALIA						
AMWU	4	3	75%	25%	200%	200%
CANADA						
IAM	8	7	88%	75%	100%	75%
USWA	18	5	28%	0%	33%	11%
Canada Total	26	12	46%	23%	54%	31%
UNITED STATES						
UFCW	16	15	94%	233%	267%	83%
USWA	40	30	75%	17%	25%	28%
IAM	60	33	55%	20%	100%	48%
UNITE	20	8	40%	21%	21%	108%
UAW	50	11	22%	24%	84%	6%
UTU	70	10	14%	15%	35%	8%
OCAW	44	3	7%	14%	18%	61%
U.S. Total	300	110	37%	21%	30%	24%
BRITAIN						
AEEU	5	5	100%	40%	20%	60%
RMT*	6	0	0%	83%	67%	17%
TGWU*	7	0	0%	0%	114%	0%
Total U.K.	18	5	28%	39%	50%	14%

\* No report received

AEEU — Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Workers Union; AMWU — Amalgamated Manufacturers Union; CAW — Canadian Autoworkers Union; EU — Engineers Union; MWU — Meat Workers Union; IAM — International Association of Machinists; OCAW — Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers; RMT — National Union of Rail, Maritime, and Transport Workers; TGWU — Transport and General Workers Union; UAW — United Auto Workers; UFBGWU — United Food, Beverage, and General Workers Union; UFCW — United Food and Commercial Workers; UMW — United Mine Workers of America; UNITE — Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees; USWA — United Steelworkers of America; UTU — United Transportation Union.

League in Canada, January 1-4, 1998.

Katy LeRougetel is a member of United Steelworkers of America Local 5338 in Toronto YS member Fabian Garcia contributed to this article.

# Young Socialists in Canada hold convention

Continued from front page  
Woodstock, Ontario.

Including the 11 delegates from the three chapters, 58 people registered for the convention. The international character of the Young Socialists came across in the gathering, with the participation of fraternal delegates and observers from France, Iceland, Sweden, and the United States. Greetings from the international delegates, the Political Committee of the Communist League in Canada, and the Union of Young Communists in Cuba were read at the convention.

Three documents on the political principles, rules of membership and organization, and a security policy were put before the delegates for discussion and vote. These documents were discussed and debated out in all three chapters during the seven weeks leading up to the convention.

In his report to the convention on "Working-Class Resistance and the Crisis of Imperialism: Building the Young Socialists," YS leader Carlos Cornejo explained that under the impact of the deepening crisis of capitalism in the world, more young people are radicalizing and moving into action. They organize walkouts against cutbacks in education and participate in the Ontario Federation of Labor "Days of Action" protests in Ontario, they march for immigrant rights in New York City, and young workers in St-Hubert, Quebec, fight to organize a union at McDonald's.

"The Young Socialists were born out of this resistance in Canada, the United States, and around the world," said Cornejo. "They were attracted to the example of Che Guevara, the Cuban and Russian revolutions, and they felt the need to read books by Fidel Castro, Malcolm X, Thomas Sankara, Lenin, and Marx."

## Quebec and socialist revolution

"Addressing the national question in Canada is crucial in the fight for the unity of the working class, and for constructing a communist youth organization based on equals," explained Cornejo. One of the principles adopted by the YS states, "We join in the fight for Quebec independence."

"The Canadian government would like us to believe that it is more humane than the others," the YS leader noted. "In the meantime, it is the main military force behind the occupation of Haiti and its forces are stationed in Yugoslavia, as well as other countries."

"It is the same government that militarily occupied Quebec during the 1970s to crush the fight against national oppression of the Quebecois — a struggle that continues to mobilize thousands of workers and youth against Ottawa today. The same rulers sent in an occupation force against Natives in Kanesatake in 1990 as they fought for their land. And Canadian banks continue to plunder Latin America."

Delegates also discussed the importance of supporting the right to self-determination for all oppressed nationalities, including the Native peoples in Canada.

Cornejo explained that the YS seeks to "orient ourselves toward the working-class and its vanguard party, the Communist League in Canada, with the goal of participating in leading the working class to take power in Canada. It is in this framework that we must understand the importance of the fight for Quebec independence."

A good deal of discussion took place on the historical continuity between the Russian and Cuban revolutions. Members discussed experiences in meetings commemorating the political legacy of Ernesto Che Guevara. "Reconquering the lessons born out of the 1917 Bolshevik-led revolution in Russia is part of explaining the communist Che was, how he fits into the communist continuity of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, V.I. Lenin, and Leon Trotsky," said Mick McDonald, YS leader from Toronto and member of the United Steelworkers of America. As part of this effort, one of the classes held during the convention was on



Militant photos: top, Brian Taylor; left, John Sarge  
Youth repelled by the war, racism, and economic depression bred by capitalism and attracted to a socialist alternative gathered in Montreal for the founding convention of the Young Socialists. Above, participants celebrate the arrival of French-language translation of *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics*. Participation in actions like October 17 labor protest in Windsor, Ontario, (left) forged YS.

the history of the Russian Revolution. Other popular classes were on the fight for Quebec independence and on political developments in Cuba today by Militant reporter Martin Koppel.

There was also ample discussion on the point in the political principles that outlined the Young Socialists' opposition to all imperialist trade and military pacts, including NATO and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) pact. A delegate from Vancouver described the YS's participation in the NO! to APEC Coalition, which is organizing protests against the imperialist-dominated trade forum.

Other questions delegates took up were how the YS works with others to broaden participation in social protest actions and the importance of the security policy that members have no involvement with illegal drugs. This policy is needed to defend a revolutionary youth organization in today's world of police brutality and increasing attacks on democratic rights. Xochitl Punal from Vancouver said, "We should try to convince other organizations we collaborate with why they need a policy like ours."

An important task of the delegates was to

elect a Central Committee responsible for leading the YS between conventions. After some discussion on where the Central Executive Committee of the CC should be located, members decided it must be in Montreal. The decision was based on the understanding of the Quebecois struggle against national oppression being at the heart of the fight against the imperialist state of Canada. In this way, the YS would be in the best position to strengthen its strategy to unify the working class to fight for a workers and farmers government in Canada.

Patricia O'Beirne presented the second report to the convention, titled, "Propaganda Axis and the Tasks of the Young Socialists." It laid out a plan of action for the YS to organize in the coming months to reach out to young fighters with revolutionary books and periodicals.

"There are more openings today to win youth to seeing the revolutionary potential of the working class," she said. But to do this "they have to come into contact with communist ideas, either through meeting up with members of communist organizations, or coming across a book that explains world politics from a communist perspective."

The delegates voted to join in a campaign

alongside the Communist League to sell *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics: Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions* — which is available now in English, French, and Spanish — between November 1 and January 1, through participating in labor struggles, protest actions, literature tables, and by approaching co-workers on the job.

The main public event of the convention was the launching of *Le visage changeant de la politique aux États-Unis — la politique ouvrière et les syndicats*, the French translation of *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics*. Rafik Benali, a member of the Young Socialists in France, said, "Our central axis is recruitment of young fighters, and building a proletarian party. *The Changing Face* is a handbook for that."

Those attending the convention bought 12 copies of the book in French and two in English. Among them were two high school students who decided to put their money together so they could get a copy of the book in French.

Over the last year, a growing number of YS members have decided to get jobs in industrial work sites along with members of the Communist League in order to carry out effective communist political work on the job. A third of the YS members are trade unionists, and others plan to get into industry.

Another important step made at the convention included launching a national fund campaign of CAN\$3,000 as an essential part of building a self-financed organization that can act in politics. Among other activities over the next month, YS members plan to attend the demonstration for women's rights in Quebec City on November 15, the November 17-22 anti-APEC events in Vancouver, and an antifascist book fair in Gardanne, France, in November.

The convention closed with the announcement of the newly elected Central Committee. Its regular members are Carlos Cornejo, Jacob Gavin, Maria Isabel Le Blanc, Mick McDonald, and Patricia O'Beirne. The three alternate members are Christian Cornejo, Vuk Krcmar Grkavac, and Elssa Martínez.

## 'Looking to join the Young Socialists,' says Quebecois youth at convention

BY BRIAN TAYLOR

MONTREAL — "I'm looking toward joining the Young Socialists," 18-year-old Erick Lafleur from Quebec told this reporter during the October 31-November 2 Young Socialists founding convention here. About a dozen young people who were not members of the YS attended the convention.

Explaining his first contact with the YS, Lafleur said, "I went to a Che commemoration in Quebec where the YS had a stand to sell Pathfinder books. There, I met [YS member] Carlos, who told me about a Militant Labor forum on the work of Che in Latin America." He continued, "I was interested in how the YS works so I asked if I could participate in the forum and possibly join the Young Socialists. That's when he invited me to come" to the convention. Most impressive to him, Lafleur said, was the international character of the event.

Quebec independence activist Maude Prod'Homme, 16, was impressed by the fact that the convention was overwhelmingly held in French. Prod'Homme, a high school student, participated together with a Young Socialist member in a lunchtime discussion group. Formerly a member of the anarchist group Food Not Bombs, Prod'Homme said she wanted to see what the YS is all about. "I think the independence struggle is a great

example of a fight," she said. "It is an historic oppression, whose injustice is so evident. The question is *how* to fight."

Fabián García had joined the YS just before the convention. He was most impressed by the seriousness of the political discussions that took place during the delegated sessions of the convention.

García bought *Pombo: A Man of Che's 'Guerrilla'* and *Le visage changeant de la politique aux États-Unis*. Following the convention discussion on defending the YS against harassment and victimization from the state and its cop organizations, García also bought *Cointelpro: The FBI's Secret War on Political Freedom*.

Andrew Sovran joined the YS in Woodstock, Ontario, two weeks before the convention during a tour by YS leader Maria Isabel Le Blanc. Young Socialist Kevin Austin found out that Sovran was doing a high school project on Fidel Castro's political history, and invited him to "check out some Pathfinder books." Sovran had scrounged his high school library and read *The Communist Manifesto*. During the convention he bought copies of *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics: Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions* and *New International no. 3*, which includes the articles "Communism and the Fight for a Popular

Revolutionary Government: 1848 to Today" by Mary-Alice Waters and "National Liberation and Socialism in the Americas" by Manuel Piñeiro.

Sarede Switzer, 17, came on the last day of the convention. "I was always interested in socialist ideas," she said. Switzer bought a subscription to the *Militant* and attended a class on the 1917 Bolshevik-led revolution in Russia.

Julien Boisvert, 19, is a student at the College de Maisonneuve and a journalist for the student newspaper there called *Trait d'Union*. He met the YS at a literature table when the posters on it caught his attention. One was of Che Guevara, another called for support for the unionization drive at McDonald's, and the third was on the fight for Quebec independence, which surprised him because there is no referendum currently taking place.

"I've wanted to get involved for a long time," Boisvert said. "Last year I participated in a protest at Quebec City during the student strike there. A bunch of us would discuss the fact that we were against the cuts, but I would never be able to come up with what we could do instead. That's why I was interested in the YS," he said. The political arguments of the Young Socialists are the "way to convince people."



# Boston protesters: 'no death penalty'

BY TED LEONARD

BOSTON — More than 250 people rallied on the steps of the Massachusetts State House here October 27 in opposition to the death penalty. Protesters carried signs demanding "Down with the Racist Death Penalty," "An eye for an eye leaves two people blind," and asking "Who will you kill when the state kills the wrong person?"

Five days later 200 people participated in a second rally at the State House in the pouring rain.

The rallies were in response to a bill to restore the death penalty that the House passed October 28 by a 81-79 vote. It was the eighth time in seven years a death penalty bill was before the House. A few weeks earlier, the state Senate passed a different bill to reinstate capital punishment.

Proponents of the death penalty took advantage of several recent murders and sexual assaults of women and children to wage an hysterical campaign for the measure. The last execution in Massachusetts took place in 1947. The October 27 platform included a representative of Amnesty International, civil libertarians, local church leaders, and elected officials.

Bobby Joe Leaster also spoke. At age 19 he was sentenced to life imprisonment for murder. After serving 15 years for a crime he did not commit, Leaster was released when new evidence was presented that exonerated him. Quoted the day after the rally in *The Boston Globe* he said, "I'm a living example of what could happen."

Echoing this theme *The Boston Globe* in an October 28 editorial, entitled "Wrongful

death" explained, "In a welter of public passion, Massachusetts executed Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti 70 years ago. Half a century later, the state apologized. A proclamation signed by Governor Dukakis acknowledged that their trial had been unfair. While their innocence has not been established beyond doubt, their guilt is certainly in question, and the proclamation directed that their names be cleared."

Alicia Jefferson, a young Black woman, explained from the platform, "There is no justice in this country. If there was they would be talking about giving us food and housing and education."

Elena Tate and Michaela McSweeney, from the Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School Gay/Straight Alliance, spoke. Tate said, "Young people have a huge stake in keeping the death penalty out of our state.... It is a dangerous tool for the state to have and impossible to be given out justly."

The November 1 "Rally to Stop the Death Penalty" was sponsored by and included speakers from the Massachusetts Civil Liberties Union, Massachusetts chapter of the Lawyers Guild, the NAACP, Physicians for Human Rights, American Friends Service Organizations. This rally was overwhelmingly young with students from nearby high schools and campuses.

If the bill passed by the House goes into effect, Massachusetts would become the 39th state to reintroduce the death penalty since the U.S. Supreme Court made it legal to do so in 1976.

The bill is broad in scope, covering first-

## Houston socialist campaign in the news



The Daily Cougar/Jennifer Ward

"Mayoral candidates speak at UH," read the headline from the University of Houston student newspaper, *The Daily Cougar* October 16 over an article about a campus debate that included Socialist Workers candidate for mayor Patti Iiyama. The article quoted Iiyama extensively about education, affirmative action, taxes, employment, and racism. "Affirmative action is important to all workers, white, black, Asian, Hispanic, male, female, citizen, immigrant, whatever, because there can be no unity with discrimination," the student newspaper quoted Iiyama as saying. The article ran with the picture above.

degree murders that fall into 15 categories. They include the killing of cops; firefighters, judges, jurors, and witnesses; people killed by explosive devices or automatic weapons; defendants involved in drug "trafficking;" murders committed in violation of domestic restraining orders; and murders committed in front of immediate family members.

Andrew Buchanan, the Socialist Workers candidate for mayor of Boston, campaigning at the November 1 rally said, "All working people, youth, and those interested

in the defense of democratic rights must join the fight against the death penalty. Not only because of its barbarity but because it is a weapon leveled against all working people and all progressive social movements. It is a weapon the bosses and their politicians aim to use extensively in the deepening economic crisis, social turmoil, and working-class resistance which lie ahead."

Ted Leonard is a member of the United Transportation Union Local 1473

# 'Not one penny to capitalist sports barons'

BY JEFFREY JONES

ST. PAUL, Minnesota — "Working people need funding from the state and city for more available child care, rather than spending one penny on building a new stadium for professional baseball," said Jennifer Benton, Socialist Workers candidate for mayor of Minneapolis. Benton was invited to speak October 18 on a candidates' panel as part of the City Parents United child care congress.

Minnesota governor Arne Carlson ordered a special session of the state legislature on October 20, in an attempt to get public funding approved for building a new sta-

dium for the professional baseball team, the Minnesota Twins. The team's owner, Carl Pohlad, has threatened to sell the baseball franchise to a businessman who would take it to North Carolina if this session fails to approve public funding for a new stadium.

Pohlad said that he can't pay for a competitive team without the increased revenues that a new stadium is estimated to bring in. He testified before a legislative committee on October 24 arguing that this required \$250 million from the state and \$50 million from the city of Minneapolis and Hennepin County, where the new stadium would be built. The Twins currently share revenues

from the Metrodome stadium in Minneapolis, opened in 1982, with the Vikings football team.

The owners of professional teams in many other cities across the United States are similarly pushing for new sports arenas, built with public funds. They are driven by the same thirst to cash in on new revenue sources — more ticket sales, concessions, and merchandising, luxury corporate suites, and rights to name the stadium.

Minnesota legislators face opposition to public funding for a new stadium, as expressed in several polls. In response, legislators have floated a wide variety of funding schemes. By emphasizing state revenues derived from the state lottery or proposals to expand gambling under state control, some legislators have claimed this would mean no actual taxes would be involved.

"State-sponsored gambling, whether it's lottery tickets or state-run casinos, still amounts to taxation and it primarily falls on the working class," explained Benton, in a subsequent interview. "My campaign calls for an end to all taxation on the working class and exploited producers. I am also opposed to the attempts to infringe on the sovereignty of Native American nations in Minnesota by the state demanding a share of profits from gambling on Indian lands in return for not opening casinos in direct competition."

Benton also stated her opposition to a professional, profit-driven sports system. By putting the talents of athletes into a market of contracts where they are bought, sold, and traded, the human value of their training and efforts are distorted and debased. Many working people are justly repelled by the frenzied profit taking of the owners and the large contract payoffs to some individual athletes, with additional millions of dollars to participate in the huckstering of capitalist products.

Benton pointed to how differently sporting events are organized in socialist Cuba, where profit-making has been removed from athletics. With the 1959 revolution there, athletic education and amateur sports was opened widely to workers and peasants. Today, Cuban athletes rank among the best in the world.

Another example of the difficulty in winning support for public funding of a new stadium for baseball comes from a proposed city charter amendment on the November 4 ballot in Minneapolis. This amendment

would require approval in a city referendum for any city expenditure of more than \$10 million on a new or renovated stadium.

The president of the downtown business association opposes this amendment on the grounds that it could force the selection of another city in Minnesota for the site of the proposed stadium or block it altogether. Minneapolis mayor Sharon Sayles-Belton has said she doesn't like policy making by referendum, but has avoided coming out specifically against the amendment. Her Republican-endorsed opponent in the election, Barbara Carlson, sensed an opportunity and reversed her initial position opposing the amendment.

The Minnesota 1997 Socialist Workers Campaign called for a No vote on this proposed amendment. Benton explained that this referendum "places the question in the wrong framework of accepting that some city money — up to \$10 million — will be spent. Rather than \$10 million or 10 cents being given away for a new opportunity to make profits, we should demand a massive program of building and repairing public infrastructure and expanding public libraries, parks, and athletic facilities."

Jeff Jones is a member of the International Association of Machinists, Local 1833.

## Socialist candidate in D.C. addresses Machinists council

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

WASHINGTON, D.C. — "I'm running for city council in Washington, D.C. as the Socialist Workers candidate, explaining that working people need our own independent working-class voice and movement capable of defending ourselves against the assault by the ruling rich on our living standards and democratic rights," stated Mary Martin in an address to a meeting of the D.C.-Maryland Machinists Council on October 26. "This assault is a bipartisan one, coming down from both parties of the capitalist system under which we live."

Martin, the SWP candidate for D.C. City Council at-large in the December 2 special election, is a member of International Association of Machinists (IAM) Local 1759 and works as a baggage handler at National airport. Some 30 IAM delegates from Maryland and D.C. were in attendance at the meeting.

As an introduction to Martin's presentation, one of the union officials read the entire text of the socialist campaign leaflet to the audience, a copy of which was also given to all the delegates in attendance.

"The socialist alternative urges working people and our unions to break from the parties of the ruling rich and chart a course of independent political action and international solidarity," states the flyer. "This course points to workers and our allies establishing a government that acts to advance our interests, not those of our exploiters —

a workers and farmers government that will abolish capitalism in the United States and join in the worldwide struggle for socialism."

Martin received a warm reception from the unionists as she pointed to the inspiring examples of new labor resistance shown in the recent strike victories by the Teamsters at UPS, the Bay Area Rapid Transit Workers in San Francisco, and steelworkers in their 10-month-long strike against Wheeling-Pitt.

"My campaign promotes the idea of working-class political action independent of the capitalist parties and to stand with other unions and fighters to protest racist attacks, and to fight against anti-immigrant laws," stated Martin. "My campaign calls for 30 hours work for 40 hours pay to spread the available work around, for defending and extending affirmative action programs, for stopping police brutality, and for statehood for D.C. Governing officials should be building and repairing schools, not more prisons. I'm against the U.S. rulers' drive toward wars, which are not in our interest." She also pointed to the importance of defending the Cuban revolution.

In a discussion later in their meeting, the Machinists Council voted to endorse Martin's campaign and sent her a letter suggesting she contact other IAM locals in the D.C. area for speaking engagements.

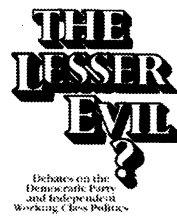
Brian Williams is a member of United Steelworkers of America Local 2609.

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# 'This was the work of a giant'

The interview below is with Arturo Guzmán, who is today an economic advisor to CUBALSE, a Cuban state import company. The interview was originally published in the Oct. 6, 1997, issue of *Trabajadores*, the weekly newspaper of the Central Organization of Cuban Workers (CTC), under the title "The work of a giant." Translation and footnotes are by the *Militant*.

BY JULIO GARCÍA LUIS

Guzmán's time is just about freely convertible. His current job as financial adviser to CUBALSE is directly linked to the intense effort to obtain hard currency, and he puts all his long experience in economic management into this task. Additionally, he does not like to squander what for him is "something very intimate, cherished memories." He is referring to the early 1960s, when he held a whole range of management responsibilities in the Ministry of Industry, from factory administrator up to working closely with Che as first deputy minister.

Nevertheless, his kindness, in combination with the spirit of those days of remembrance, proved stronger. In the end, he made time to see us.

"I did not know Che. I had been involved in the clandestine struggle in Havana and was a professional accountant. In February 1960 I received a sheet of paper designating me as administrator of an 'intervened' factory called Técnica Cubana, in Cárdenas. This was a plant producing paper from sugarcane bagasse.

"A short time after that, I saw Che for the first time. He came to visit the factory, and we showed him the installations and explained the production process. Afterward I asked if he wanted to see more. 'Where are the warehouses?' he asked. We went there and he began to examine the packing slips, in order to verify that what each one said matched what was actually there. Aleida, his companion, helped him. She would read: 'x amount of 15-watt light bulbs' and there had to be that number of bulbs. He was giving me a practical lesson that's lasted my entire life. 'This is important,' he was telling me. 'It is your responsibility. Nothing can be missing here.'

"I think that to be able to assess what this extraordinary man did at the National Bank, the Department of Industrialization of the National Institute of Agrarian Reform, and the Ministry of Industry," Guzmán states, "one would have to recreate the whole atmosphere of those days, which you would find hard to understand if you didn't live through them.

"The conditions were exceptionally adverse. First of all there was the exodus of technicians. In Técnica Cubana, when I arrived, there were 18 engineers — Cuban,

Canadian, and North American. In a short time, there were only two Cuban engineers left, plus one middle-level technician.

"There was no machine tool industry on a national level. The U.S. blockade of spare parts, raw materials, and goods of every type was getting under way, and there were no means to produce spare parts. We didn't even have the blueprints to make them. One must remember that 95 percent of the basic means of production that were nationalized came from the U.S. There was enormous dependency. That is the context in which Che accomplished the feat of avoiding a collapse of industry, maintaining production, organizing it, and even managing to make it grow steadily. Statistics of the time show that between 1960 and 1967 industry grew at an average annual rate of 4 percent.

"What's more, this was done over five years, and with scientific and technical personnel like ourselves, to boot. We were people with no training; combatants of different backgrounds, with no authority other than our political credibility.

"Just so you get an idea, on August 10, 1963, all the administrators of industry in the country took an exam, and it was determined that anyone lacking a sixth-grade education could not continue in administration. There were 132 comrades who had to either go back to school, or return to their original work places. Looking at it from today's standpoint, having a sixth-grade education is nothing great.

"At a meeting shortly after that, Che stated that his Directing Council — that is, all of us — were 'makeshift luminaries.' And he didn't stop there. He gave us a period of 10 years to obtain a university degree in the fields we were heading. Since I knew this wasn't a joke but was very serious, I went and enrolled in industrial engineering.

"Once he gave us a little book on linear equations. Then, every so often, he would ask me — and I imagine he did this with the others — whether I had read the book, whether I had studied it. Finally he realized that we were not making great use of the book, and he called us together one day at 7:00 in the morning, and began to give us classes."

## His vision of the future

"One of the things that should be stressed is the all-embracing nature of the system Che created in the Ministry of Industry. There was a policy on cadre development, an economic policy, a policy on scientific development, there was a plan for future perspectives, we talked about making chemicals from sugarcane in the long term, of the production of nickel, steel, fertilizers....

"The basic feature of the cadre policy was promotion of scientific and technical personnel from the ranks, based on performance

ter consultation with Washington.

As part of the commemoration of this anniversary in Cuba, dozens of articles, speeches, and interviews by those who worked with Che are being published, dealing with the Cuban revolution, its impact in world politics, and the actions of its leadership.

Many of Guevara's collaborators and family members have spoken at conferences and other meetings, bringing Che to life for a new generation and explaining the importance of his rich political legacy today. These materials contain many valuable firsthand accounts and information, some of which are being written down and published for the first time. They are part of the broader discussion taking place in Cuba today on how to advance the revolution.

The *Militant* is reprinting a selection of these contributions as a weekly feature, under the banner "Che Guevara and the Cuban Revolution."



Ernesto Che Guevara, left, presenting award for voluntary work in 1964 union meeting. At center is Cuban trade union leader Lázaro Peña.

on the job. At a certain moment, with one or two exceptions, all of us on the Directing Council came from the ranks.

"In addition, the cadre policy was based on great rigor in selecting scientific and technical personnel, and a demanding attitude toward the fulfillment of tasks. In the ministry there was a system of councils, offices, and meetings. Agreed-to tasks were to be carried out to the letter. If an agreement could not be fulfilled, you were required to submit in writing, prior to the deadline, the reasons for it, and you had to receive written authorization for nonfulfillment of the agreement.

"Fifteen minutes after the time set for a meeting, no latecomers would be allowed in. Discipline was conscious, above all, but it was also obligatory. If you failed to meet an agreed-upon task, you weren't scolded, you were sanctioned. Every day that a statistical report was delayed was one day's less pay for the director responsible. Guanahacabibes was set up to deal with administrative problems of a more serious nature.<sup>1</sup> In other words, 'Praise the lord, but pass the ammunition.'

"Che's emphasis on reducing costs is completely valid today. He promoted the use of statistics and economic projections, economic analysis, mathematical techniques. At that time there was a large computer, an Elliot, which occupied the entire basement of the Ministry of Labor and was run from there. Who knows what Che would have achieved with today's computers?

"I was director of the heavy chemical branch of industry for a time, and discussions on the production plan were held on the sixth or eighth of every month. Those days and no others. Which means that you had to have your report ready. I had a Friden, a gigantic machine, and I was extremely happy that they gave it to me. Now, on the fifth of the month, the country's books were closed for record keeping. And it was record keeping that was 100 percent accurate, because if it wasn't accurate... if you came to the Ministry of Industry with a report that had inaccurate figures — well, better you should dry up and disappear before entering. There was one type of record keeping — accurate — and that's that.

"Moreover, one must keep in mind that everything was within a single ministry. For example, when I was leading the heavy chemical branch, there were five enterprises in it, and one of them was the Consolidated Sugar Enterprise headed by Alfredo Menéndez and Esteban Breto, with a team of technical personnel, and it produced six million tons of sugar a year.

"We had a really powerful apparatus of supervision: it eventually had some 400 members, between accountants and inspectors, to review performance of that entire industrial universe.

"It was a systematic, rigorous job that compelled you to respond at every moment and to each and every problem.

## He did not impose his views

"As is well known, Che's economic policies were carried out in the framework of the budgetary finance system. And there's one thing that says a lot about his personal qualities, which is that he didn't impose his views but submitted them for discussion. In the magazine *Nuestra Industria Económica*,

which at that time was one of the three publications we had in the Ministry of Industry, there were articles on the economic accounting and the budgetary finance systems, both from defenders and opponents.

"He also created a policy on scientific development and established institutes such as ICIDCA, compelling us to come up with the personnel and resources required from what little we had.

"Che founded a Vice Ministry of Technological Development, which aimed to promote science and technology, as well as a Vice Ministry of Industrial Construction. There was a lack of experience in the country. Nevertheless, factories were built such as the domestic utensils plant in Santa Clara, which was up and running in two years, and the textile mills of Gibara and Alquizar.

"Only a genius could oversee all that, in the midst of the blockade, of sabotage, of counterrevolution, of the lack of trained personnel in everything.

"Che had no special background for this task. He was a doctor, a guerrilla fighter, and everything he did began when he was assigned there. In addition, he had political, military, and international responsibilities, a host of things. But one of his hours at the ministry was the equivalent of months of work.

"When you look back at that time, and see this as whole, you say: 'This was the work of a giant.'"

<sup>1</sup> Guanahacabibes was a work camp for administrators in the Ministry of Industry who committed serious infractions. Going there for a period of time was voluntary political punishment. If an administrator refused to go, he would be removed from his position. After completing a period of time there, persons were reinstated in their old post.

## for further reading

### Che Guevara, Cuba, and the Road to Socialism

In *New International* no. 8

**Ernesto Che Guevara, Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, Carlos Tablada, Mary-Alice Waters, Steve Clark, Jack Barnes**

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This selection is part of a series marking the 30th anniversary of the death in combat of Ernesto Che Guevara. Argentine by birth, Guevara became one of the central leaders of the Cuban revolution that brought down the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship in 1959 and, in response to mounting pressure from Washington, opened the socialist revolution in the Americas. Che, as he is popularly known, was one of the outstanding Marxist leaders of the 20th century.

In 1966-67, he led a nucleus of revolutionaries from Bolivia, Cuba, and Peru who fought to overthrow the military dictatorship in Bolivia. In the process, they sought to forge a Latin America-wide movement of workers and peasants that could lead the battle for land reform and against U.S. imperialist domination of the continent and advance the struggle for socialism. Guevara was wounded and captured on Oct. 8, 1967. He was shot the next day by the Bolivian military, af-

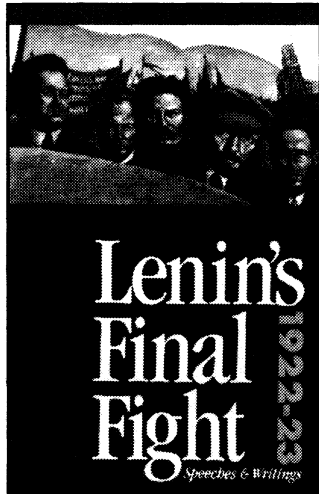


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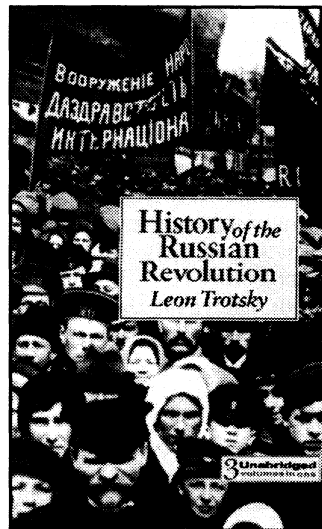


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V.I. LENIN

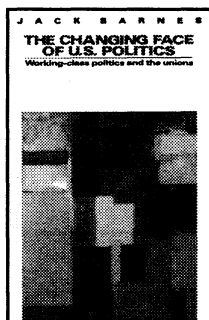
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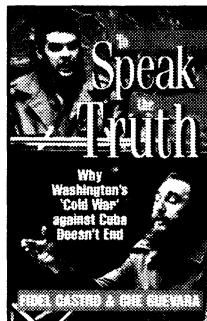
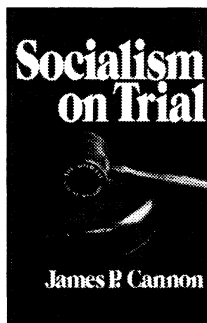
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# 'Che Guevara was model of an honest human being'

## Houston event celebrates Guevara's legacy

BY LEA SHERMAN  
AND ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

HOUSTON — "Originally Harry Villegas was scheduled to be our featured speaker as part of a panel on Che Guevara, internationalism, and his legacy today," said Farida Meguid, opening an October 28 meeting at the University of Houston. "But the U.S. government denied him a visa."

Meguid, president of the U of H chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW), welcomed about 70 students and others to the event. Renamed a week earlier "Why is Washington afraid to let Harry Villegas of Cuba come to the U.S.?" the meeting was sponsored by the university's Department of History, African American Studies Center, Dean of Humanities Lois Zamora, and a number of other professors and student and community groups. Those included the Latina Coalition, Pan African People for Progressive Action (PAPPA), MEChA, Irish Unity Committee, Cuba Friendship Committee of Houston, and S.H.A.P.E. Center.

"(Villegas) is an extraordinarily important historical resource," said Thomas O'Brien, chairman of the History Department, in an interview that was quoted in a front-page article in the October 29 *Daily Cougar*, the main campus newspaper. "He was a companion of (Guevara). They fought together in Bolivia and the Congo.... I don't know that there is another living figure who can offer the same perspective."

María González, Director of Graduate Studies at the Department of English at U of H, and Tom Kleven, a law professor at Texas Southern University, co-chaired the meeting. They asked participants to write and call the State Department demanding that the U.S. government reverse its decision and grant Villegas a visa. Kleven introduced a 14-minute videotaped interview with Villegas shown on Cuban television last year.

Villegas, also known by his *nom-de-guerre* Pombo, is today a brigadier general of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces. While a young man in his late teens, Villegas, whose father was a carpenter in a small village in eastern Cuba, joined the Rebel Army and July 26 Movement that led the 1956-58 revolutionary war in Cuba, culminating with the overthrow of the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Batista. He fought with Ernesto Che Guevara, Argentine by birth and one of the central leaders of the Cuban revolution, in Cuba's Sierra Maestra and in internationalist missions in the Congo in 1965 and later in Bolivia. Villegas wrote *Pombo: A Man of Che's 'Guerrilla'*, his

account of the Bolivia campaign, which was published in Cuba in 1996. Pathfinder Press published the English-language edition of the book last summer. The October 28 event marked the 30th anniversary of the fall in combat of Guevara and his comrades in Bolivia.

### 'A model of an honest human being'

"By banning Villegas, the State Department has denied us as students a choice that we should have a right to make," said Patrick Hawkins, a representative of PAPPA, in bringing greetings to the event from the student group. Hawkins then read a message from Villegas to the students.

"It's very gratifying to know that today you are holding this scientific event on the thought and works of commander Ernesto Che Guevara, a model for all humanity of an honest human being," Villegas wrote.

"Che's example is more relevant every day because the evils afflicting the societies of the third world are growing: there is more poverty, more hunger, more illiteracy. But sooner rather than later, the social justice you and others are fighting for will prevail throughout the world."

The panel featured Dagoberto Rodríguez, First Secretary for Political Affairs at the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, D.C., and Mary-Alice Waters, editor of the English-language edition of *Pombo: A Man of Che's 'Guerrilla'* and president of Pathfinder Press. The sponsoring professors and student groups decided to invite these speakers when they learned on October 20 that the State Department had denied Villegas a visa. Kleven said, in introducing Rodríguez, "so we could have a chance to hear and discuss the ideas the U.S. government is trying to censor."

Rodríguez described how Guevara, after graduating from medical school in Argentina, traveled throughout Latin America in the early 1950s experiencing first hand the terrible social conditions working people faced and their struggles to change them. He also told the story of how Guevara joined Fidel Castro and other Cuban fighters in Mexico in 1955 and subsequently became a commander of the Rebel Army and a central leader of the Cuban revolution.

"Che was not just a guerrilla fighter and military strategist, as some people try to portray him," Rodríguez said. "As president of the National Bank in Cuba and minister of industry in the early 1960s, Che set an example of the new human being he argued millions can become through the revolution. He was a man who combined action and ideas. He was a tireless reader, with indomitable persistence, and took time as he held heavy responsibilities in the new government in Cuba to write about the revolutionary process, leaving us a rich record."

"Today his ideas are more alive than ever. His legacy is expressed in the determination of millions of Cubans to defend the revolution under tremendous odds," he said, referring to Washington's escalating economic war against the Cuban people and the loss of much of the trade and aid from the former Soviet bloc countries since the opening of the 1990s.

### Che is about the present

Iram Hernández, president of the U of H Cuba Friendship Committee, then introduced Waters, who had returned from Cuba just the day before.

Waters, who had met with Villegas a few days earlier, conveyed a personal salutation from him to the meeting. "Villegas had been very much looking forward to this trip," Waters said, "because the in-

## UN pickets: 'Lift the blockade against Cuba!'



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

Around 20 people gathered across the street from the United Nations November 5, where Ricardo Alarcón, president of Cuba's National Assembly, was addressing the General Assembly, protesting the embargo against Cuba. The pickets chanted in English and Spanish, "Hey, hey, ho, ho, that blockade has got to go!" and "Cuba Sí, Bloqueo No!" among others. The United Nations was expected to pass a resolution against the embargo on Cuba. Casa de las Américas called the picket, which drew activists from the Cuban Committee for Peace of Elizabeth, New Jersey, and other organizations. "We are always in every action for lifting the blockade," said Sandra Lozada López, one of the activists of the committee, second from left in above photo, joined by her daughter Janet Alvarez, first from left. Alarcón will be speaking in New York, Saturday, November 8, at 8 p.m. at Casa de Las Américas, 104 14th St., corner of 6th Ave.

vitations from the professors and student groups here would have given him the opportunity to speak to an audience of young people — people of the age he was when he first met Che Guevara and began to look to Che for the example that he set."

Che Guevara is not about the past, Waters stated. "Just like the Cuban revolution from which Che is absolutely inseparable," she noted, "Che remains an example for us here today and for fighters all over the globe who are not willing to accept a world with the kind of poverty, injustice, and exploitation that Che gave his life fighting to change."

Pointing to the statement in the message from Villegas that Che set an example of an honest human being, Waters said, "This is a very simple, yet a very profound idea. Che was the kind of person who was capable of leading men and women to realize their capacity to do things they never thought they were capable of doing and to transform themselves in the process."

### October 1962 'missile crisis'

This month also marks the 35th anniversary of one of the most important events of the last half of this century, Waters stated, referring to what is known in the United States as the "missile crisis" and is described in Cuba and elsewhere as the October crisis. In October 1962 the administration of John F. Kennedy brought the world to the brink of nuclear war after its intelligence flights confirmed the installation of Soviet missiles in Cuba.

The Cuban government agreed to this installation earlier that year in face of Washington's escalating aggression. The recently published book *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Missile Crisis* contains transcripts of many of the meetings between Kennedy and his advisers at the time, shedding some new light on those events.

About the third day of those meetings, Waters said, the transcripts show that

Kennedy had decided to launch an invasion of Cuba. But when his advisors informed Kennedy that in the first ten days of such an invasion the U.S. military would suffer an estimated 18,000 casualties the administration changed course and began considering other alternatives. "That figure was greater than the total casualties U.S. forces were to sustain in Vietnam between 1961 and 1966," Waters said.

"It was the determination of the Cuban people to fight to defend their revolution, whatever the cost, that saved the world from nuclear holocaust. Not the 'calm and cool heads' of Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev," the Soviet premier at the time.

On the threshold of the 21st century, Waters continued, as the vulnerability and weakness of U.S. imperialism become more apparent, and the barriers to unity in struggle of working-class fighters from around the world continue to lessen, this same determination by the Cuban people and the example of Che, Pombo, and their comrades will gain greater weight. "That's why Washington is afraid for men and women like Pombo to come to the United States to talk to you directly about their lives and their struggle."

Others who made brief remarks from the panel included Marilyn White, representing the Latin American Committee of the Presbyterian church, and Robert Buzzanco of the U of H History Department. Ned Palmer of the Young Socialists read a message to Pombo and a letter demanding the State Department grant Villegas a visa, which the meeting approved.

Other messages protesting Washington's decision to deny Villegas a visa can be sent to James Theis, Cuba Desk, U.S. Department of State, 2201 C Street NW, Washington, D.C., 20250; Tel: (202) 647-9273; Fax: (202) 736-4475.

Lea Sherman is a member of the International Association of Machinists in Houston.

## Houston vote retains affirmative action

BY TONY DUTROW

HOUSTON — In a closely watched test of whether or not an anti-affirmative action initiative cloned from California's Proposition 209 could win on the ballot in the fourth largest city in the United States, opponents of affirmative action suffered a defeat. Proposition A was defeated 54 percent to 46 percent in the November 4 referendum.

Proposition A sought to gut the city's voluntary minority and women's contracting policies. Supporters of the measure dubbed their coalition and the petition effort launched this summer as the Houston Civil Rights Initiative.

There was a fight over the wording of the measure, which on the original petition read, "The City of Houston shall not discriminate against, or grant preferential treatment, to any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color ... in the operation of public employment and public contracting."

A re-wording of the ballot by the city government was upheld in court in September. The proposal that was voted down read, "Shall the charter of the city of Houston be amended to end the use of preferential treatment (Affirmative Action) in the operation of City of Houston employment and contracting?"

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# Ontario teachers

Continued from front page

embraced each other. This determined mood was expressed the next day when between 1,000 and 1,500 teachers and supporters rallied at Centennial College in Scarborough, a working-class suburb of Toronto. The rally themes centered on defense of public education, including adult education and junior kindergarten, which has already come under the government knife. Many carried placards reading: "Teachers care, we can't back down."

"This is the fight of our life," said Elaine Barrett, a secondary school teacher for 10 years. "If we have to lose three or four weeks pay [to win], then we have to do it." Since the teachers are not striking against the boards who employ them, but are protesting the government, they get no strike pay from the five unions to which they belong.

In a statement distributed to the demonstrators, OTF president Eileen Lennon said that the court decision "is a major defeat for [Premier] Harris. The Premier is now faced with some brutal realities: he can either sit down with the OTF and deal with the Federation's concerns about Bill 160, or he can push ahead and try to bully the teachers either by recalling the legislature or by trying to get a ruling from the Ontario Labor Relations Board.

"It is clearer today than ever, the Bill 160 will not improve education, that it shifts control [of education] from the communities to the cabinet, that it gives the government the means by which to cut hundreds of millions of dollars out of schools."

Bill 160 says almost nothing about education itself. It removes the power of the unions to negotiate students' learning and teachers' working conditions with the school boards, by giving the cabinet the power to determine all aspects of education, including class size. The government has announced it intends to reduce the time teachers now have to prepare classes — a move which the OTF says could result in the firing of up to 10,000 teachers.

## Growing support for teachers' fight

Support for the teachers' stand has been growing. Before the strike, polls showed about 42 percent were in favor of the teachers' opposition to Bill 160. A more recent poll showed 54 percent of those polled were behind the strike — including 59 percent of parents. The strike has closed schools for 2.1 million students. Conservative members of the Provincial Parliament are being flooded with complaints about the government's admission that it plans to take up to \$700 million out of the \$14 billion dollar education budget.

Melody Simard and Nancy Lague, on the picket line in front of the CCVS Vocational School in Cornwall, near Montreal, reported that all members of the Schools Council, which includes representatives of the teachers, parents, community, and business support the teachers. "They have seen what the cuts have done and don't want more," they said. Teachers' union leader Greg McGillis explained that in the Cornwall region where 25 percent of students are French speaking, further cuts would "devastate" French language education.

In the small community of Woodstock 2,000 teachers and supporters turned out to a rally October 31 at the office of the local member of the provincial parliament. In

stead of picketing the three high schools in the area, teachers have taken over the one main street in the town, which they picket every day.

There have been a few small actions against the strike. At an October 29 rally of several thousand teachers at the provincial legislature, a small group of students from Northern Secondary School set up a counter protest. "You have the wrong attitude, get back to negotiations," yelled Sabrina Kloetzig, 16.

In Newmarket, about 100 members of the Canadian Autoworkers (CAW), and Canadian Union of Public Employees, which organizes the 40,000 school support staff, who have refused to cross picket lines, joined 25 teachers on the picket line at Bogart Public School, where 18 of 45 teachers have crossed the line. Most schools, however, are shut tight. The Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation reported that of the 5,000 members of District 16, only 57 had crossed as of November 3.

The Canadian Taxpayers Association has now announced that it is attempting to go the complex route of filing a complaint before the OLRB on behalf of citizens in each of the school board districts.

In the meantime the picket lines remain and the OTF continues to hold rallies and demonstrations around the province. At a November 4 news conference CAW President Basil Hargrove called for a massive turnout at a union-sponsored solidarity rally at the Queen's Park legislature in Toronto, for the afternoon of November 8.

In a statement given to the *Militant* at the Centennial College rally, CAW member



Militant/John Steele

**Teachers picket Central Technical School in Toronto. Their mass protest against the provincial government's Bill 160 has won wide support among working people.**

Joanne Pritchard, who is the Communist League candidate for mayor of Toronto in the November 10 municipal election, said: "The court ruling reflects the massive support by working people and students throughout Ontario and across Canada for the line in the sand drawn by the teachers' against the government's cuts to education. This support strengthens the ongoing fight against cuts to health care, other social services, and the government's union-busting efforts.

"The Harris government can be beaten back in its efforts to gut public education and weaken the teachers' unions. We need

to double our efforts to explain to co-workers, friends and others the justice of the teachers' struggle, and to involve them in picket lines, rallies and demonstrations. In the final days of the election campaign, this is what my campaigners will be doing."

*John Steele is a member of International Association of Machinists Local 2113. Gary Watson, a member of CAW Local 1285 in Bramalea; Grant Hargrove, a member of the IAM in Montreal; and Young Socialist member Kevin Austin, a student at Woodstock Collegiate Institute, contributed to this article.*

# Tentative agreement at Amtrak

Continued from front page

at the announcement. The Clinton administration has actively intervened throughout the dispute against the union. In August, using provisions of the Railway Labor Act, President William Clinton enjoined the union from striking and appointed an emergency board to make proposals to settle the dispute. The board recommended accepting the union's wage proposal while referring work rules and other issues to negotiations.

The Railway Labor Act, passed by Congress in 1926, imposes a barrier to strikes for which there is little parallel elsewhere in U.S. industry. Railroad workers are saddled with the most complex labor laws on the books. The law proclaims that every decision by railroad unions to fight for major contract gains is followed by months of mediation, arbitration, and special boards. These mediation and arbitration boards are stacked against labor. During their meetings the old contracts remain in effect. This gives the railroads and the press time to mount propaganda campaigns against the workers.

As a participant at the bargaining table with the union and Amtrak's Board of Directors, Slater twice appealed to the union to extend the strike deadline, first winning an extension until October 29, and on the eve of the 2nd deadline gaining an eight-day extension until November 6.

The union and the company agreed to not disclose details of the settlement until it is submitted to the BMW membership for ratification and the Amtrak Board of Direc-

tors for approval. The November 3 *New York Times* reported however, that Slater said the deal with the union was "historic because it included provisions under which the railroad and the workers would receive benefits from productivity gains."

Under the deal Amtrak would save \$7 million in annual work rule concessions. The union promised to work out an additional \$6 million in concessions. The union is expected to receive less than the 3.5 percent wage increases sought, and the agreement is contingent upon Congressional approval of \$2.3 billion for Amtrak's capital funding.

The dispute has focused public discussion on the funding of a national passenger railroad. In announcing the strike settlement, Secretary Slater urged Congress to consider ways to keep the passenger rail line from going bankrupt. "There is clearly a role for Congress to play because the issue we are dealing with is not just the strike," he said. "Ultimately, we have to deal with the long-term viability of Amtrak." That budget agreement established a downward "glide path" into the next decade in which Amtrak would gradually get no operating subsidies. An October 29 *Wall Street Journal* editorial opined, "We've never been fans of keeping Amtrak on life support, and we agree it ought to be privatized."

Throughout the dispute a concerted campaign to whip up a hysteria against the maintenance workers, blaming them for inconveniencing professionals and other middle class layers, was orchestrated by Amtrak, other railroads, the business press and other media, and politicians.

"Commuter doomsday is detailed, Fears of Amtrak strike" was the headline of an October 16 *Daily News* article here in New York. The first line says, "Transit officials have a one-word prediction for next week's threatened Amtrak strike: pain"

New Jersey Transit issued a notice to passengers warning, "If a strike occurs, railroads throughout the country, including NJ Transit will not be able to operate rail service on portions of railroad which are owned and maintained by Amtrak." New Jersey Governor Christine Whitman created an Emergency Transportation Council to "oversee statewide contingency plans in case of a strike." During the "cooling off" period, flashing gridlock alert signs on major New Jersey highways warned of the impending strike. Signs posted in subways and all over Penn Station cautioned commuters to be prepared for long lines and delays.

The *Wall Street Journal* joined the anti-union fray. Editorializing under a banner of

"Who's Killing Amtrak?" they called the threatened strike "a pique" and whined about "Amtrak's archaic labor laws." New York Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan protested that unions shouldn't "close down the enterprise on which they survive."

Even without the wage increases, Amtrak has projected that it will have to borrow \$100 million, its most ever, to meet expenses for the current fiscal year, which ends next September. In addition, the passenger railroad is carrying a debt of about \$1 billion from new locomotives and other equipment it bought to modernize its fleet.

The tentative contract settlement is contingent on the approval of a so-called "reform" bill for the railroad, a step that would free \$2.3 billion that Congress set aside this summer for capital aid to Amtrak. It is also contingent upon Congress releasing \$200 million allocated this year for capital expenses and allowing Amtrak to use it for operating expenses, including salaries. In asking Congress for more money, Amtrak is assuming that the other rail unions, several of which are in current negotiations, will seek the same raise if it is given to the Maintenance of Way union.

Another provision of the "reform" bill is aimed at weakening union protections, allowing Amtrak to contract out work, potentially laying off its entire clerical, track, signal, and mechanical forces so it can use non-union labor. In addition, the legislation aims to alter the layoff protection the union won with Amtrak's inception. Federal law guarantees veteran workers six years' income if laid off due to route changes. The *Wall Street Journal* editorial page called this protection "the outrageous nature of Amtrak's feather-bedding contracts."

Scrawled above this antilabor editorial posted on the bulletin board in the crew room at Amtrak's Penn Station was "this shows what the ultra-rich parasites think of people who work an honest job for a living." This comment reflects the growing sentiment afoot after four weeks of approaching strike deadlines.

If all the promised funding does not come through Amtrak can cancel the contract and take 30 days to negotiate before the union will have the right to strike if an agreement is not reached. Given the various funding contingencies connected to the tentative settlement and the union's upcoming vote on the contract, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* noted, "Whether the deal will stick remains open to question."

*Ruth Robinett is a member of United Transportation Union Local 1370.*

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# Workers confront austerity drive in Asia

Continued from front page

November 3, after weeks of mass protests and political pressure. He had just met with Hubert Neiss, director of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Asian-Pacific department, to discuss how to implement the conditions for a \$17.2 billion economic "rescue package" set up by the IMF in August. All 48 ministers had earlier resigned from the Chavalit administration as mass protests forced the regime to rescind a new oil tax urged by the IMF as a means to pay off international investors. Similar demonstrations brought down the military government there in May 1992.

These events highlight mounting explosive pressures as regimes in Southeast Asia attempt to impose IMF-sponsored "bailouts" in response to a deepening currency crisis. A wave of currency devaluations has exacerbated an unfolding banking crisis, with bad bank debts totaling nearly \$1 trillion around the region. The currency devaluations will make it more expensive for these governments to pay back the loans and compounded interest on them.

The regime in Jakarta closed down 16 ailing banks over the weekend of November 1 in a move that affected tens of thousands of people. The closures are part of a "reform program" pushed by the IMF in return for more than \$37 billion in new loans to the government. The Indonesia rupiah has lost about 35 percent of its value against the U.S. dollar since July.

Between 1980 and 1995, the country's foreign debt quintupled to more than \$107 billion, according to the World Bank, as it was being touted as one of the promising "emerging markets" where rapid capitalist expansion was possible. The Asian Development Bank estimates that \$10-\$15 billion in private loans must be repaid or rolled over in the next six months.

Expressing the capitalist rulers' nervousness over the "political risks" that regimes in the region must be prepared to take, a commentary in London's *Financial Times* November 3 remarked, "The IMF deal may indicate that the Jakarta government is committed, and politically strong enough, to enforce some painful measures."

Indonesia is the world's fourth-largest country, with a population of more than 200 million people. Suharto recently chopped \$13 billion worth of infrastructure projects laying off thousands of workers; thousands more have lost their jobs as unofficial estimates of underemployment increase up to 40 percent. Earlier in October, some 10,000 aerospace workers went on strike at the

IPTN aircraft factory in Bandung protesting wages that had been frozen for a year.

The regime plans to implement other measures demanded by IMF officials, including ending state monopolies on imports of wheat, garlic, and soybeans; reducing import tariffs on chemicals, metal products, and fish; and opening distribution and wholesale markets to foreign companies manufacturing in Indonesia. These steps will open up the economy to greater penetration and domination by the imperialist powers, at the expense of the national bourgeoisie.

Bambang Trihadmodjo, Suharto's son, has threatened to go to court over the shutdown of Bank Andromeda, where he holds a 25 percent stake. The bank lent him and two other shareholders \$75 million, which they used to pay off some of the \$1.37 billion debt of the Chandra Asri petrochemical plant. Bambang and other colleagues own 75 percent of the plant, which was shielded from foreign competition by the import tariffs.

## Asian fund rejected by Washington

In an attempt to shore up the rupiah, several central Asian banks — Bank Indonesia, the Bank of Japan, and the Monetary Authority of Singapore — purchased an estimated \$500 million of the Indonesian currency. The central banks in Singapore and Japan pledged \$5 billion each in "standby" loans to Indonesia. Japan's finance ministry and some regimes in Southeast Asia have been pushing to create a \$100 billion Asian Monetary Fund. This proposal was dismissed by Washington at recent IMF and World Bank meetings in Hong Kong.

The Malaysian government, which also pledged \$1 billion to the Indonesian bailout package, had been blocked by the U.S. government from launching an Asian economic

trade pact called the East Asia Economic Caucus. Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad announced September 3 that his administration was setting up a \$20 billion support fund. Mahathir called foreign investors "racists" who are "not happy to see us prosper." Using anti-Semitic demagoguery, he claimed Malaysia's economic troubles were caused by Jews who "robbed the Palestinians of everything, but in Malaysia they could not do so, hence they do this, depress the ringgit."

The Malaysian ringgit has lost some 30 percent of its value since the avalanche of currency devaluations that began when Thailand government officials released the Thai baht's peg with the U.S. dollar on July 2.

The Clinton administration announced October 30 it would contribute \$3 billion toward the Indonesian bailout, to be used only if the main IMF package fails to restore stability. Even then, they stressed that the regime could not use the money unless it had more currency reserves on hand than it was borrowing from Washington. "Financial security round the world is critical to the national interests of the United States," declared U.S. treasury secretary Robert Rubin on October 30.

The three-year IMF deal includes the loans from the Central Asian banks and was the largest "rescue" since the \$50 billion loan package foisted on the Mexican government in 1995 to guarantee imperialist investments there in the wake of the collapse of the peso.

The IMF deal was criticized as "the wrong medicine for Asia" by Jeffrey Sachs, director of the Harvard Institute for International Development and an economic advisor to governments in Asia. "The package could do more harm than good, transforming a

currency crisis into a rip-roaring economic downturn," he asserted." Citing the depression of the 1930s, Sachs compared the IMF measures to moves by the Federal Reserve in 1933, which "tightened credit, as financial orthodoxy prescribed. Confidence sank, and the banking system collapsed."

## Capitalists anxious to impose austerity

Meanwhile, capitalist investors are anxious to press austerity programs in Southeast Asia. "Foreign lenders are horrified that Bangkok still has not produced a detailed recovery plan," chided the November 10 issue of *Business Week*. "The global fund [IMF] should insist that Thailand and Indonesia shelve pet projects and balance budgets," the big-business magazine added.

Kim Mahn-je, chairman of Pohang Iron & Steel Co. in south Korea, declared, "The government has to adopt a ruthless policy of restructuring." He had slashed the workforce there by more than 20 percent to less than 20,000 workers over the past four years.

Elsewhere in south Korea, some 20,000 auto workers at Kia Motors Corp. returned to work November 3 after walking off the job on October 21 protesting the company's plans to file for bankruptcy. The company has debts totaling \$12.9 billion.

Bad debts for the nation's banks are escalating as corporate bankruptcies increase. According to the *Economist* of London, eight large conglomerates that owe a combined \$18.2 trillion worth of loans have stopped making payments to banks this year. Moody's Investor Service, the U.S. credit rating agency, downgraded the credit ratings for four of south Korea's six main commercial banks October 31. Also hit by the economic turmoil engulfing the region, the south Korean currency has plummeted by

Continued on Page 14

## MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

### CALIFORNIA

#### Los Angeles

**Asia Currency Crisis Shakes Wall St.** Speaker: John Benson, Socialist Workers Party, member of Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers union. Fri., Nov. 14, 7:30 p.m. 2546 W. Pico Blvd. Donation: \$4. Tel: (213) 380-9460.

### GEORGIA

#### Atlanta

**Workers Safety vs. Profits: How Can the Labor Movement Fight for Safety on the Job.** Speaker: Abby Tilsner, Socialist Workers Party, member of United Transportation Union, Local

511. Fri., Nov. 14, 7:30 p.m. 803 Peachtree St. Donation: \$4. Tel: (404) 724-9759.

### MASSACHUSETTS

#### Boston

**What the Stock Market Roller Coaster Means for Working People.** Fri., Nov. 14, 7:30 p.m. 780 Tremont St. Donation: \$4. Tel: (617) 247-6772.

### MINNESOTA

#### St. Paul

**Eyewitness Report from the Million Woman March.** Panel discussion. Sat., Nov. 15, 7:30 p.m. Reception, 6:30 p.m. 2490 University Ave.

Donation: \$4. Tel: (612) 644-6325.

### NEW JERSEY

#### Newark

**The Myth of Emerging Markets: What's Behind the Gyration on the Stock Market?** Speaker: Maurice Williams, *Militant* staffwriter. Sun., Nov. 9, 7:30 p.m.

**Eighty Years of the Bolshevik Revolution: The Impact of the Russian Revolution on World Politics.** Speaker: Michael Baumann, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Nov. 14, 7:30 p.m.

Both events will be held at 87A Halsey St. (1 block west of Broad, 2 blocks north of Raymond). Donation: \$4. Tel: (201) 643-3341.

## CALENDAR

### MASSACHUSETTS

#### Boston

**Support the Irish Peace Process.** Speaker: Martin McGuinness, Chief Negotiator for Sinn Fein. Fri., Nov. 14, 8:00 p.m. *Boston Teachers Union Hall, 180 Mt. Vernon Street, Dorchester.* Donation: \$20. Sponsored by Friends of Sinn Fein. For more information, call: (617) 492-5998.

### NEW YORK

#### Manhattan

**March against Sweatshop Abuse!** March in solidarity with workers to demand: fair, living wages; the right to organize and the right to bargain collectively; decent, safe working conditions. Sat., Nov. 29, 12:00 noon. *Meet at 34th and Broadway and march.* For more information, call: (212) 645-5230.

### CANADA

#### Vancouver

**Socialism and Man in Cuba.** Class on one of Che Guevara's best-known presentations on the fight for socialism. Pamphlet available at the bookstore for \$5.00. Discussion at the Pathfinder Bookstore. Sat., Nov. 15, 3:30 p.m. 3967 Main St., Sponsored by the Young Socialists and the Communist League. Tel: (604) 872-8343.

### CORRECTION

The article on the *Militant* subscription drive in issue no. 37 incorrectly quoted Michael Pennock from Minneapolis as saying, "We are now confident we'll make our goal." It was Doug Jenness who said that in a note to the *Militant*.

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**For sure** — The California Supreme Court let stand a lower court decision that firing older workers to save money does not constitute age discrimination. The ruling declared,



Harry Ring

"Decision-making by costs — reliance on relative prices if you will — goes to the very heart of a market economy."

**Atheism a genetic defect?** —

"No one knows why humanity felt its first religious stirrings, but researchers at UC San Diego reported that the human brain may be hard-wired to hear the voice of heaven, in what researchers said was the first effort to directly address the neural basis of religious expression." — *Los Angeles Times*.

**Brown menace** — Yoshiaki Nishura, a young Tokyo truck driver, is suing his boss who fired him for coming to work with his hair dyed brown, which is currently popular among Japanese youth. Nishura, rinsed out the dye and apologized, but was fired any way. The company chief reportedly feels the fad "undermines company discipline, corrupts morale and implies a casual approach to life."

**'Me? My country?'** — With less than 1 percent of its ranks non-white, the British Army has decided to become an equal-opportunity outfit. A recruiting poster features a photo of a Black officer and the timeworn slogan: "Your Country Needs You."

**Also equal opportunity?** — In England and Wales 57 prisoners died in police custody during 1996-7, a 14 percent jump over the previous year.

**Everything's fine** — According to University of Arizona professor

John Schwarz, 7 million people were jobless last year and 4 million others wanted full-time jobs but had to settle for part-time. Also, 13 million people held full-time, year-around jobs that paid less than the poverty level.

**You get what you pay for?** — Rolls Royce has recalled 1,621 cars in which hydraulic brake pipes can scrape on steering column bolts, causing brake fluid leaks.

**Grad studies** — RSP, a software firm known for its educational products, has gone big time with a new game, Postal. Featuring a gun-toting character who goes berserk, it

invites players "to spray protesters, mow down marching bands and char-broil whole towns."

The lead character must finally put a gun in his mouth and pull the trigger. \$50.

**Plain talk** — For the well-heeled, a number of New York hospitals are offering luxury rooms. (At Mt. Sinai, an extra \$500 to \$1,000 a night gets you a room with a view of Central Park plus gourmet cuisine).

Class-biased medical care? Responds one hospital administrator: "If you want to question the whole underpinnings of capitalist society, it was an argument that seems to have been settled a long time ago."

# Why capitalists' rate of profit tends to fall

The excerpt printed below is taken from Volume 3 of *Capital* by Karl Marx. In part three of this volume, titled "The Law of the Tendency to a Fall in the Rate of Profit," Marx explains the tendency for the general rate of profit to fall. It is this tendency that provokes the competitive struggle between capitalists, currency devaluations, and the other pressures driving the ruling class. This falling rate of profit underlies the currency crisis in

## BOOK OF THE WEEK

Asia that has rattled Wall Street investors, highlighting the inner contradictions of capitalism and how the basic laws of motion of the capitalist mode of production lead to explosive crises.

In the mathematical relationship expressed below, C represents the overall capital advanced in the production process. This capital comprises two components: the sum of the money *c* laid out on the means of production (constant capital — that is machinery, raw materials, etc.) and the amount of money *v* spent on wage-labor (variable capital). Surplus-value *s* is the added value created by workers during the production process above the wage paid to maintain their basic necessities for existence. The rate of profit *p'* is the ratio between the surplus value and the total capital advanced.

BY KARL MARX

Once wages and the working day are given, a variable capital, which we can take as 100, represents a definite number of workers set in motion; it is an index of this number. Say that £100 provides the wages of 100 workers for one week. If these 100 workers perform as much surplus labour as necessary labour, they work as much time for the capitalist each day, for the production of surplus-value, as they do for themselves, for the reproduction of their wages, and their total value product would then be £200, the surplus-value they produce amounting to £100. The rate of surplus-value *s/v* would be 100 per cent. Yet, as we have seen, this rate of surplus-value will be expressed in very different rates of profit, according to the differing scale of the constant capital *c*

and hence the total capital C, since the rate of profit is *s/v*. If the rate of surplus-value is 100 per cent, we have:

if *c* = 50 and *v* = 100,  
then *p'* = 100/150 = 66 2/3 per cent;  
if *c* = 100 and *v* = 100,  
then *p'* = 100/200 = 50 per cent;  
if *c* = 200 and *v* = 100,  
then *p'* = 100/300 = 33 1/3 per cent;  
if *c* = 300 and *v* = 100,  
then *p'* = 100/400 = 25 per cent;  
if *c* = 400 and *v* = 100,  
then *p'* = 100/500 = 20 per cent.

The same rate of surplus-value, therefore, and an unchanged level of exploitation of labour, is expressed in a falling rate of profit, as the value of the constant capital and hence the total capital grows with the constant capital's material volume.

If we further assume now that this gradual change in the composition of capital does not just characterize certain individual spheres of production, but occurs in more or less all spheres, or at least the decisive ones, and that it therefore involves changes in the average organic composition of the total capital belonging to a given society, then this gradual growth in the constant capital, in relation to the variable, must necessarily result in a *gradual fall in the general rate of profit*, given that the rate of surplus-value, or the level of exploitation of labour by capital, remains the same. Moreover, it has been shown to be a law of the capitalist mode of production that its development does in fact involve a relative decline in the relation of variable capital to constant, and hence also to the total capital set in motion.

This simply means that the same number of workers or the same quantity of labour-power that is made available by a variable capital of a given value, as a result of the specific methods of production that develop within capitalist production, sets in motion, works up, and productively consumes, within the same period, an ever-growing mass of means of labour, machinery and fixed capital of all kinds, and raw and ancillary materials — in other words, the same number of workers operate with a constant capital of ever-growing scale.

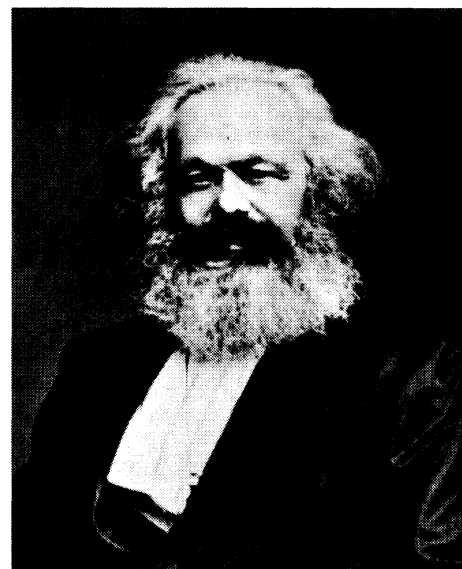
This progressive decline in the variable capital in relation to the constant capital, and hence in relation to the total capital as well, is identical with the progressively rising organic composition, on average, of the social capital as a whole. It is just another expres-

sion for the progressive development of the social productivity of labour, which is shown by the way that the growing use of machinery and fixed capital generally enables more raw and ancillary materials to be transformed into products in the same time by the same number of workers, i.e. with less labour.

There corresponds to this growing volume of constant capital — although this expresses only at a certain remove the growth in the actual mass of use-values which the constant capital consists of in material terms — a continual cheapening of the product. Each individual product, taken by itself, contains a smaller sum of labour than at a lower stage of development of production, where the capital laid out on labour stands in a far higher ratio to that laid out on means of production.

The hypothetical series we constructed at the opening of this chapter therefore expresses the actual tendency of capitalist production. With the progressive decline in the variable capital in relation to the constant capital, this tendency leads to a rising organic composition of the total capital, and the direct result of this is that the rate of surplus-value, with the level of exploitation of labour remaining the same or even rising, is expressed in a steadily falling general rate of profit. (We shall show later on why this fall does not present itself in such an absolute form, but rather more in the tendency to a progressive fall.)

The progressive tendency for the general rate of profit to fall is thus simply the expression, peculiar to the capitalist mode of production, of the progressive development of the social productivity of labour. This does not mean that the rate of profit



Karl Marx

may not fall temporarily for other reasons as well, but it does prove that it is a self-evident necessity, deriving from the nature of the capitalist mode of production itself, that as it advances the general average rate of surplus-value must be expressed in a falling general rate of profit. Since the mass of living labour applied continuously declines in relation to the mass of objectified labour that it sets in motion, i.e. the productively consumed means of production, the part of this living labour that is unpaid and objectified in surplus-value must also stand in an ever-decreasing ratio to the value of the total capital applied. But this ratio between the mass of surplus-value and the total capital applied in fact constitutes the rate of profit, which must therefore steadily fall....

## —25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



November 17, 1972

WASHINGTON, D.C., Nov. 8 — Agreement was reached today between leaders of the Indian protest occupation of government offices here and U.S. officials. Details of the agreement have not yet been announced, although Indian leaders have indicated that some of their demands have been won. The government has so far agreed to form an interagency task force to hear grievances and proposals from the Indians. Most of the Native Americans have begun to go back to their homes across the country. As they left, they confiscated secret files and memorandums that outline deals between the Bureau of Indian Affairs and corporations to cheat Indians out of their land, mineral, and water rights. The following article was written during the occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs offices.

WASHINGTON, D.C. Nov. 6 — Native Americans from 250 tribes whose Trail of Broken Treaties Caravans converged on the capital Oct. 30 continued today to occupy the offices of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), which they have renamed the Native American Embassy. Since Nov. 2 more than 500 Native Americans have held the federal office building housing the BIA, a symbol of centuries of oppression.

Approximately 1,800 Native Americans have come to the seat of their government

overseers to demand self-determination and to protest U.S. violation of 387 unequal treaties imposed on them.



November 17, 1947

Oct. 18 — During the second week of September the British Military Government ordered the dismantling of the Holmag plant in Kiel, Germany. When the workers of the Holmag plant learned of the decision to dismantle it, their factory committee decided unanimously to refuse to collaborate in any way with this demolition decree. All the workers immediately went out on strike. Foreign workers employed in the plant participated solidly in the strike. After four weeks of struggle the strike still goes. The British troops have occupied the factory but it has not yet been dismantled.

The action of the Holmag workers is of historic importance. It constitutes the first public and organized demonstration by the working population against the savage plundering measures imposed on vanquished Germany by the Potsdam agreement. The Holmag workers have shown by this action that a decisive change is beginning to take place in the psychology of the German working class. This working class had been paralyzed for two years by a mood of total impotence in the face of the overwhelming military economic anti-political superiority of the occupying powers.

For further reading

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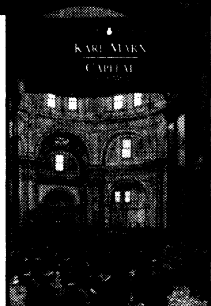
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# U.S. hands off Iraq!

Washington's latest military threats against Iraq show the weakness of U.S. imperialism. In 1991 the U.S. rulers broke their teeth in Iraq. After organizing one of the most monstrous carnage in the history of modern warfare against the Iraqi people, they were unable to replace the regime in Baghdad with one completely subservient to Washington's interests and get control over the oil wells of that country.

Ever since, the U.S. government has used its military and economic muscle to punish the Iraqi people. The embargo continues to deprive millions of toilers in Iraq of food, potable water, medicines, seed and agricultural supplies, and other vital necessities. It has already caused the deaths of over half a million Iraqi children.

Working people the world over should demand that the U.S.-engineered sanctions be lifted immediately, the "no-fly" zones imposed by Washington over large parts of Iraq be ended, and the U.S. and other "arms inspectors" get out of the country now — along with their U-2 spy flights. The so-called weapons investigating teams, sent with the fig leaf of the United Nations but clearly maneuvered by the White House, are used for constant provocations on the ground to justify punitive measures against

Baghdad.

The U.S. government is engineering these provocations as it has failed to muster international support for new sanctions on Iraq. Paris and Moscow refused to go along with Washington when it attempted to impose additional punitive measures on Iraq at the United Nations last month. This is another indication that the U.S. rulers will never be able to regroup the coalition they cobbled together during the 1990–91 war. Competition among the main imperialist powers has become more the order of the day since the war in the Arab-Persian gulf.

In its decline, however, the U.S. empire has sunk its tentacles in virtually every powder keg in the world, threatening to drag humanity once again toward fascism and war in its drive to defend the profits of U.S. capitalists. Washington's assault on Iraq in 1991 sounded the opening guns of World War III. The recent threats against Baghdad could ignite another conflagration, which is against the interests of working people around the globe.

Now is the time to organize forums, meetings, and public rallies demanding:

U.S. and other imperialist powers out of Iraq!  
Lift the embargo now!

## Fight for affirmative action

Defend and extend affirmative action! That should be a rallying cry for the labor movement and all supporters of the rights of women and oppressed nationalities in the United States.

Affirmative action — an important gain of the massive battles for Black rights and women's rights — is under increasing attack. The Supreme Court decided November 3 to let stand the grossly misnamed "California Civil Rights Initiative," or Proposition 209, which bans affirmative action programs for hiring and education in all government institutions in California. Similar measures are under consideration in 26 other states. They are part of the employers drive to impose harsher antilabor measures to defend their profits and of the social polarization that marks this period of capitalist disorder.

A battle over this question is unfolding, however.

In Houston, Texas, Proposition A, copied from California's measure, was just defeated in the polls. The labor movement needs to make its business working to defeat any other such measures around the country.

The fight to defend affirmative action must be taken directly into the only mass organizations of the working class — the unions. The end of the retreat of the working class and the uptick in the defensive struggles by the unions, from the UPS strike to the transit workers walk-out in San Francisco and the recent tug-of-war between

rail workers and Amtrak, make this more possible.

A growing number of workers are waking up to their class interests, which do not lie in seeking privileges for some. More workers today can understand the political economy of discrimination — that discrimination does not mean an extra buck for some workers at the expense of women or oppressed nationalities; instead it drags the whole class down in terms of real wages and job conditions, and saps the collective ability to fight back against the bosses. More workers can understand that affirmative action is not charity to make up for the past, nor a morally correct position but materially disadvantageous to males and whites.

Affirmative action was instituted to address the historic discrimination of women, Blacks, Chicanos, or Puerto Ricans. Despite past gains, these divisions are very much a reality today. The Bureau of Labor Statistics announced in September that weekly earnings of full-time working women were just 75 percent of the men's median, down from 77 percent four years ago. Unemployment is much higher among Blacks than white workers, and living conditions are qualitatively worse in predominantly Black neighborhoods.

The labor movement must champion demands to fight this inequality and build working-class unity. Affirmative action must be at the top of the list.

## Currency crisis in Asia

Continued from Page 12  
13 percent this year.

Capitalists in the United States and other imperialist countries are nervous about the impact if the currency devaluations spread to Latin America, especially Brazil, which has a population of 160 million people. Brazil's foreign debt soared from \$71 billion in 1980 to nearly \$160 billion in 1995.

"Remember the Baht and Defend the Real," warned an article in the October 31 *Wall Street Journal*. If the Brazilian real succumbed to the same fate of the currencies in Southeast Asia, "the fallout in Latin America would be devastating," the article stated. The currency is reportedly overvalued by as much as 30 percent. The government spent up to \$10 billion during the last week of October to prop up the real.

### Fears of deflation and overcapacity

The Dow Jones industrial average climbed 232 points on November 3, brining it within just 41 points of where it was before the 554 point nosedive a week earlier. That plunge registered the largest one-day point lost in its history.

Despite the recovery, business investors expressed concerns about "some real potential problems" that remain unresolved.

Bank stocks plunged October 31 and most banks refuse to report any losses in the so-called emerging markets in Asia, Russia, and Latin America, particularly Brazil, according to the *New York Times*.

Banks in Japan have extended some \$265 billion in

Asian loans and bank deposits, which could vanish if there is a prolonged economic downturn in the region. Around \$87 billion from Japanese banks is at risk in Hong Kong alone, where inflated property values threaten to go bust.

The financial tornado in Southeast Asia has provoked commentary in the bourgeois press expressing fears of deflation and excess capacity — the ability to produce more commodities than capitalists can sell at a high enough profit to justify expanding their productive plant and equipment.

"Production everywhere is running ahead of consumption," complained *Business Week*. "There is a worldwide overcapacity in industries, from semiconductors to autos. And the excess supply will get even worse as Asia tries to export its way out of trouble."

The article noted that "overcapacity" and "downward price pressure is clear in the auto industry." Worldwide capacity has reached 70 million vehicles — 32 percent more than consumers are now buying, according to the consulting group Coopers & Lybrand LLP Autofacts division.

Auto sales in Thailand collapsed by 77 percent from a year ago. In the United States, prices on passenger cars have dropped by 2.1 percent over the past year, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Despite the falling demand in the region, General Motors and Ford Motor are constructing huge assembly plants in Thailand and preparing to build five more factories in Southeast Asia and China. South Korean conglomerate Samsung is investing \$4.5 billion in a factory that will produce 80,000 cars in the first production year.

# Washington escalates threats against Iraq

Continued from front page

fire agreements signed at the end of the U.S.-led war on Iraq in 1991, clearing the way for military action.

In recent weeks, Washington has bolstered its forces in the region, which include 20,000 U.S. troops and 200 warplanes. There are 17 U.S. Navy ships in the Arab-Persian Gulf, including the aircraft carrier *USS Nimitz* dispatched there in October ahead of schedule. An additional 1,500 U.S. soldiers are in Kuwait on land warfare exercises, and about 2,000 are wrapping-up similar war maneuvers in Egypt.

Since August of 1990, Washington has led a United Nations embargo against Iraq, which is maintained on the pretext that the regime of Saddam Hussein is supposedly not complying with restrictions on weapons production it previously agreed to. The UN arms inspection team, established in the wake the war, is supposed to certify that Baghdad does not have major weaponry or the capacity to build it. Thus the inspectors, led by those from the United States, are at the center of maintaining the sanctions. The embargo has crippled the Iraqi economy and has led to the death of an estimated 500,000 children from malnutrition and disease. In January 1993 Washington launched cruise missiles at Baghdad after Iraq restricted inspectors. More recently, Washington has tightened the embargo.

The pretext for stepped-up war moves is the Iraqi decision to begin refusing entry to U.S. officials of the UN weapons investigation team. Baghdad had earlier ordered ten other U.S. inspectors already in the country to leave.

Since 1991 the U.S. government has routinely used U-2 spy planes to photograph parts of Iraq as an integral part of the "arms inspection." On November 2 Iraqi representatives at the United Nations asked UN chief inspector Richard Butler to cancel scheduled intelligence flights for the following week, which Baghdad has threatened to shoot down. U.S. president William Clinton warned Hussein that it would be a "big mistake" if the threat to shoot down the U.S. planes was carried out. U.S. ambassador to the United Nations William Richardson declared at a congressional hearing, "we are not — I repeat not — withholding any option of any kind."

Speaking on the NBC TV news program "Meet the Press," Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Newton Gingrich said, "We should be prepared to take whatever steps are necessary to enforce [the] rules." When asked if that included military action, he replied, "Absolutely." Senate majority leader Trent Lott, also a Republican, and the Democratic congressional leaders Thomas Daschle and Richard Gephardt echoed similar views on that program.

Washington's moves come at a time when the so-called coalition that waged the 1991 assault against Iraq is fissuring. Washington attempted to force the UN Security Council to invoke sanctions and travel restrictions on Iraq in late October. But the governments of France, Russia, China, Egypt, and Kenya opposed it. In the end, only a milked-down resolution was issued with a strong threat of added restrictions. On October 30 the UN Security Council called on Iraq to reverse its decision to ban the U.S. members of the inspection team. This time the French and Russian representatives abstained from the vote. The *New York Times* quoted an unnamed U.S. official speaking of the "uncertainty about the cohesiveness of the anti-Iraq coalition that waged the Persian Gulf war."

Paris has oil and gasoline companies negotiating future production deals in Iraq; and Russia's Lukoil signed a production-sharing pact with Iraq in March, which is valued at \$3.8 billion. In early November, 65 Jordanian businessmen visited Baghdad. Paris and Moscow delegates to the UN, backed by Arab and African nations, have said that the use of force would not be acceptable without further action by the UN Security Council.

### For further reading

#### New International no. 7

#### Opening Guns of World War III: Washington's Assault on Iraq

by Jack Barnes

Also includes:

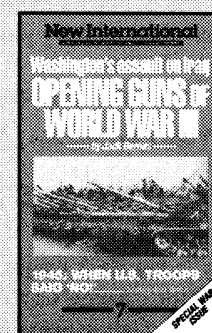
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# Canadian gov't denies visas to anti-APEC activists

BY NED DMYTRYSHYN

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — "We denounce the denial as an affront to our universal rights of freedom of speech and freedom of assembly," declared Maita Santiago of the No! to APEC Coalition in an October 31 press release. This was in protest against the Canadian government denial of visas to Iswari Prasad Pandey, a student activist from Nepal, and Nathanael Santiago, the secretary-general of BAYAN (New Patriotic Alliance) in the Philippines.

Both have been invited to speak at the second People's Conference Against Imperialist Globalization — Continuing the Resistance. The November 21 – 24 conference is organized by the No! to APEC Coalition, made up of more than 50 organizations. The first People's Conference was held in Manila, Philippines, last November.

Organizations involving unionists, students, and other activists are planning a series of parallel conferences, workshops, and demonstrations protesting the meeting of government and business leaders from the 18 member countries of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), to be held here November 19 – 24. APEC is a trading bloc dominated by the imperialist regimes in the United States, Japan, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The governments of Brunei, Chile, China, Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, and Thailand are also APEC members.

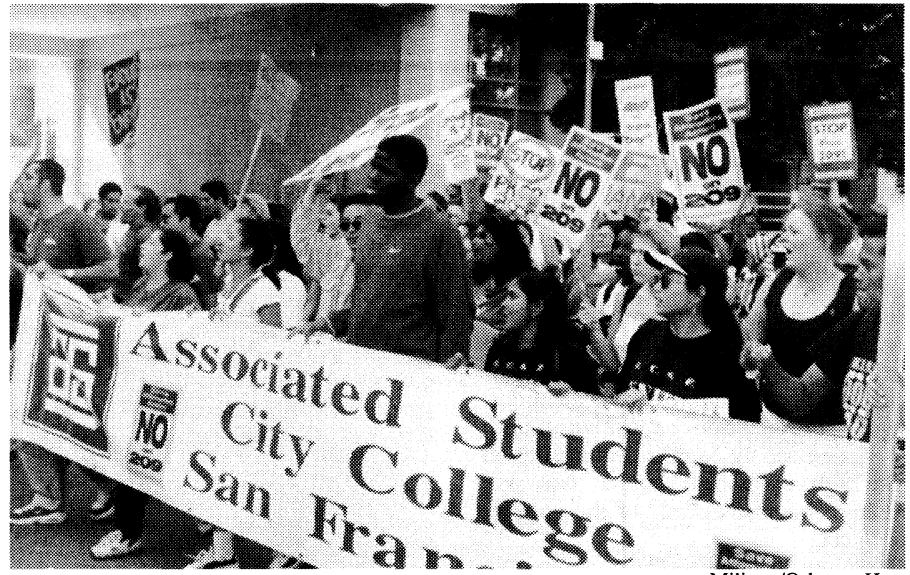
The Peoples Summit on APEC is also organizing activities against the trade conference, starting with a Women's Forum November 17 – 18, as well as issue forums November 21 – 22 on topics such as Opposing Corporate Rule, Workers' Rights and Democratic Development, Education, Youth, and Human Rights. Organizers say

they expect more than 3,000 participants. A march and rally is planned for 11:30 a.m. on November 23, which will leave from the Plaza of Nations. A partial list of organizations in the Peoples' Summit includes the Canadian Labor Congress, the Canadian Federation of Students, National Action Committee on the Status of Women, the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, and the Anglican Church of Canada.

"The authorities will be turning this city into an armed camp, with probably the biggest RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] operation in history," said Jesse Scott a member of APEC Alert. This group of students and teachers at the University of British Columbia has been organizing rallies, marches, and other actions protesting the decision by the university administration to hold the APEC conference on campus November 24 – 25. On September 22, two UBC students, Mark Luchow and Shiraz Dindar, were arrested by the RCMP while painting a circle around the "Goddess of Democracy" statue near the student union building, designating it an anti-APEC free zone. The statue was erected several years ago in honor of the students killed by authorities in Tiananmen Square Beijing, China. "On October 31, three more students were arrested for drawing 'Say Boo To APEC' in water-soluble paint on UBC President Martha Piper's house," Scott told the *Militant*.

According to APEC Alert, university authorities will be spending \$400,000 to renovate Piper's residence so that the APEC officials can have lunch there. "To me it seems that by having this meeting on campus the administration's top priorities are the leaders of these countries, their body guards, their riot police and snipers. While students who dare to object are seen as obstacles and

## Sacramento: 4,000 march for affirmative action



Militant/Osborne Hart

On November 3 the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal of a challenge to Proposition 209, thus allowing California to go ahead with the anti-affirmative action measure. On October 27 students, unionists, and others from as far away as Los Angeles marched on the state capitol steps in support of affirmative action. Prop. 209 was passed as a referendum last November. It outlaws affirmative action for oppressed nationalities and women in state and local governments and colleges and universities. With chants of "Hey, Hey! Ho, Ho! 209 has got to go!" in the background, Daria Neal, chair of the Black Law Students at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), said, "The atmosphere at UCLA is different since 209. There are only a few students of color enrolled." Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow Coalition, organizers of the protest, have called for another action for February in Los Angeles.

nuisances and are being arrested," wrote UBC student Chantal Gittens in the October 17 issue of the Langara College student newspaper, the *Gleaner*.

Cecilia Diocson, of the Philippine Women's Center, told the *Militant* October 30 that the RCMP has been phoning the center every day for the last week asking about anti-APEC activities being planned. "This is an attack on our democratic rights. It's wrong for the RCMP to harass us like this," she said. "The Canadian government is presenting itself as a democratic model by hosting the APEC conference, yet denying democratic rights and inviting dictators with terrible records on human rights."

The No! to APEC Coalition is organizing a march and Rally for November 25 at 5:30 p.m. at the Vancouver Art Gallery with feeder marches coming from UBC and Oppenheimer Park.

For further information, contact No! to APEC Coalition at 604-215-9190 or e-mail notoapcc@vcn.bc.ca.

The People's Summit at 604-682-1952 or e-mail popsum97@bc.sympatico.ca or APEC Alert at 604-251-9914 or e-mail alert@netinfo.ubc.ca

Ned Dmytryshyn is a member of International Association of Machinists Lodge 764 in Vancouver, British Columbia.

## — LETTERS —

### Ambiguity on NAFTA?

I've read Doug Jenness's response to Roger Annis and it seems to me you have a problem.

Annis has been out selling the *Militant* all these years, and all along, it seems, he thought its position on imperialist trade deals was "neutral." And I'd guess none of his comrades ever told him differently.

Now we have Jenness responding that the *Militant's* been opposed to capitalist trade deals for the past 69 years (though I think it's mainly the last 10 years or so Annis wants to discuss). Even a socialist in congress, Jenness says, should have been able to figure out the *Militant's* stand. "Never mind the jots and tittles. Just read between the lines, comrades!"

Readers of this debate, it seems to me, can come to one of two conclusions. Either Annis is dull-witted or Jenness's memory is failing him.

I know from my own experience, when I debated Jenness in your pages in 1993, that at that time he wouldn't have admitted opposition to NAFTA if he'd been beaten with a stick. I'm prepared to take Jenness's word that he was always opposed to NAFTA, but, for tactical reasons (until recently) he was also opposed to saying so explicitly.

Readers might otherwise conclude that the *Militant* itself was at fault. Perhaps it was ambiguous, or contradictory. Perhaps it had a mistaken tactical line — which happens to be my view. Whether it's bad politics or bad journalism, it seems to me, the *Militant* has some explaining to do. How could two of its long-standing supporters come up with such a counterposed understanding of its position?

Howard Brown  
Rosetown, Saskatchewan

### Drug laws harass unionists

The *Militant* has frequently pointed out how the government and the employers use the laws against illegal drugs to harass and victimize unionists, political activists, and other working people.

A recent example occurred in August at the General Motors Chevrolet Malibu assembly plant in Wilmington, Delaware. As a result of a 16-month undercover investigation, 12 workers — members of UAW Local 435 — were arrested at work by armed policemen.

The undercover job was conducted by ASET Corp., a private security firm based in Dayton, Ohio, working together with county police. According to reporter Eve Tahmincioglu of the *Wilmington News Journal*, "operatives hired by the company — described by workers as attractive young women — got to know employees, schmoozing with them during work hours and at local bars after work. "Nor was it big-time drug dealers who were targeted. After 16 months and a lot of company time and money, the raid netted "a quarter pound of marijuana, 6 grams of cocaine and small amounts of methamphetamine and PCP."

Many workers were upset by the raid. Paul Webb, a spot welder at the plant, commented that, "It proves that trust is a one-way street. GM wants us to trust them but they will never trust us." Assembler Gary Prucino said the raid by armed policemen put workers' safety in jeopardy. According to the article, GM has conducted similar investigations at 10 of its plants since 1994.

Bob Braxton  
Atlanta, Georgia

### Interested in socialism

I am presently incarcerated. My father is a prisoners' rights activist



and advocate. He sent me your address in hopes of receiving information on socialism.

I have never been able to vote and I'm interested in receiving your newspaper for prisoners. I am tired and frustrated with the treatment my family and I have had to endure from a stupid petty crime back in 1989.

A prisoner  
San Quentin, California

### Longtime socialist fighter

On June 22, friends and comrades gathered here to honor Walter Walimaa who died earlier in the month at age 58 from complications of a pancreatic infection.

Ned Dmytryshyn, a member of the International Association of Machinists welcomed everyone. He began by reading a letter from Jacquie Henderson, a socialist worker in Minneapolis. She described the founding convention of the Young New Democrats in 1961. "That's where I met Walt and joined the Young Socialists (YS).... Walt stood out in my eyes because he didn't seem to have any of the concepts about age that I ran into in high

school as I tried to express my views as a communist. Walt was old. He must have been at least 21 to my 14. But he never made me feel like I was too young to think."

Henderson wrote, "Walt hated capitalism. He hated everything about how it grinds down the human spirit. He even got fired for doing too good a job! He never did adjust to wage slavery and that made survival very complicated for him."

Retired postal worker Larry Nozaki and Walter were founding members of the YS in Vancouver and went to high school together. Nozaki, who was one year behind Walter in school, would encounter teachers who would despair when yet another socialist with controversial questions arrived in their class. He said Walter declared himself a socialist at age 13.

Longtime friend Dick Princep told about a ritual he and Walter carried out at demonstrations. They would stand on either side and count marchers as they crossed a given point to get an accurate figure on how many were there. Then they would compare their figures with

the police count, the media and the organizers.

Others remembered Walter as a patient teacher. This was not lost on the many who worked side-by-side with Walter renovating the Vanguard and Pathfinder bookstores in Vancouver over the years.

Walter preferred to work behind the scenes. For him, no job was too small. He would be at the bookstore to take out the garbage and clean up before a public event. He will always be remembered as a banner-maker extraordinaire, spending

hours designing and painting banners and placards along side whoever else was available at the time.

He always wanted to talk through the important issues of the day, on which he was always informed. If it wasn't bent over a banner, or with a hammer in hand, these talks unfolded while hiking through beautiful locations around Vancouver.

Walter's contribution to the working-class movement spanned almost four decades. For most of that time he was not a member of the Communist League nor the organizations that preceded it. This makes his work all the more remarkable as he did not have the benefit of organized discussion. His inspiration and friendship is missed by all who had the privilege to work with him.

Monica Jones  
Vancouver, British Columbia

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.

## Argentine vote registers deep unrest

BY HILDA CUZCO

Reacting against high unemployment and austerity, voters in Argentina dealt the ruling party of President Carlos Menem a blow in the October 26 congressional elections. Leaders of the victorious opposition alliance have condemned the Menem administration for the high joblessness, but say they will keep the economic agenda of the government intact.

The ruling Justicialista Party, commonly known as the Peronists after former president Juan Domingo Perón, held the allegiance of the working class in Argentina for decades. The Peronists experienced their biggest loss in Buenos Aires province, a longtime stronghold. The Alliance, an electoral bloc between the Radical Party (UCR) and the Frepaso party, won 48.3 percent of the vote in that province, compared to 41.3 percent for the Peronists. The UCR is the traditional liberal party, and Frepaso is a bourgeois party that is supported by reformist left-wing forces.

Nationwide, the Alliance won 45.8 percent of the ballots or 61 seats, while the Peronists captured 35.5 percent or 52 seats, losing 13 seats. This meant Menem's party lost its majority in the lower house of congress, where half of the 257 seats were up for election.

The Alliance's lead congressional candidate, Graciela Fernández Meijide, a former teacher and senator, told *El Clarín* of Buenos Aires that she plans to defend the economic policies of the government by respecting "the privatizations, the opening of the economy, stability, and balanced fiscal spending." Fernández added that she also hopes the president "agrees to a dialogue." The Alliance campaign blamed Menem's regime for the high unemployment of 16.1 percent, down slightly from a peak of more than 18 percent two years ago.

During her congressional race, Fernández, who is now spoken of as a presidential hopeful for the Alliance, mentioned the problem of joblessness, but focused her campaigning mainly against corruption. "I voted for the Peronists in the last two elections and my life has only gotten worse because of it," said María Vareca, 50, a convenience store owner who attended a pro-Fernández rally in the working-class city of Moreno.

Fernández, 66, has cultivated an image as a "modern, honest, and austere" politician, and a defender of human rights. Her son was "disappeared" in 1976, one of thousands of victims of the Argentine military regime's "dirty war." She was elected to the Senate in 1995. "The disappearance of my son Pablo drove me into the political arena to fight for human rights," she told reporters. "I see this election as an extension of that — a fight for human dignity, and social and cultural and economic rights."

Hilda Duhalde, the wife of Buenos Aires province governor Eduardo Duhalde, was the Peronist candidate running against Fernández. Duhalde heads a charity network with a staff of some 17,000 women volunteers who hand out milk and eggs in working-class areas. Duhalde's defeat has been seen as a setback for her husband's hopes in securing a presidential bid within the Justicialista Party for the 1999 elections. In fact, his provincial government has come under fire for implications of police involvement in the bombing of a Jewish community center in 1994 and in the murder of journalist José Luis Cabezas last January.

### A vote against Menem

Other prominent Alliance candidates who won congressional seats included Carlos Alvarez and Domingo Cavallo, Menem's former economy minister, both from the city of Buenos Aires. The city and province of Buenos Aires together make up half the national electorate.

"I didn't vote for anyone as much as I voted against President Menem," said Julio Arias, 45, after learning the victory of the Alliance. "I can't stand the corruption and the dishonesty any more."



Argentine youth in Liberador, Jujuy province, lead march organized by unemployed workers during an independence day celebration in May.

Carlos Corach, minister of interior, admitted in a news conference, "The people [have sent] a message to the national government."

Meanwhile Menem, whose government has been plagued with corruption scandals in recent years, tried to downplay the defeat of his party, saying on national television that the election results merely showed "the existence of a strong opposition," and calling the vote a victory for his government.

Earlier this year thousands of workers, farmers, and youth responded to high unemployment and intolerable social conditions in Argentina with protests and roadblocks from Jujuy in the northwest to the depressed Patagonian oil-producing town of Cutral-Có in the south.

The outrage has not diminished. Hundreds of unemployed workers took to the streets in Jujuy in October to demand jobs.

### Growing debt crisis in Latin America

The latest figures released by the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) indicate that half the population in Latin America is now living below the official poverty level — that is 235 million people. According to the same report, urban unemployment in Latin America is up to 16.2 percent, and real minimum wages fell 30 percent between 1980 and 1996. More than half of all children do not finish elementary school. The IADB report states that in Argentina 18.4 of the population fell into the "new poor" — middle class layers and

workers hit by unemployment or an abrupt fall in income.

The lending institution also reported that the foreign debt for Latin America climbed to more than \$623 billion in 1996, from \$419 billion in 1990. This represents a 7 percent annual increase, while growth in gross domestic product has averaged just 3.3 percent per year.

The impact of the devaluation of the Mexican peso in 1994, and loans to the governments of Mexico and Argentina, the IADB said, have contributed to the increase of the debt. Payment of interest on the debt in 1996 represented an equivalent of 15 percent of the official budgets of the governments of Latin America.

In Argentina, the Menem administration is under pressure to keep its fiscal deficit for the year down to the \$4.5 billion target agreed to with the International Monetary Fund. Moreover, the currency crisis in Asia has sent shock waves through Latin America. On October 27, the Buenos Aires stock market plunged 13.7 percent. The same day the stock market in São Paulo, Brazil, dived 15 percent and the Mexican *bolsa* fell 13.3 percent, on top of a 10 percent devaluation of the peso.

The Menem government issued a decree last August to sell off 38 of Argentina's 59 airports, but has run into obstacles in the courts, which several times have declared the move unconstitutional.

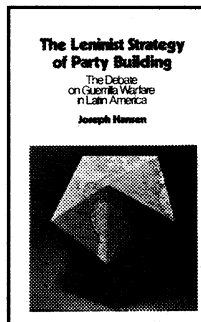
Menem said he may resort to a so-called *per saltum* order, an immediate decision by the Supreme Court, and continue with the hand-over to private investors by December 1. A similar measure took place when Argentina's airline Aerolíneas Argentinas was put up for sale in 1991. The bid for the airports involves a 35-year lease with a 10-year option to renew. If the deal goes through, the operator would have to pay the government a minimum annual fee of \$40 million and invest \$2 billion in upgrading the airports.

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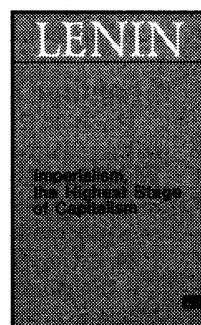
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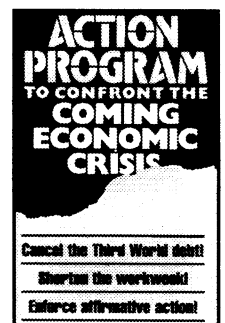


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