

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Interview with leader of Cuban Association of Combatants

— PAGE 8

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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Quebec vote spotlights desire for sovereignty

BY MICHEL DUGRÉ

MONTREAL — The November 30 provincial election brought very little change in the Quebec National Assembly, to the dismay of Canada's rulers. They had waged a major campaign to defeat the government of the Parti Quebecois (PQ), a bourgeois party that favors sovereignty for Quebec.

Prime Minister Lucien Bouchard's Parti Quebecois won 75 seats, two fewer than in 1994, while the Quebec Liberal Party (PLQ) of Jean Charest got 48, an increase of one. The Action Démocratique du Québec (ADQ) of Mario Dumont won one seat.

In the actual number of ballots cast, the Liberals got a thin majority of 44 percent of the vote against 43 percent for the PQ. The difference in the number of seats stems from the highly concentrated votes for the Liberals in non-francophone areas. French speakers are spread throughout the electoral districts of the province, while non-

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London, Paris deal threatens U.S. hegemony in Europe

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

A new deal on military policy between the British and French governments, and growing strains within the reactionary NATO alliance stemming from intensified interimperialist competition and shifting alignments between these capitalist powers, threaten Washington's hegemony as the number one economic and military power in Europe.

London and Paris have agreed on a joint initiative that would give the European Union (EU) a role in military affairs on the continent and beyond for the first time, officials from both governments announced December 1. The accord involves dissolving the Western European Union (WEU) — pushed earlier by Paris and Bonn as the emerging military arm of capitalist powers

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Striking coal miners expand picket lines

UMWA members defy Freeman's ultimatum

BY BETSEY STONE AND CAPPY KIDD

FARMERSVILLE, Illinois — One hundred seventy striking miners turned out for expanded picket lines at midnight and in the early morning of November 30 in front of two mines owned by Freeman United Coal Company in central Illinois.

They were responding to a personalized letter sent to every miner by company president Walter Gregory ordering them back to work on their regularly scheduled shifts on November 30 at 12:01 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. or face replacement.

Members of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) Locals 1969, 12, and 2488 struck Freeman's three mines September 11 after the company refused to continue health benefits for retirees. Freeman is a subsidiary of General Dynamics Corp.

The night of the expanded pickets, miners and members of the women's auxiliary, most of them dressed in camouflage, gathered at strike headquarters where they were organized into vans by Local 1969 president Greg Mahan.

At the Crown 3 mine, pickets gathered on both sides of the road. On one side was the picket shack. On the other, an intense spotlight atop a 30-foot tower illuminated the mine roadway entrance. Agents from Vance, the notorious strike-breaking agency providing "security" thugs to employers involved in disputes with their workforce, photographed and videotaped the strikers.

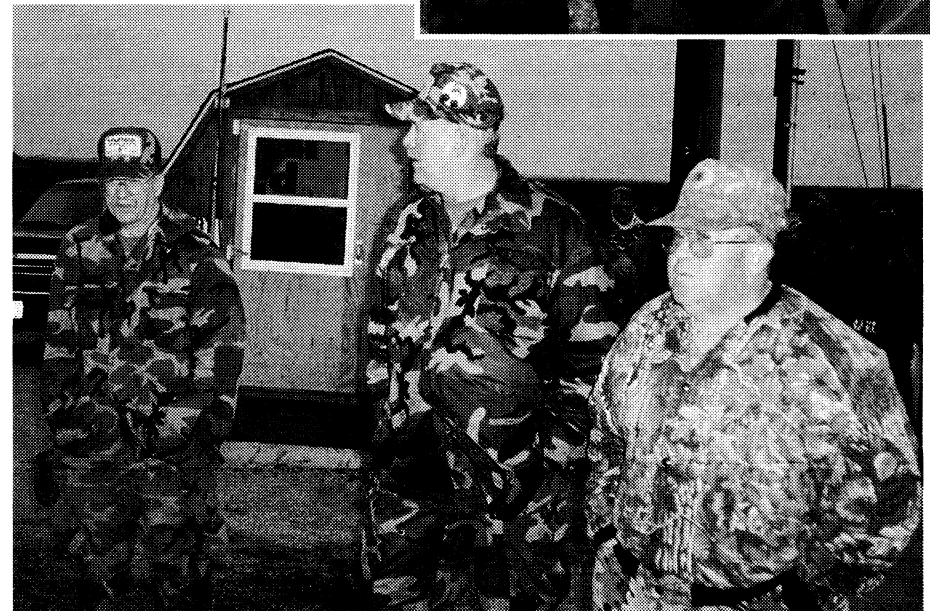
Almost every car and truck that passed on the main road honked in solidarity. Min-

ers responded with cheers and thumbs up. At the morning picket, union songs were played over a boom box.

Pickets jeered as a few trucks of coal emerged from the mine entrance. Miners explained that some company bosses, as well as contractors, are working in the mine. The other two mines are not operating.

Steve Norman, a miner for 22

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Militant photos by Betsey Stone

Miners outside picket shack at Crown no. 3 mine during picketing November 30. Above, a truck with scab coal mined by the bosses leaving Crown no. 3.

Black farmers debate gov't attempt to settle discrimination suit out of court

'Offer is not morally just,' says farm leader Gary Grant

BY KEN MORGAN AND STU SINGER

DURHAM, North Carolina — Hundreds of Black farmers, their families, and former farmers attended meetings November 18-20 in Selma, Alabama; Pine Bluff, Arkansas; and Durham, North Carolina, to hear about a proposed settlement of their class

action suit against the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The proposal from lawyers for the farmers is being discussed with the U.S. Justice Department, which represents the USDA in the federal court suit. It would divide farmers into two classes, A and B. Class A, which would include 2,000 to 4,000 farmers, would

be required to provide relatively little documentation to prove discrimination. They would receive cash payments of \$50,000 each, and their loan debts to the government would be written off. The government would also credit them with partial payment of taxes on both the \$50,000 and the loan payments.

Some farmers, the lawyers estimated less than 100, would be in class B. If they have much more extensive documentation, they could go to binding arbitration where they could get a bigger settlement or no settlement at all.

A person would be appointed by the federal judge hearing the case to monitor continuing discrimination against Black farmers for a period of several years.

In North Carolina, the Black farmer who initiated the case, Tim Pigford, and president of the Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association Gary Grant, as well as other leaders of this fight decided not to attend the November 20 meeting in Durham.

Grant commented later, "They have put an offer on the table, but there are many questions. For one thing, it is not morally just. How do you compensate someone for the loss of their health, the loss of a family, the loss of an ability to make a living? There

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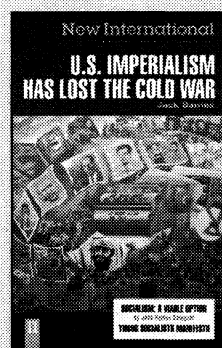
Militant/Mike Italie

October 13 rally outside U.S. Court House in Washington, D.C., demands justice in Black farmers' lawsuit against government discrimination.

New International ■ no. 11

U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War

JACK BARNES



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Available from bookstores listed on page 12, or write **Pathfinder**.

'Flu' grips Asian economies

Countries throughout southeast Asia face recession conditions: a sharp downturn in economic growth this year and "gloomy" prospects for 1999, according to a report from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The report stated Indonesia is bearing the brunt of the crisis. "Civil unrest and an unexpected change of government in Indonesia heightened the sense of instability" there, it stated. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of that country is expected to contract 16 percent this year, as opposed to the 3 percent projected earlier. Nearly 50 percent of Indonesia's 200 million-plus people are living below the official poverty line — four times the number in 1996.

This year Thailand's GDP will shrink 7 percent, Malaysia's 6 percent, and the Philippines' nearly 2 percent. Most of these countries are expected to stay in recession next year.

Many banks in these countries are nearing collapse. In Indonesia bad loans could rise 35 percent by year's end. Thailand can expect a 30 percent rise, Malaysia 25 percent, and at least 10 percent for the Philippines. Official unemployment rates have risen 13 percent in the Philippines, 9 percent in Indonesia, 7 percent in Malaysia, and 8 percent in Thailand. "Over 30 billion dollars fled Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines in 1997 and 1998 (as a result of the crisis which has been pounding the region since July 1997)," the ADB reported.

Indonesian troops massacred W. Papua independence fighters

The facts about a government-organized massacre of scores of West Papuan independence fighters were recently pieced together based on accounts of the Biak people. The island is just off the New Guinea coast. In the first days of July, Biak residents held a festival commemorating the July 1, 1961, proclamation of West Papuan independence from New Guinea. Part of the ceremonies included a four-day raising of the West Papuan independence movement flag. The Indonesian government caught word of the flag raising and sent a memo to surrounding police stations warning of a "rash of OPM-led pro-independence actions." OPM is the ac-

ronym of the Free Papua movement.

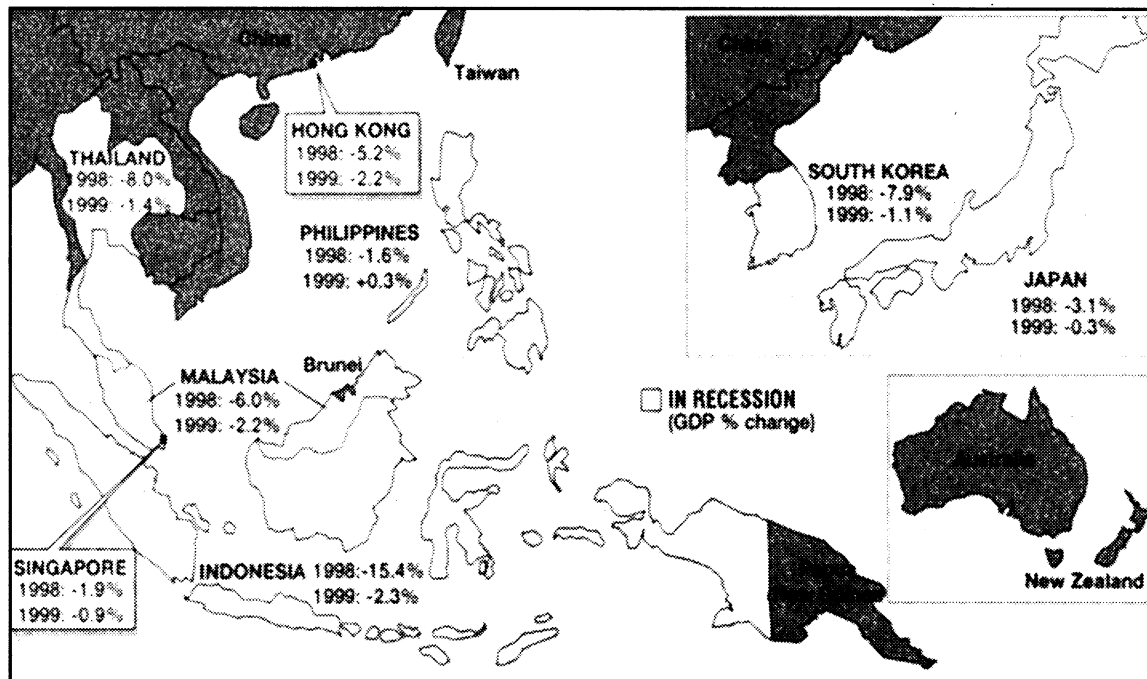
Indonesian troops stormed the activities. The crowd resisted attempts to "give guidance and direction" to the demonstrators, as a local military commander put it. At 5:30 a.m. the next morning, as 200 participants slept at the tall tower the flag was hanging from, soldiers opened fire. According to reports from Biak survivors, many people were brutally tortured, raped, and killed. Dozens of people were bound and thrown into the sea. Government officials claim only one or two people were killed that morning. But as weeks passed following the attack, bodies began washing ashore in the area.

Indonesia: protests persist

November 26 marked yet another of the near-daily protests occurring across Indonesia in response to the deepening economic crisis there. More than 1,000 students marching toward the house of former Indonesian president Suharto in the capital city of Jakarta, were blocked by government troops. Two-hundred more protesters attempted a sit-in at the attorney general's office. Dozens more held an action outside Television Republik Indonesia against the network's coverage of the protests. In Pinrang, located on Sulawesi island 850 miles northeast of Jakarta, residents hit the streets en masse protesting the inability of banks to handle customer withdrawals. A day earlier in Semarang, students held protests against government corruption. Cops attacked the demonstrators, injuring at least 54. Some 31 people have been killed in demonstrations in Jakarta in the past two weeks alone.

Zimbabwe unions add demands

The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) suspended its third one-day strike



Map of nations in southeast Asia that are in recession. Figures taken from *Investors Business Daily*.

November 23, giving the government one week to respond to expanded demands. Unionists demand that President Robert Mugabe reduce his ministerial staff from 55 to 15, the government reschedule debt repayments, an audit of government spending, all funds stolen through corruption be recovered, the media be freed from government control, and that a new constitution be prepared by 1999. These proposals are in addition to demanding subsidized fuel prices, which shot up 67 percent October 31.

The first two nationwide strikes brought the country to a virtual standstill. The ZCTU vowed to continue the walkouts if their demands are not met. "Everywhere in Zimbabwe people are frustrated both by their rising poverty and lack of any serious steps to address it," said ZCTU general secretary Morgan Tsvangirai.

Le Pen banned from office

Ultrarightist Jean-Marie Le Pen, a central leader of the National Front in France, was banned from holding government office for a year for physically assaulting Socialist Party candidate Annette Peulvast-Bergeal in 1997. According to an article in the *Financial Times*, this was the first such ban made by the courts. Le Pen, who is notorious for his openly racist and other reactionary positions, blasted the government's as an attempt to "shove aside Jean-Marie Le Pen, who enjoys the confidence of millions of voters."

The National Front has won 15 percent of the vote in the previous legislative and presidential elections. If Le Pen does not appeal this decision to a higher court, he will have to resign from his seat as a member of the European parliament and will have to relinquish his position as councilor on the Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur regional administration.

UN cops will remain in Haiti

The United Nations Security Council decided to keep UN police in Haiti for another year, after the original 1997 resolution stated they were to leave at the end of this year. Moscow and Beijing reportedly abstained from the vote. The cops replaced the 1,300-member UN "peacekeeping" team sent in 1995. While Haitian president Rene Preval requested the extension, many members of Haiti's parliament have openly opposed it. The UN police are supposedly there to train Haitian cops. Meanwhile, Haitian police were confronted by angry protests November 7, after unjustly arresting a bus driver in Saint-Michel-Gonaives. Demonstrators marched to the local headquarters of the Haitian National Police, demanding Michel Gaspard's release. When the cops refused, residents chased them into hiding, burned up the police station and one cop car. Protesters blocked roads, causing public transportation to be suspended. The so-called Intervention and Maintenance of Order Company attacked residents, arresting 13 people and wounding four.

Florida: antichoice law struck

A Florida law banning late-term abortions in the state, passed in June but suspended by a temporary restraining order, was ruled unconstitutional November 24 by U.S. District Judge Donald Graham. Doctors at the two-day hearing, which took place in August, testified that the law, though supposedly aimed at ending a particular type of abortion, would make nearly all abortions illegal. About 80,000 abortions are performed annually in Florida, all but a tiny fraction in the first two trimesters. Similar laws have also been found unconstitutional in Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Illinois, Michigan, and Montana.

— BRIAN TAYLOR

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Quebec elections

Continued from front page

francophones are concentrated in a relatively small number of districts.

The election results mark the failure of a campaign launched by Ottawa early in 1998 to build what they thought would be a winning combination to defeat the PQ and prevent another referendum on Quebec's future. In 1995, a referendum on Quebec sovereignty initiated by the PQ almost won, striking a political blow to Canada's ruling rich. As part of his campaign, Bouchard had promised to organize another such referendum in the future.

The elections showed that the fight for Quebec independence is far from being squashed. It remains an unsettled question that bothers the bourgeoisie across Canada. "I'll try to work with Bouchard," said Canadian premier Jean Chretien, hours after the PQ's victory was announced. "But when they talk about another... referendum on separation, then they should know that we shall defend and protect our country... with the last of our energy."

The rulers' campaign to defeat the Parti Quebecois was centered around Charest, who resigned as head of the Conservative Party in Ottawa to become the leader of the PLQ last spring. Charest pledged not to hold a new referendum, claiming that this would bring political and economic instability.

But the Liberals did not succeed in breaking the majority support for the PQ among Quebecois, the French-speaking oppressed nationality in Quebec who make up about

80 percent of the province's population. At the same time, the PQ did not win by a wide margin as many bourgeois opinion polls had predicted the last week before the vote.

The day after the election, Bouchard announced that his government would not organize a new referendum for the time being, as the result of the vote indicates it would not be a winning one at the moment.

The gains made by the ADQ, which almost doubled its share of the vote, getting nearly 12 percent, is the most significant change since the 1994 elections. The ADQ was established in the early 1990s from a split in the PLQ. It campaigned on a program to the right of those of the other parties, centered on tax reductions and cuts in social services.

The ADQ presented itself as the alternative to the two other parties, as offering at least a different style from the established politicians, standing above their old conflicts that it described as responsible for mismanaging the economy and public budget. Its campaign remained in the framework of mainstream bourgeois politics.

The ADQ's success is rooted in the dissatisfaction among a significant layer of Quebecois, including many workers, with the PQ's massive cuts in social services and the PLQ open support for the federalist status quo.

The election campaign was marked by a series of labor actions against belt-tightening demands by the employers. Some 80,000 teachers organized a one-day job action de-

Canada: McDonald's workers fight for contract



Militant/Monica Jones

A November 28 rally supporting McDonald's workers who are fighting to negotiate their first contract in Squamish, British Columbia, near Vancouver. Above, two McDonald's workers (far left) and their supporters. Rally participants included members of the Canadian Auto Workers, among others.

spite threats of fines and imprisonment by the Quebec government and the opposition of the PQ and the Liberals. Paperworkers in Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland won a victory against Abitibi-Consolidated (see article on page 10). And some 500 poultry

workers began a strike against Olymel-Flamingo near Montreal.

Michel Dugré is a member of UNITE and was a candidate of the Communist League in these elections.

Strikes, marches for immigrant rights spread in France

BY RAFIK BENALI
AND NAT LONDON

PARIS — Thousands of workers throughout the country have organized strikes and demonstrations against layoffs and to demand the bosses hire more workers. At the same time thousands of undocumented workers and others have held spirited demonstrations demanding "papers for everyone."

About 11,000 rail workers have been on

strike since November 27. It is the second time in a week that workers have tied up the entire French railway network. Only one third of the trains in France were able to move. Rail workers are demanding that SNCF, the state-run railway, hire 6,000 more workers.

Rail workers participated in European-wide rail actions November 23, striking in six countries — Belgian, France, Greece, Luxembourg, Portugal, and Spain. Workers are protesting an EU plan to sell off state-owned

railroads. The job actions came after hundreds of rail workers in Marseilles took part in a 12-day strike to demand that 30 workers be hired at their station. On November 23 they won a promise of 20 workers to be hired in 1999 and 20 more to be given job training the following year. That same day jobless workers, some of whom closed job offices last December demanding higher benefits, occupied a Marseilles unemployment office.

Meanwhile, at Le Havre naval shipyards

thousands of workers and their supporters have been demonstrating against the announced closure of the shipyards. Hundreds of workers at two SEITA cigar and cigarette factories have been protesting the planned closure of the plants. Unionists have also protested the closure of four Levi's plants in France and Belgium, which will put 1,400 workers on the streets.

Demonstrations were held throughout France November 21 for 60,000 undocumented immigrants who were refused papers and are now threatened with deportation. The government has granted papers to 80,000 of the *sans papiers*, but rejected 60,000 others because they "didn't meet the requirements." Most protesters opposed the government's method of reviewing each immigrant's dossier individually. "We don't want the case by case, we want papers for all immigrants," chanted demonstrators.

"Everyone should have the right to ask for papers to live in France, because it is not a poor country," said Janneke Van den Berg, a student from the Netherlands working in France as an au pair. "We need more demonstrations like this."

Behind the protest actions and recent strikes lies a persistent level of high joblessness and an explosion in the number of temporary jobs. Unemployment is currently 11.6 percent with almost 3 million people unemployed in France. Temporary jobs have increased by 51 percent in the last two years and have quadrupled in the last 15 years. Today, nearly one worker in 10 is on a temporary contract.

Under the pressure of stepped-up working-class resistance, the Socialist Party-led coalition government of Lionel Jospin has proposed a measure to increase the bonus paid to temporary workers at the end of their contracts. They claim this would increase the pressure on bosses to give permanent contracts to 1.7 million temporary workers. This proposal has also been made to tax companies that have more than 10 or 15 percent temporaries on their payrolls.

The government has announced that beginning January 1 companies that lay off workers over 50 will be fined between two months and one year's salary, depending on the age of the worker being fired. At the same time, Jospin has cut in half the government financing of early retirement programs for companies with economic difficulties.

In recent years, hundreds of thousands of workers have been able to retire at age 56 or 57 or even as early as 53 in some cases, instead of being fired. This allowed many capitalists to "downsize" their factories while avoiding the need to fire large numbers of workers outright. Unions have demanded that the unemployed be hired to replace each worker on early retirement.

Growing strains within NATO, EU

Continued from front page

in western Europe — and transferring its rudimentary military assets to the EU directly.

"The objective is to launch a defense policy that would strengthen Europe's image and ability to act in regional crises or other missions," said a front-page article in the December 2 *International Herald Tribune*. "For both countries, an official said in London, the bottom line is that 'individually, our countries can only field marginal forces alone or with the Americans, but together we could put 30,000 men on the line and make ourselves noticed by anyone.'"

London and Paris are the main imperialist powers in Europe that can quickly deploy combat forces abroad. For London, the deal may signify a weakening of its long-term "special relationship" with Washington. For decades, this "relationship" has been the cornerstone of an imperialist military alliance in Europe that aims to overturn the workers states in Eastern Europe and counter struggles of workers and farmers in other parts of the world. Not too long ago, British government officials were assailing attempts to boost the role of the WEU for interventions abroad, and were singing praise to NATO. "I don't see any serious possibility that the WEU could be suitable to carry out a serious combat-related task," said Malcolm Rifkind two years ago. Rifkind was the British foreign secretary of the Conservative government that ruled prior to the victory of Anthony Blair's Labour Party.

For Paris, the deal indicates a smoothing over of its often adversarial relationship with its British rivals, in order advance its open challenge to U.S. military dominance in Europe through NATO. The French rulers have refused to rejoin NATO's military wing, after Washington bluntly turned down French demands that NATO's southern command be controlled by military officers from one of the EU countries.

While Washington is officially not opposed to the European Union taking on military powers, the *Tribune* said, "many policymakers have feared that the change

risked blurring command authority in the alliance," that is, NATO. "In particular, some U.S. officials fear that an independent European military capability could lead to paralyzing quarrels in the alliance's councils and to political rivalry that could undermine America's role in Europe's military security."

In a related development, Washington rejected about a week earlier a proposal by the new Social Democratic/Greens coalition government of Germany that NATO pledge never to be the first to use nuclear weapons.

"It is an integral part of our strategic concept and we think it should remain exactly as it is," U.S. defense secretary William Cohen responded November 23, referring to Washington's insistence on maintaining a nuclear first-strike threat.

The November 28 *New York Times* published a front-page article that indicated further strains within NATO. It was titled, "A policy struggle within NATO: U.S. plan for widening scope raises opposition of allies."

Washington is seeking to broaden NATO's mandate to give the imperialist alliance a freer hand in intervening beyond Europe's borders to where the U.S. rulers, who call the shots in NATO, deem the alliance's "interests" are threatened. The U.S. government is also seeking to include a stipulation in a new NATO "vision" statement that military action by NATO does not require authorization from the United Nations Security Council.

"The proposals are running into European opposition that threatens to undermine a 50th-anniversary NATO summit meeting in Washington in April," the *Times* article said. "France, always concerned with what it sometimes calls American hegemony and keen to develop Europe's own military abilities, and Germany... are among those wary of giving NATO too sweeping a mission. Russia is also deeply concerned."

Underneath these strains on the military front is fiercer economic competition among the main imperialist powers on the two sides of the Atlantic, amidst a world deflationary crisis that's worsening.

Just recently, Washington threatened to raise import taxes to 100 percent on a range of products from EU countries if the European Union fails to change its current policies on the banana trade.

The December 3 *New York Times* and other major big-business dailies reported on Boeing's announcement that it would layoff another 20,000 employees over the next two years, on top of cutting 28,000 jobs the company had previously announced. The *Times* pointed to lower than expected profit rates for the aerospace giant and increased competition from rivals in Europe, particularly the French Airbus.

Paris and Bonn have pushed the establishment of an EU common currency, the "euro," as a way to undercut Washington's economic superiority. While these efforts may be bearing some fruit vis-à-vis Washington, the much touted prospect of a "united Europe" remains a myth.

"Storm cloud over the EU," was the lead headline of the December 2 *International Herald Tribune*. "A deepening policy rift between France and Germany is threatening to paralyze efforts to reform the 15-nation European Union," the paper said in a front-page article. "The divisions between Paris and Bonn... were laid bare Tuesday [December 1] on a wide range of issues following a two-day summit meeting that illustrated how competing national interests are pushing the two allies apart."

One of the main disputes is the demand by the German government to cut significantly Bonn's payments of \$12 billion per year, the largest contribution to the EU budget, and curtailing the program of farm subsidies that amounts to some 70 percent of the EU budget. Paris, which receives a heftier share of the farm subsidies than any other member, is vehemently opposed to such cuts. France remains the number-two exporter of farm products in the world, following the United States. Paris — a major nuclear power, unlike Bonn — is also opposed to the German proposal of renouncing first-use of nuclear weapons.

New platesetter will reduce labor, facilitate political timeliness in Pathfinder printshop

BY STEVE CLARK

"Let the imperialists do what they will! They will never force Cuba to surrender and they cannot keep Latin America in submission indefinitely," said Cuban president Fidel Castro in a Dec. 21, 1989, speech, the day after the bloody U.S. government invasion of Panama.

Castro's speech is included in the pamphlet, *Panama: The Truth about the U.S. Invasion*, scheduled to be the first title reprinted using the Pathfinder printshop's new Agfa Galileo platesetter, which was delivered November 21. The pamphlet was originally edited and printed in just a few days over the New Year's weekend in 1990, as part of an emergency campaign by socialist workers and youth demanding "U.S. Hands Off Panama!"

Pathfinder's new state-of-the-art equipment will now make it possible for the printshop to produce revolutionary pamphlets and books with an even more rapid turnaround — and with higher quality, less labor, and lower costs. Producing new Pathfinder titles and keeping in print its 350 existing publications necessitates a smaller printshop, one the communist movement is financially capable of sustaining.

"More than in hackneyed phrases of international law, more than in discredited international institutions, we believe in the peoples and in their courage," said Castro in the 1989 talk. "We believe in the ability of man to continue marching on the path of progress, on the path of independence, on the path of genuine freedom and dignity!"

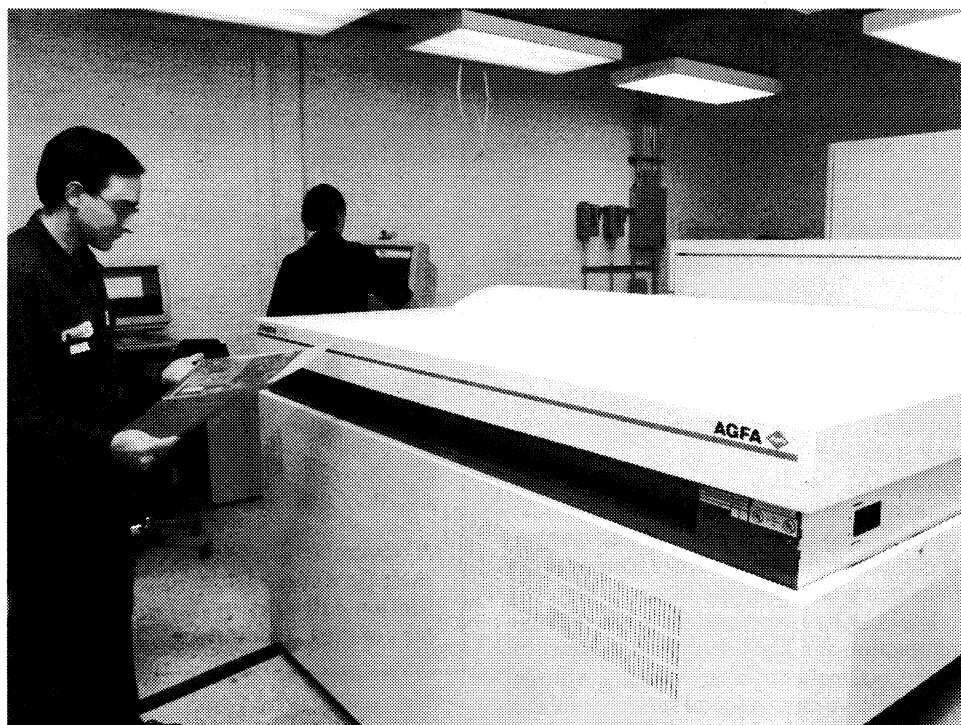
Those same attitudes of proletarian consciousness and discipline are at the heart of the revolutionary transformation of producing Pathfinder books and pamphlets. Since the beginning of this year, some 140 volunteers in cities across North America and around the world have taken on the task of preparing Pathfinder's entire political arsenal of revolutionary books and pamphlets for reprint. They are scanning, proofreading, and formatting the text of each of these titles, and readying the covers and graphics for the presses as well.

The Panama pamphlet is one of the volunteers' most recent jobs. Over the past week, they also completed *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics: Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions* by Socialist Workers Party national secretary Jack Barnes and *Che Guevara et la lutte pour le socialisme aujourd'hui* (Che Guevara and the fight for socialism today), a French-language pamphlet by Mary-Alice Waters, editor of *New International*.

From computer to plate

"What the volunteers send to us in the printshop is a CD-ROM with the entire book in electronic form, ready to go into production," explained David Rosenfeld, a press operator responsible for organizing to bring the new computer-to-plate equipment on line in December.

"Right now, we take that disk and go directly to film," he said. "That alone lets us bypass hours of work we used to spend just



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

New computer-to-plate machine will make it possible for the printshop to produce revolutionary pamphlets and books faster, with higher quality, less labor, and lower costs.

a few months ago on camera work and stripping up large flats by hand to make plates.

"But with the Galileo, we will eliminate film altogether, at another big savings in labor," he said. "We will go directly from the computer disk the volunteers send in to the printing plate we put on the presses."

Members and supporters of the communist movement from across the United States and Canada mobilized at the Pathfinder Building in New York City over the November 20-22 weekend, when the platesetter was delivered, to help build the environmentally controlled room where it is currently being installed. They also did renovation work and painting in the second-floor sales office and production areas of the shop. Since then, volunteers from Cleveland, Newark, New York, Syracuse, Toronto, Washington, D.C., and elsewhere have helped complete some of the unfinished tasks.

"During the Thanksgiving week and the week afterwards," Rosenfeld said, "technicians employed by Agfa, the manufacturer of the Galileo, have been working with us to get the platesetter up and running."

"From December 2 through December 4, we'll have a trainer in here for three solid days showing several of us not only how to operate the platesetting equipment itself, but also how to use the software package — called

Apogee — that substantially reduces the skill level of going from computer to plate. Then the three of us will begin training others who work on the presses or in the bindery."

"Over the past two weeks," he added, "we've also decided on the proofing equipment we need so that Pathfinder and the shop's other customers can confidently review and sign off on the accuracy and quality of our work — before we make the plates." Among other reasons proofing is so important, he explained, is that production costs rapidly become unsustainable in the shop unless workers there can hold the remake of faulty plates to below 5 percent of all those produced.

"We're still quite a ways from reaching that necessary level right now," Rosenfeld said. "But doing so rapidly is a precondition for the survival of the printshop. Just like the effort we are now in the middle of, to reverse several months of a steep decline in sales of commercial printing we need to keep the shop a financially viable operation."

Capital Fund

The Galileo platesetter is a \$350,000 piece of equipment. Since early October, supporters of the communist movement have contributed \$215,000 to a capital fund to make possible the purchase of this machinery;

\$135,000 more is needed between now and the turn of the year to complete the payment.

Overall, the fund is seeking to raise \$550,000 — not only to finance the platesetter, but also to pay off \$200,000 in outstanding loans on the printshop's web press and two sheetfed presses. That will free the shop once and for all of the bankers' lien on equipment essential to the production of the *Militant*, the Spanish-language monthly *Perspectiva Mundial*, and Pathfinder books and pamphlets.

Since the report in last week's *Militant*, contributors have swelled the fund by \$13,000. Of that total, \$2,800 was raised at a November 29 meeting in Detroit to honor the life and political contributions of Helene Millington, a member of the Socialist Workers Party for more than two decades who died in October at age 86. Other donations came from supporters in Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Altogether, \$100,000 of the total raised so far has come from three individuals, with the remainder from some seventy contributions ranging from \$1,000 to \$10,000. Veterans of the communist movement for many years are joining with younger members and supporters in making this effort a success. Many have turned over employer bonuses in full to the capital fund. Other contributors have come into substantial amounts of capital as a result of bequests, accident settlements, or other windfalls.

Meetings are being organized in many cities to discuss how supporters of the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists can help these organizations respond most effectively to the political openings before them as a result of an upturn in defensive struggles by workers and farmers in the United States and other imperialist countries. These events, and other aspects of the fund, are being organized by a committee of Nan Bailey (Seattle), Sam Manuel (Washington, D.C.), Dave Prince (New York), Norton Sandler (San Francisco), Maggie Trowe (Des Moines), and Jack Willey (Chicago). This week, Frank Forrestal (Pittsburgh) also joined the committee.

All of them will be in Los Angeles over the December 4-6 weekend for the socialist conference being held in conjunction with the third national Young Socialists convention there. This will be the next big opportunity to increase contributions to the fund.

To find out how you can make a contribution, write: Capital Fund Committee, 410 West Street, New York, NY 10014.

Connecticut, Florida protests press for release of Puerto Rican political prisoners

BY OLGA RODRIGUEZ

DANBURY, Connecticut — "Tear down the prison walls! Free the Puerto Rican Prisoners of War!" "Freedom! Freedom! for Alejandrina and the rest," and "Long Live Free Puerto Rico; Yankees out of the Caribbean!"

So chanted 30 activists from Boston, New York City, and Hartford and Southington, Connecticut, as they marched down Main Street in this small town where the Federal Corrections Institute for women is located. Protesters were here to press the case for the unconditional release of Alejandrina Torres, who is jailed at the Danbury federal prison, and the 15 other Puerto Rican political prisoners. The spirited march was one of several organized by the National Committee to Free the Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners. Demonstrators carried a massive Puerto Rican flag, banners demanding independence for Puerto Rico and freedom for the Puerto Rican patriots held in U.S. jails, and carrying large photos of each of the Puerto Rican political prisoners.

The actions at each of the federal prisons where 16 *independentistas* are serving jail sentences of 15 to 105 years were organized to publicize the cases of the prisoners and to help build toward a vigil at the United Nations on December 10. The UN rally will demand that the world body pressure Washington to free the prisoners.

The Boston and New York chapters of

the National Committee were joined in the action by members of the Boston American Friends Service Committee's Support Group for Families of Prisoners, the New York and Boston branches of the Socialist Workers Party, the Young Socialists chapters in these cities, and supporters of Sylvia Baraldini, an Italian national doing time at the Danbury prison for her alleged help in aiding in the escape of Joanne Chesimar, also known as Assata Shakur, a fighter for Black rights who currently lives in Cuba.

Manuel González, a worker from Southington, Connecticut, who had been involved in the defense of the Hartford 15 at the time of their trial, stated: "I'm here to support the political prisoners, and to condemn the hypocrisy of the U.S. government that marches around the world preaching freedom of expression while denying Puerto Ricans those rights for 100 years."

Christopher Torres, a 22-year old former student at Lehman College, and activist in the New York chapter of the National Committee, said, "I became curious about who these prisoners were when I stopped by a table that the National Committee to Free the Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners at the Puerto Rican Festival when I was 17. I later joined the study group they were organizing on Puerto Rican history. I learned a lot about what my people have gone through, and our true history. Stuff they never teach us in schools." He

was heartened by what he sees as increased interest and growing support over the last couple of years for the international campaign to win unconditional release of the jailed Puerto Rican patriots.

Alejandrina Torres was one of 16 pro-independence fighters arrested and accused of being members of the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN), an alleged group Washington claimed carried out a series of bombings of government, business and military sites between 1980 and 1983.

Torres was brutalized by guards at Chicago's Metropolitan Correctional Center while awaiting trial and being held in administrative detention. After a visit from her daughter, a male guard threw her to the floor, broke her collarbone, and participated in a body cavity search with four women guards. After the search, the warden put Torres in solitary confinement for being "insolent."

Torres and 13 others were convicted of seditious conspiracy against the U.S. government and given sentences ranging from 35 to 105 years in prison.

Following an ecumenical service and brief rally, the protesters got in cars and vans and made the two-mile trip to the Danbury prison, with horns blaring. The caravan participants drove by the prison and then returned to town, as there is no place for cars to park or protesters to stand. Federal cops, who were waiting with cameras and video recorders at

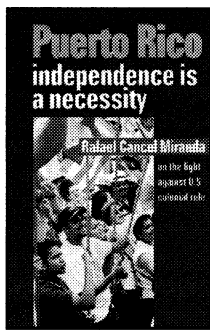
Continued on Page 5

From Pathfinder

Puerto Rico:
INDEPENDENCE IS A
NECESSITY
**Rafael Cancel
Miranda**
on the fight
against U.S.
colonial rule

In two interviews, a leader of Puerto Rico's independence struggle speaks on the brutal

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Oregon disclosure ruling saps free speech

BY DENNIS RICHTER

SEATTLE, Washington — The Oregon Elections Division has denied a request for an exemption from disclosing the names of contributors to, and vendors of, the election campaign of Adrienne Weller, the candidate of the Freedom Socialist Party for Oregon state representative in the 18th District.

In an Oct. 23, 1998, letter, Fred R. Neal, Campaign Finance Manager of the Oregon Elections Division, wrote: "There is insufficient evidence to show that there is a reasonable probability that the required disclosures will subject those identified in the reports to threats, harassment, or reprisals." The letter formally denied Weller's request.

In closing, the letter justified the Division's rejection of an exemption by stating: "A similar exemption was requested before the city of Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission (SEEC) in 1997 and was denied."

Neal is referring to the SEEC decision to deny the Socialist Workers 1997 Campaign an exemption from publicly disclosing the names of its contributors and vendors last year. The Socialist Workers Party ran Scott Breen for mayor and Roberta Scherr for city council in Seattle in 1997.

"The Oregon decision represents a widening attack on the right to privacy, free speech, and voluntary association, which began with the City of Seattle during my campaign," Breen said in an interview. "This proves what we said at that time: the SEEC decision would not be limited to Seattle, nor just to the Socialist Workers Party. All fighters for social justice, especially trade unionists who face increasing intervention by government into our unions, should protest the Oregon decision and demand it be reversed."

The SEEC decision prompted a public campaign organized by the Seattle Committee to Defend Free Speech, demanding the SEEC reverse its initial decision, drop its proposal to fine the Socialist Workers Campaign \$6,000 and grant an exemption. It spanned three public hearings and generated public debate in the major newspapers. The Committee to Defend Free Speech organized protest meetings and its fight received active legal support from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Washington.

Dozens of individuals, including Secretary-Treasurer of the King County Labor Council Ron Judd, sent letters of protest to the city of Seattle and supported the demands of the Seattle Committee to Defend Free Speech.

After this six-month public protest, the City of Seattle and the Socialist Workers Campaign agreed to a settlement. The city authorities, while refusing to grant an exemption, agreed not to demand the names of the contributors and vendors, thus preserving the privacy rights of those individuals. The socialist campaign agreed not to file a lawsuit and pay a significantly reduced fine of \$330.

Long history of struggle

In the wake of the enactment of "public disclosure laws" and government bodies to enforce them in the 1970s, the SWP and ACLU fought to have minor political parties who have been targets of government harassment — like the Socialist Workers Party — exempted from reporting the names, addresses, and employers of contributors and vendors of their election campaigns.

Such lists, if publicly disclosed, could



Militant/Carmen Maymi

Socialist Workers candidate Scott Breen, center, campaigning in the streets of Seattle.

provide ready-made "enemies lists" and subject individuals to harassment and reprisal. In addition, such laws give the government more tools to intervene into workers organizations like the Socialist Workers Party and the unions.

After nearly a decade-long battle, these exemptions were won, backed up by Supreme Court decisions like *Buckley v. Valeo* and *Brown v. Socialist Workers 1974 Campaign Committee*.

Since the 1980s, the Federal Elections Commission has granted such exemptions to SWP campaign committees. In 1996, cit-

ing evidence of continuing harassment, including from government agencies like the police, the FEC granted the SWP an exemption from public disclosure until 2002.

The SEEC's decision in 1997 was the most serious recent probe by ruling-class forces against this provision. They denied that there was a reasonable probability of harassment against the Socialist Workers Campaign, despite evidence provided to the contrary. This included the fact that Breen's employer, the Boeing Company, carried out an investigation of him after being interviewed as a candidate on a popular radio

show. This was seen by many as an act of intimidation. The Boeing Company also maintains an anti-communist "rule" against engaging in "un-American activities."

The SEEC also attempted to influence the Washington State Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) in 1997, faxing a copy of their decision to the commission right before a hearing of that body on the Socialist Workers Campaign's request for an exemption. The PDC granted an exemption at that time.

Fight to overturn new PDC provision

In 1998, the Washington state PDC again granted a formal disclosure exemption to both the Socialist Workers 1998 State Campaign and to the Freedom Socialist Party candidate for state representative in the 37th District. It inserted, however, a new provision that allows for "an independent third party" audit of their campaign's books.

Breen, speaking before the PDC hearing in August that made this decision, explained why the Socialist Workers Campaign opposed this new provision. "This new provision runs contrary to the PDC's own findings that we are subject to government and private harassment for our political views. It opens a crack in the protection of privacy and voluntary association we have won over the last 25 years. If allowed to stand, it can be used to subject our contributors and vendors to public scrutiny now and be widened in the future."

The Socialist Workers Campaign has formally appealed this provision of the August ruling and the PDC has agreed to reconsider it at their Jan. 26, 1999, hearing.

Rightism, Bonapartism, and the election of Jesse Ventura

BY DOUG JENNESS

ST. PAUL, Minnesota — Last week's *Militant* described Jesse Ventura, the newly elected governor of Minnesota, as a Bonapartist. That's "the best description of this breed of radical demagogue," I stated in an "As I see it" column. In the article, "Election of Bonapartist figure Ventura in Minnesota is danger to working people," I explained that the governor-elect presents himself as a champion of "the people" who stands above partisan politics and classes.

AS I SEE IT

Describing Ventura as a Bonapartist is more accurate than simply referring to him as another "ultrarightist." He isn't a rightist in the same manner as politicians like former U.S. president Ronald Reagan or ultrarightists like Patrick Buchanan. Unlike politicians of this sort who espouse a broad range of rightist positions, Ventura takes diverse stands — from supporting a woman's right to choose abortion and legalization of prostitution and drugs — traditionally not positions of the political right — to cutting state-subsidized day care and replacing income tax with a national sales tax.

However, the article mistakenly creates the impression that Ventura's victory isn't a victory for the right wing. One of the break-

ers states, "Ventura: a Bonapartist, not a rightist." Underneath, the first sentence reads: "It's not accurate to label Ventura as a rightist..."

The truth is that while Ventura's demagoguery is designed to draw support from a wide range of voters with contradictory political views and conflicting class interests, the thrust of his victory and his administration will aid the employers' offensive against working people and give a boost to rightist forces.

We should anticipate more assaults on social benefits that working people have wrested in struggle from the boss class — from education to workers' compensation and from child care to public relief for workers that can't get unemployment or medical insurance. And this will all be justified as being in the interests of the people of Minnesota.

What's wrong with 'third partyism'

As I pointed out in last week's column, many middle-class radicals have hailed Ventura's victory as a breakthrough for building a "third party."

Marvin Davidov, a prominent pacifist in the Twin Cities, wrote to the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* on November 14: "The governor [Ventura] has opened up space for all alternative political parties. Sen. Wellstone should analyze carefully Jesse Ventura's victory. Paul, move to the left in your presidential run and help build the Third Party." Davidov is referring here to liberal Democratic senator Paul Wellstone, who is currently probing a run for the Democratic Party nomination for president in the elections two years from now.

In a similar vein Greg Gibbs of the Twin Cities Labor Party, in a letter posted on the Internet, stated, "The dead horse of 'responsible' Minnesota politics has been turned upside down. This can only be food for the third party movement. Ventura's victory is the best thing that could have happened as it opens the door for us."

The underlying assumption here is that there is something inherently progressive about a third party. But that's not true. All parties and politics have a class basis — even Ventura who claims to represent businessmen, farmers, and workers alike. The Reform Party, for which Ventura was the standard-bearer, is a capitalist party. Its positions are based on upholding and perpetuating the capitalist system of exploitation.

Those who talk about a third party abstracted from any class perspective inevitably end up being sucked into backing some form of capitalist politics. This has been the historical experience with "populist"-style third parties.

As workers and farmers, however, are drawn deeper and deeper into struggle to defend ourselves against the worsening consequences of the capitalist economic and social crisis, we more sharply confront the political parties and policies of the employing class.

The need is posed of breaking, not only with the Democratic and Republican parties, but with all forms of bourgeois politics, no matter if there are three, four, or five capitalist parties. As our struggles become sharper and more massive, the political confrontation will lead us to establish our own political course and policies independent of the capitalist rulers. It will pose sharply the need to form a political party of working people, based on the mass organizations of working people, including trade unions that become detachments of struggle.

Release Puerto Rican political prisoners

Continued from Page 4

the entrance to the facility, failed to intimidate the protesters. The National Committee and others are building a December 10 rally at the United Nations, which will take place on the 50th anniversary of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 100th anniversary of the Treaty of Paris, through which Spain illegally ceded colonial domination of Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines to the United States. Other events include longtime independentista and former Puerto Rican political prisoner Rafael Cancel Miranda speaking at Baruch College. For further information on the December 10 rally call (212) 387-1694.

Olga Rodríguez is a member of the International Association of Machinists.

BY ERNIE MAILHOT

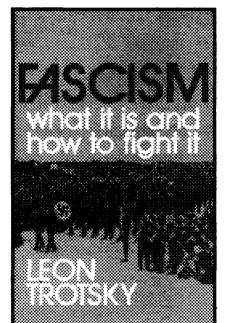
MIAMI — Twenty-four people rallied at the Federal Courthouse in Orlando, Florida, November 21, demanding freedom for Juan Segarra Palmer and the other Puerto Rican political prisoners held in U.S. jails. Segarra was convicted as one of the "Hartford 15" who were accused of conspiracy in the alleged robbery of a Wells Fargo depot in Hartford, Connecticut in 1983. He's detained at a penitentiary in Coleman, Florida, serving 65 years. The Orlando chapter of the National Committee to Free the Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners organized the protest. Participants came from Miami, St. Petersburg, and Tampa. The event was aired on a local cable TV station.

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Skychef strikers in London stand firm

BY CAROLINE BELLAMY

LONDON — At a mass meeting on November 21, 400 workers employed by LSG Lufthansa Skycheffs voted unanimously to reject company conditions for their reemployment, effectively deciding on all-out strike action. The day before, the company issued dismissal letters, firing members of the Transport and General Workers Union at the plant who had taken part in a 24-hour stoppage.

Brian Powell, a worker in the Wash Up area who moved the resolution that was adopted, said to enthusiastic applause: "No individual should sign any management let-

ters offering reinstatement. What we want is a union-negotiated settlement. We should all stay out until we're all taken back on agreed terms."

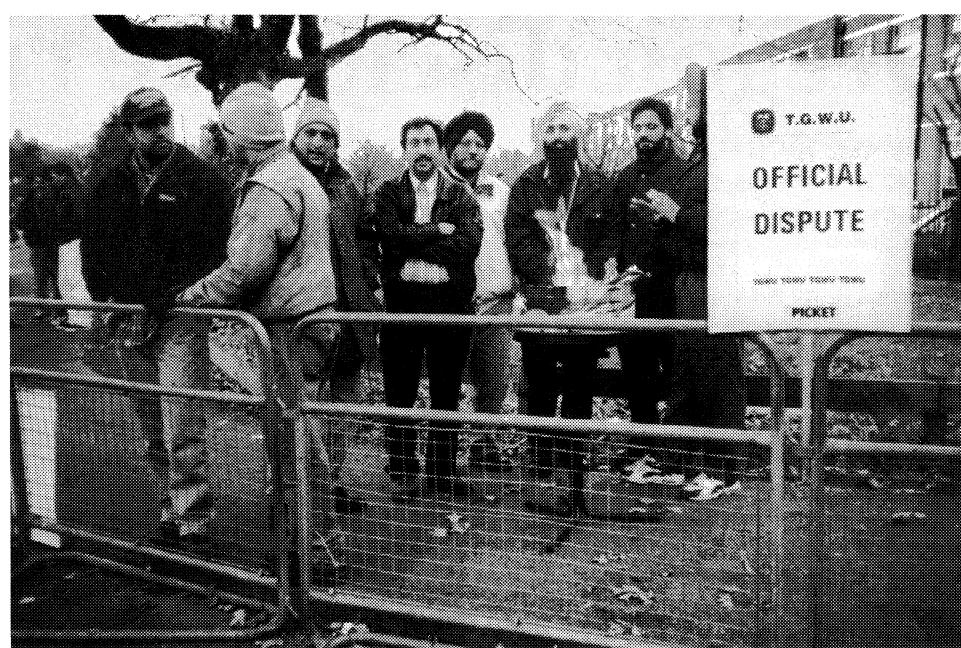
There were cheers when the vote was taken. Many of the workers are Asian. The mass meeting was conducted in English and Punjabi.

The strikers then turned to organizing the walkout. They're picketing around the clock and are establishing a strike headquarters. Union officials pledged to contact trade unions at other airports and in other countries for support, and to raise the strike with Members of Parliament.

One of the pickets, Javid Upaday, said that the workers were prepared for a long battle. "No doubt we'll be preparing turkeys for a Christmas picket," he stated. Even on the first day of action, the workers had organized two braziers to keep them warm and to use as cooking facilities. As cars passed by the 50 or so pickets, many hooted their horns in support. The president of the local Sikh temple came to the line to offer support.

There was a marked cop presence at the picket. The police insisted the strikers stick to the legal limit of six pickets at the gate and erected crowd-control barriers to hem in the unionists. Many had to stand across the road from the factory. Pickets also reported that special security patrols with German shepherd dogs had been organized.

The issues behind the strike concern new work practices, "single operated catering," introduced by the company for those on the transport team who take the prepared food and drink from the factory to the airport, and load it onto the planes. The union responded with a demand for £1.50 per hour raise and that there should be no compulsory redundancies (£1 = US\$1.65). The company of-



Militant/Caroline Bellamy

Strikers at LSG Lufthansa Skycheffs, members of Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), picket across from the plant November 21 in London.

ferred £0.40 per hour instead. But, in fact, following the introduction of new rosters, the Transport Team received a wage cut by as much as £70 or £100 per week.

The union also demanded a raise for other workers, rejecting what everyone perceived as a divide-and-rule policy of the company that was seeking a special deal with the drivers. The company responded by offering all workers, including the drivers, a £0.12 per hour rise.

An initial move to strike action had been aborted when the company alleged that the procedures adopted were outside of the legal framework established by the former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. This includes a postal ballot sent to all workers to be involved in a strike and the provision of seven days notice of action.

When the union made a second attempt to organize strike action, the workers recorded a vote of more than 70 percent in favor of a walkout. The necessary notice was given and the day of strike action was set

for November 20. When they went out on strike, workers were sacked for breach of contract. The company representatives called workers who were sick at home to ask if they would have walked out had they not been ill. Those who answered "yes" were told that they were fired too.

The company offered as a condition of reemployment that each worker sign a letter agreeing to the £0.12 per hour raise and that they would not press any other issues in dispute. Most workers were offered an immediate return to work if they signed. A minority, including a number of union stewards and workers identified as more militant, were informed that they would not be reemployed until February 1999.

"This is clearly an attempt to break our union," Upaday said. "It's no longer an issue of money. We're out for respect, dignity, and union rights."

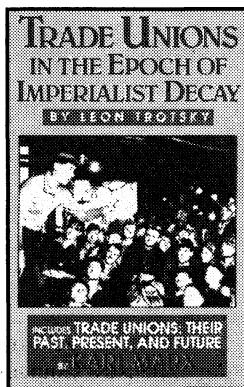
Caroline Bellamy is a member of the Transport and General Workers Union in London.

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UK farmers face 'worst crisis since 1930s'

As farmers protest for living income, many embrace protectionist demands

BY ALAN HARRIS AND PETER ROSNER

LONDON — "The worst crisis in agriculture since the 1930s." That's how the November 12 *Times* of London and other dailies here described the devastation faced by farmers in the United Kingdom.

A report by accountants Deloitte and Touche in October estimated a drop of 66 percent in farm profits over two years and that a quarter of farms are now running at a loss. According to the *Times*, figures to be released later in November are expected to show that total farm income has dropped to £700 million this year (£1 = \$1.65), compared to about £4 billion two years ago.

Hardest hit are family farmers, with farm closures escalating daily.

In response to this crisis, UK agriculture minister Nicholas Brown announced November 16 a meager "emergency aid package" of £120 million to farmers. National Farmers Union leader Ben Gill described the package as "a short term safety net for some farmers teetering on the brink of financial collapse." The union is a conservative association whose membership ranges from the largest capitalist farmers to small family farmers.

"We are grateful for the package but we would like to see long-term solutions to our problems," said Maurice Vellacott, a work-

ing farmer of hill livestock from Exmoor in the west of England. He was speaking to *Militant* reporters November 18 outside the Houses of Parliament where about 150 small farmers, mainly from the southwest of England and Wales, held a public meeting and organized to lobby Members of Parliament (MP). The event was called by Farmers in Crisis, an organization of small farmers.

"Today we sell a lamb for £28 and the supermarkets charge £119," Villacote said. He pointed out that the middlemen — abattoirs, distribution networks, and supermarkets — get the difference between these two prices. Last year the price farmers received was £48 per lamb.

Villacote has run a deficit this year of £24,000. His costs include £10,000 per year in interest on his mortgage. He will receive £7000 from the government aid package, which means he will still finish the year in the red to the tune of £17,000.

Villacote's wife and son used to work with him on the farm, but since they've hit hard times they both have taken other jobs. "Now it's just me and the dog," he stated. These figures give a glimpse to the kind of aid the government package amounts to. It also covers only some farmers.

Villacote said that other farmers are even worse off than himself. Graham McCloud from North Devon, another farmer in the group *Militant* reporters interviewed, will get nothing from the package because his farm is in the lowlands. And pig farmers, one of the hardest-hit groups, will also receive nothing.

The package's main recipients will be hill farmers and those in the beef industry hit by fluctuations in national currencies — such as suckler cow producers. A third element of the package is extending special payments to farmers to slaughter and destroy within three weeks of birth male calves that have no markets due to the ban on exports following the outbreak of the BSE, or "mad cow," disease. This scheme, due to expire November 30, has been extended to April. But payments to farmers will now only be 70 percent of the previous rate.

Many of the farmers who participated in the November 18 protest were susceptible

to reactionary, protectionist explanations as to reasons of the recent devastating conditions they face. At the same time many of them focus their demands on getting a living income.

Villacote's view was that "the strong pound and cheap imports" were the decisive reasons for the crisis faced by farmers like himself.

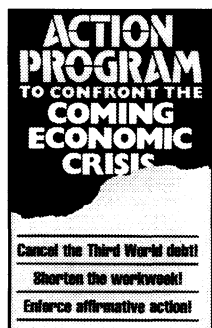
The predominant theme at the meeting inside Parliament between the farmers and MPs was that the supermarkets pay farmers a pittance for their produce and livestock, compared to the prices of food on the supermarket shelves. However, when Liberal Democrat member of parliament Paul Tyler claimed that "cut-price substandard imports" were the biggest problem, he received a favorable reception from the audience.

Rightist forces are also appealing to the farmers attempting to channel discontent in a nationalist direction. The UK Independence Party issued a leaflet outside the lobby blaming the European Union and farmers from other countries for the crisis. "British farmers are being ruined by events that have nothing to do with British Agriculture: our obligations under EMU — even though we may never join — mean high interest rates and an artificially strong pound. Our economy is being dragged down in order to make it converge with those of our EU 'partners,'" the flyer said. "You can't even sell your produce at home because our 'partners' dump their surpluses on us — and they will stop at nothing to squeeze us out of third markets."

The rightist Countryside Alliance, an organization that beats the drum for the "British way of life" in the countryside, attempting to draw small farmers behind big agrobusiness and large landowner interests, also backed the lobby of Parliament.

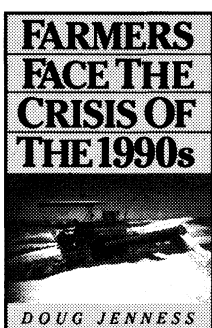
The National Farmers Union refused to throw its weight behind the lobby. "I think the union is a bit scared of us and what we are trying to do," a spokesman for Farmers in Crisis said in a statement. "We were asked not to upset talks with the government and the supermarkets, but we told the two senior members of NFU staff we met that grassroots farmers felt talks were going nowhere."

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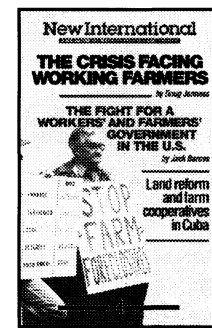
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Cuban youth leaders tour Vancouver...

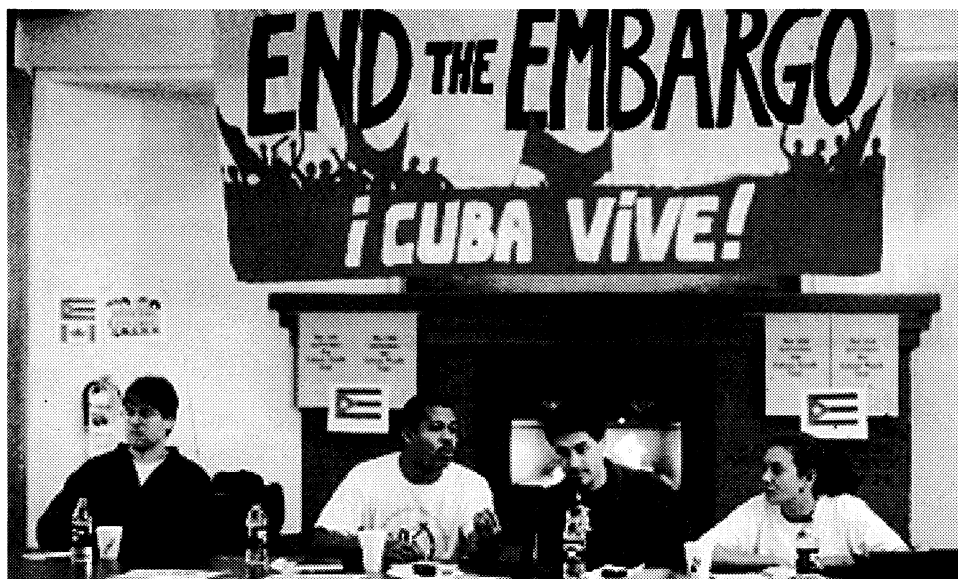
BY PAUL KOURI

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — "I liked what he said that Cuba shows there is another way, that capitalism isn't the only way," commented Sarah Petrescu after hearing two Cuban youth leaders address a public meeting of 140 at the Roundhouse Community Center here November 20. Like many of the 400 people — in their majority young — people who came to hear the Cubans throughout the five days they spent in Vancouver, Petrescu is repelled by the poverty, wars, and other social evils fostered by capitalism.

Juan Carlos Frómata de la Rosa is the coordinator of the Americas section of the international relations department of the Union of Young Communists (UJC). Raíza Rodríguez González is a member of the National Secretariat of the Federation of University Students (FEU) and a masters student in sociology at the University of Havana. They spoke to hundreds of youth during their three-week tour in Canada that began in Montreal November 1.

Sponsors of the Vancouver leg of the visit included the student unions from Langara College, University of British Columbia (UBC), and Simon Fraser University (SFU). The three campus meetings drew more than 200 students. Other youth/student groups such as Colour Connected, Third World Alliance, Global Development, Latin American Students Union at SFU, and Young Socialists helped organize campus meetings. The Cubans spoke to 40 delegates at the regular monthly meeting of the Vancouver and District Labour Council.

They also met with 13 workers, members



Militant/Monica Jones

A November 17 meeting at Langara Community College in Vancouver with members of Union of Young Communists in Cuba. From left: chairperson Paul Zollman, Juan Carlos Frómata de la Rosa, translator Francisco Trujillo, Raíza Rodríguez González.

of the International Association of Machinists, who work at Avcorp, an aerospace plant. Boe Ducayen, 21, commented after the exchange: "It was great meeting the Cubans. They should go to high schools. When I was going to high school in Alberta they brainwashed us with videos portraying Cuban nuclear missiles pointed at the United States. But it's the other way around. They [Washington] spend billions to send troops to Iraq when they should be helping countries in need like Nicaragua."

"Cuba has contributed a lot to Africa," Albert Tjitunga, who was born in Namibia,

said during the exchange between the Cuban youth and the IAM members. More than 300,000 Cubans volunteered in Angola between 1975 and 1990 to help the people there defend their hard-won independence from Portugal and push back repeated invasions by the South African army. The defeat of Pretoria's forces at the closing of the 1980s played a key role in winning the independence of neighboring Namibia and in boosting the struggle to bring down South Africa's apartheid regime itself.

Speaking to students at Langara, Frómata described how his two years in Ethiopia as

...speak with Steelworkers in Toronto...

BY KATY LEROUGETEL

TORONTO — "There are four children in my family and we're all at a university. Only my father's paycheck comes in every month — 198 pesos. But we're fine. I may not have the latest fashionable clothes, but I eat, take the bus to school every day, and go out with my friends," said Raíza Rodríguez González, 22, a representative of the Federation of University Students in Cuba. She was talking with a dozen members of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) November 12.

Together with Juan Carlos Frómata de la Rosa, representative of the Union of Young Communists, she toured Canada in November speaking with students and unionists. They were in Toronto for five days.

This discussion over coffee and donuts in a hotel meeting room near the workplace had been set up by USWA Local 5338 and announced with leaflets posted on union bulletin boards in English, Spanish, Punjabi, and Vietnamese.

"But what's the point in having a free education, if you can't get a well-paying job afterwards?" said steelworker Dwight Duncan. "We might have to look for a job for one or two years here, but then you could walk into IBM at \$95,000 a year." Rodríguez stated that all education was provided free of charge to every Cuban and those graduating are guaranteed a job after their studies.

"Well, we have different starting points," Frómata replied. "In Cuba, we don't have shacks where children infected with parasites live — like you saw during the storm in Central America — while at the same time some earn \$95,000 a year. We want to create a collective approach, to raise everyone up. We share what little we have equally."

"So what would you change in your country?" asked Joe Fusione.

"The U.S. blockade," Frómata said, describing Washington's economic war on Cuba. "I don't want a government like you have here, or in the U.S. or in any one of your countries," added Rodríguez. Workers sitting around the table were born in the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Guatemala, Canada, and El Salvador.

"Why do thousands come out of Cuba on rafts, then?" asked Fusione.

"Immigration is a very politicized question," Frómata said. "It's normal that people from underdeveloped countries want to come here, you're examples of this. How many Mexicans, Dominicans immigrate?"

"Yes, but Cubans say on TV, 'Don't send

me back, I'll be tortured.' You don't see Dominicans saying that," Fusione objected.

"Cubans are the only people offered citizenship and a job when they arrive in the U.S.," Frómata said. "It's easier to get that if you denounce the Cuban government. That's not offered to Dominicans or Mexicans."

Edgar Méndez had recently spent a week in Cuba volunteering on construction of a church. He asked, "The monthly ration of rice per person [at subsidized low prices] is 6 lbs. But often people don't get it all at once. They get 3 lbs and have to wait several weeks for the rest. With 75 percent of agricultural production taken up by sugar cane cultivation, which is state controlled and takes lots of machinery, don't Cubans really need more help growing food to eat?"

"I'm from the countryside, I'll answer that," said Rodríguez. "Sugar production doesn't take up 75 percent of agriculture — we grow coffee, cocoa, rice...but not all of

Cuba is fertile. We have to buy food from elsewhere. People have to wait for the rice because we can't get it from the United States. So the boat from China is delayed sometimes. But they do get their full ration eventually."

Three workers dropped into the discussion after attending a meeting elsewhere in the hotel to ratify a new contract with their employer. USWA 5338 is an amalgamated local where members work for many different companies. Rodolfo Molina spoke for them, "We had to accept yearly raises of 30 or 35 cents in a three-year contract because the government in this province has made a law that prevents us from shutting down the factory if we go on strike. Other people can come in and take our jobs. We have to fight hard here. We wanted to come to salute your fight for dignity in Cuba."

Katy LeRougetel is a member of USWA Local 5338.

...meet garment workers in Montreal

BY MICHEL DUGRÉ

MONTREAL — Eight members of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) working at the Merit plant here met after work with two young Cubans touring Quebec in early November. One worker had also brought a friend. The whole meeting was translated in Arabic, English, French, and Spanish.

Juan Carlos Frómata and Raíza Rodríguez González opened the discussion with brief remarks on the current situation in Cuba.

The first questions were on the economic crisis in Cuba and the measures taken by the government to confront it. The Cuban government had to retreat from previous policies of the revolution and take steps such as reorganizing the country's trade within the world capitalist market to increase imports of oil and other indispensable commodities, which used to be imported almost in their entirety from the Soviet bloc countries, and find buyers for its exports. It has had to grant concessions large enough to attract foreign capitalists as partners in joint ventures to acquire technology, tap mineral resources, develop markets, and bring in capital for economic development. And it decriminalized the use of foreign currency as part of combating speculation and the black market.

Other measures have included reorganizing many of the country's state farms into

cooperatives and legalizing self-employment in dozens of occupations.

"These measures were necessary to defend working people," concluded Frómata. "They have nothing to do with neo-liberalism. No schools, no hospitals were closed. Nobody was left without social protection."

One participant opened his remarks by pointing to the Soviet Union where, he said, communists gave up their soul in exchange for bread, but in the end found themselves with no bread, no freedom, or even a country. This unionist said that the solutions implemented by the Cuban government will not work if there is no democracy. "If workers in Cuba are not free, they will not be inspired to work," he said. "It is not enough to talk of economic problems. You also have to discuss human beings."

In response to this and similar questions, Frómata and Rodríguez said that the reason why the Soviet Union collapsed is that errors were made that led to the destruction of socialism. The most serious were policies alienating working people from government, from running the country.

"In Cuba we have our own conception of democracy," said Frómata. "Democracy is power by the people."

"It is by basing itself on the mobilization of the people that the revolution survived despite the collapse of the USSR, the ending of Cuba's foreign trade on fair terms —

a volunteer soldier was one of the most important experiences in his life and key to his political development.

Another IAM member present at the exchange, Marco Herrarte, is involved in the campaign to raise humanitarian aid for the victims of Hurricane Mitch in Central America. He attended the public meeting and appealed there for more long-term aid. He pointed out that "the Cubans have sent doctors and nurses — they don't hesitate to help people."

In his opening remarks to the main public meeting, Frómata pointed to difficulties Cubans have faced since 1990 when favorable terms of trade with the Soviet union and Eastern Europe were abruptly ended and Cuba became more vulnerable to the gyrations of the capitalist market. "In spite of our difficulties we continue to provide solidarity as we are presently doing in Central America and the Caribbean where Cuban medical brigades are helping treat victims of two hurricanes: Georges and Mitch. We follow José Martí — leader of Cuba's war of independence against Spain — who said our 'nation is humanity.'"

One questioner at UBC asked about freedom of religion in Cuba. "Many religions exist in Cuba, including the Catholic church, but they are totally separate from the state," Rodríguez replied. "Everyone is free to worship as they please. But the schools and all state institutions are secular. No religions are taught in the schools."

In answer to a question on the situation facing university students in Cuba, Rodríguez explained how universities, and the Federation of University Students (FEU) in particular, have been centers of debate for finding solutions to the difficulties facing Cuban society, and youth in particular. In Cuba education is free and students had received a living allowance from the government to pay their living expenses. Courses are opened up to students in line with the needs of the economy and society as a whole. "When the crisis hit, we agreed that the government should no longer pay us a stipend," Rodríguez said. "A system of loans was arranged instead. However, FEU is presently discussing a proposal to ask the government to reestablish the living allowance."

In discussing the biggest challenge facing the UJC and FEU, Rodríguez and Frómata discussed the need to effectively counter the effects of capitalist "consumerism and individualism that exist everywhere and which discourage solidarity. We have to show youth how to be more human, more spiritual, to prepare youth ideologically to be rounded revolutionaries, to forge youth who will know how to build socialism."

Paul Kouri is a member of the United Steelworkers of America Local 2952. Aiden Ball and Hamish McDonald, members of the Young Socialists, contributed to this article.

'We're not veterans, we're still fighting'

Newspaper interviews leader of Cuban association of revolutionary combatants

On December 5, the first national congress of the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution will take place in Havana. The association, whose president is Commander of the Revolution Juan Almeida, was founded in 1993. The following interview with Brig. Gen. Gustavo Chui Beltrán, vice president and executive secretary of the organization, appeared in the November 8 *Juventud Rebelde* (Rebel Youth), the weekly newspaper of the Union of Young Communists of Cuba. A coming issue of the *Militant* will feature a more extensive interview with Gen. Chui Beltrán and Brig. Gen. Sergio Pérez Lezcano, deputy executive secretary of the association. Translation and footnotes are by the *Militant*.

BY LUIS JESÚS GONZÁLEZ

Despite its youth, the organization has become a big part of the daily life of the neighborhoods, carrying out the principal mission of defense as much as the work of keeping history alive for the new generations. On the eve of its first national conference, scheduled for December 5, the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution [ACRC] is reviewing its work over five years of existence.

Brig. Gen. Gustavo Chui Beltrán, vice president and executive secretary of the national leadership of the ACRC, spoke with *Juventud Rebelde*.

Question. Despite being the newest social organization in Cuba, its activities have allowed it to gain a foothold in the community. Will the ACRC replace the role historically fulfilled by other organizations?

Answer. The Association doesn't substitute for the tasks of any mass organization. We follow a concrete course of action, and our work on the local level is one of supporting the other organizations, and this is true for all the existing structures. Our purpose is the unconditional defense of the revolution, the bringing together of all combatants into a single unit, and involving all of them into preparations for the War of the Entire People.¹

Q. Similar organizations around the world are made up of former combatants, who live more on their past glories than on their current work. In what way does the



ACRC differ from them?

A. We don't have any veterans here, because veterans are those who fought in the past and later devoted themselves to cultivate past glories. The ACRC includes three generations of Cubans who are still fighting. Our history is still being written.²

This is not an organization of old people. The majority of our members are 27-50 years old. A minority of them are a little older. Almost 60 percent of them are internationalists, because 10 years ago there were still many youth working in Angola and Ethiopia.³ They play an important role, and we have done some intelligent work in this regard, which I wouldn't say has fully materialized but which has advanced. It's true, though, there are still some *compañeros*, especially those who give more weight to one phase of the struggle than to others, who reject the young members.

In any case, the youth have asserted themselves in their own right, and we already see them heading up the Association in many municipalities. We remain young because young members of the FAR [Revolutionary Armed Forces] and the Interior Ministry forces, after 15 years of service, keep joining us every year. We are currently studying the idea of reducing the period of service required to join. In addition, we are adding to our political and ideological work

the children of combatants — the continuators — as well as the rest of the family and community.

Q. It seems a paradox that an organization of 300,000 people, from such a broad social spectrum, has such a recent life. Do you think the ACRC had a belated birth?

A. Many people thought it should have been founded earlier, but it arose at a decisive moment in our history, when some people in other countries were abandoning socialism and U.S. imperialism was intensifying its unceasing aggression against the Cuban revolution. The birth of our organization helped fill a need and organize into a single force all Cubans who have been involved in revolutionary struggles — from the Spanish Civil War to actions of solidarity with other peoples of the world.

Q. The presence of active-duty generals and officers within a social organization gives the Association a special character. Does the ACRC have a chain of command as in any military structure?

A. No, we're not a military organization. The Association would seem incomplete if it didn't include combatants who remain on active duty in the FAR and interior ministry, but the bulk of the 300,000 members are not on active military duty. We are legally a non-governmental organization and our leadership structures are similar to other social organizations.

As a matter of fact, we have broad participation by women in all categories, the highest numbers of which are among the internationalists. Many women already shoulder leadership responsibilities at the head of provincial and municipal executive bodies.

Q. Five years since its founding, what do you consider the most important successes of the ACRC?

A. Over the course of these five years, the Association has been able to establish a real space within Cuban society and become part of the social and political life of the nation. We carry out an important series of patriotic tasks under the guidance of the [Cuban Communist] Party, with the help of the government and the political and mass organizations.

Since its founding, the ACRC has linked together combatants from all categories, organizing itself within the

Above: Militant/Martin Koppel

Left: Granma

Above, Brig. Gen. Gustavo Chui Beltrán, vice president of the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution. Members of the association, founded five years ago, play a daily role on a neighborhood level throughout Cuba. Members help in training and in mobilizations of the population for the country's defense as well as educating youth about the lessons of Cuba's revolutionary history, drawing from their own experiences. Left, Cuban working people practice drills during Day of Defense in December 1985 for defense of their revolution from U.S. attack.

community. Above all, the organization has consolidated its role in strengthening the political and ideological work in the neighborhoods, especially through patriotic events and commemorations of historical dates. It also carries out support work in different areas of the economy. But its basic role has been its fighting spirit, the spreading of its example.

We are involved in the effort both to recover the country's history as well as protect our values. All the schools are linked to the ACRC. We go there to relate our experiences in combat. The great events and most outstanding figures are often publicized, but there are actions and martyrs on the local level that are virtually unknown. We have carried out a wide range of work along these lines, although that doesn't mean we've accomplished everything.

We still have a lot to do, but no one can deny we've made progress. You hear combatants speak in the community, and the schools request our participation, to the point where the ministry of education asks for our support, whether for mass target practice by students or to stimulate their connection with history — from elementary school to the universities.

It has been much harder in the universities, of course. Many of our *compañeros* are somewhat afraid because of the level of knowledge among the university students. But we're gradually becoming involved in that area.

¹ War of the Entire People is the strategy adopted by the Cuba's revolutionary leadership to mobilize virtually the entire population in face of threats of imperialist military attack.

² In an accompanying note, *Juventud Rebelde* explains that the association includes revolutionary combatants who fought in the Rebel Army or the urban underground movement during the revolutionary struggle that overthrew the Batista dictatorship in 1959, in the defeat of the U.S.-orchestrated mercenary invasion at the Bay of Pigs in 1961, and in the struggle against armed counterrevolutionary bands that operated in the Escambray mountains in the early 1960s. It also includes active-duty or retired members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces or the interior ministry forces with 15 or more years of service; parents of those who died defending the revolution; those receiving medals for courage and heroism from the Council of State; members of the Border Battalion; and others designated by the national ACRC leadership.

³ About 300,000 Cuban volunteer combatants served in Angola between 1975 and 1991, responding to the request of the Angolan government to help it repel invading South African apartheid troops and attacks by imperialist-backed UNITA forces. In 1977, Cuba sent thousands of volunteer troops to Ethiopia in response to an appeal by the Ethiopian government for aid in defeating a U.S.-backed invasion by the regime in neighboring Somalia. Washington planned to use a Somali victory as a springboard to help turn back land redistribution and other measures taken in Ethiopia following the overthrow of landlord-based monarchy of Haile Selassie in 1974.

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FIDEL CASTRO

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Cuba launches int'l solidarity campaign

Revolutionary gov't proposes 2,000 doctors for Central America, thousands volunteer

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

Thousands of Cubans have volunteered to serve as doctors and health-care workers in hurricane-ravaged Central America and Haiti in response to a call for international solidarity by the Cuban government.

In a November 21 speech, Cuban president Fidel Castro announced the revolutionary government is offering to send 2,000 doctors to Central America to help establish an "integral health program" that can save many more lives than the estimated 30,000 that were lost as a result of Hurricane Mitch, which wreaked destruction throughout the region in October and early November.

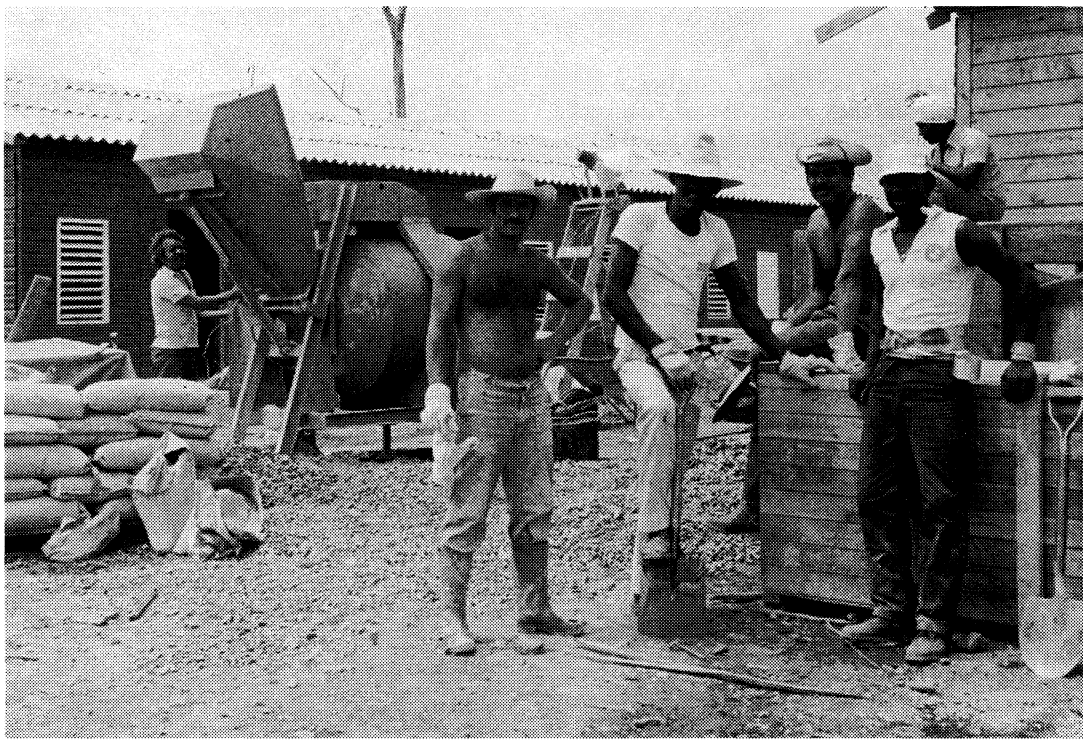
Castro called on the wealthier governments of the world to finance this health plan and appealed for volunteers from other Latin American nations and elsewhere to join the Cuban doctors. He also reported that Cuba is offering thousands of medical scholarships for students from Central America and Haiti.

After Hurricane Georges devastated the Caribbean, Cuba sent a 13-member medical volunteer brigade to the Dominican Republic that treated thousands of patients in some of the worst-hit areas. A contingent of about 200 Cuban doctors is being readied for Haiti before the end of the year. Following Hurricane Mitch, Cuban volunteer brigades went to Guatemala and Honduras. Some 200 Cuban doctors are working in Honduras today.

In a joint statement published in the Cuban daily *Granma* November 24, the Union of Young Communists (UJC) and Federation of University Students (FEU) of Cuba issued a call for "young health-care workers and students to join the medical brigades" in Central America. The youth organizations added, "Our universities are also ready to welcome youth from those countries to study in our classrooms, including a significant number from indigenous communities."

Cuban youth: 'this is our opportunity'

The UJC and FEU declared, "This is our opportunity to be internationalists, an op-



Bridget Elton

Cuba's mobilization of volunteer medical brigades to Central America is part of an 'honorable tradition' of the Cuban revolution, said President Fidel Castro. Above, members of José Martí Contingent of Cuban construction workers in Bluefields, on Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast, March 1989.

portunity our generation has dreamed about, one that will leave an indelible mark on our experiences."

Three days later, tens of thousands of students marched through the streets of Havana and other cities around the island for the annual celebration honoring a group of eight Cuban medical students who were executed in Havana in 1871 by Spanish colonial authorities for fighting for Cuba's independence. César Hernández González, FEU president at the Havana School of Medicine, read a letter at the site of the rally in Havana on behalf of medical students to Cuban president Castro expressing their willingness to volunteer in Central America. The Cuban press announced that 14,800 Cuban medical students, out of a total of 21,000, have already volunteered to go to Central America or Haiti if called.

Meanwhile, the National Union of Health-Care Workers (SNTS) of Cuba is holding local union meetings in hospitals and clinics throughout the island to determine how many of its members are willing to join the Central American brigades. Union leaders noted that some 25,000 Cuban health-care workers and professionals have carried out internationalist missions around the world over the years. The medical volunteers who recently returned from the Dominican Republic were given special awards by the Central Organization of Cuban Workers (CTC), the trade union federation.

Cuban volunteers arrive in Nicaragua

A few days earlier, the government of Nicaragua reversed its previous refusal to accept Cuba's offer of volunteer doctors, a stance that had sparked widespread outrage among Nicaraguans. Within two days, a group of Cuban volunteers arrived in Nicaragua, headed by Deputy Health Minister Abelardo Ramírez. The next day, six three-person medical brigades were busy at work in some of the remotest areas of Nicaragua.

In the November 26 *Granma*, reporter Orlando Oramas León gives a vivid account of one day in the work of a Cuban team in the cattle-raising community of La Curva, in Nicaragua's western province of Chinandega. Family doctor Rodolfo Alvarez gets up at dawn to milk the cows together with other villagers and takes part in other agricultural chores. He travels around the area on horseback to see his patients. By dusk, Dr. Rafael García, the epidemiologist, is still not back from a trip he began early that morning through the area, where at least one person has already died of leptospirosis since the hurricane.

In the first two days the *brigadistas* have treated 300 patients. "The word is getting out that we're here and patients come from far away who want to be treated by us," says nurse Miriam Estéfano. María del Carmen Romero walked more than four miles to get treatment for her daughter, who has a high fever. Romero knows the Cubans well. It was Cuban volunteer teachers who taught her to read and write a decade ago.

Some medical students from Managua, Nicaragua's capital, have joined with the Cuban volunteers. The Nicaraguan students expressed delight at Cuba's offer of scholarships to train Central American doctors.

The National Union of Farmers and Ranchers (UNAG) of Nicaragua has demanded that the Nicaraguan government request a second Cuban medical contingent for an isolated rural area near the Honduran border that remains particularly devastated.

Mitch left a toll of more than 10,000 dead, 20,000 missing, and millions without a home or livelihood. Outbreaks of epidemics have already been reported throughout Central America, including several hundred cases of cholera, dengue, malaria, acute respiratory diseases, diarrhea, and leptospirosis,

caused by a water-borne parasite.

Castro outlines int'l campaign

In his November 21 speech to a conference of the National Forum on Science and Technology in Havana, Castro outlined a series of proposals and initiatives that are part of Cuba's international solidarity campaign:

Cuba will provide at least 2,000 doctors for Central America, plus 200 for Haiti, as part of long-term integral public health plans for the two regions. The goal is to reduce infant mortality in Haiti from 135 to 35 deaths per 1,000 live births, and in Central America — where it ranges between 47 and 63 — down to 20 deaths per 1,000 live births. Castro estimated that this effort could save the lives every year of more than 20,000 children in Haiti and 25,000 children in Central America.

Cuba is appealing to Latin American, European, and other governments to send volunteer doctors as well.

This health plan would cost \$200 million in medicines and supplies, which Cuba proposed be financed by wealthier countries in the world. This amount could easily be funded out of the U.S. military budget of \$260 billion, Castro pointed out. Cuba has already donated vaccines and several tons of a rat poison, Biorrat, created in Cuban laboratories. Rats are a major carrier of disease in the flood-ravaged areas.

Madrid has been the first to respond favorably to the Cuban proposal, offering \$31 million in interest-free loans payable within 30 years, *Granma* reported.

Havana, which canceled Nicaragua's \$50 million debt to Cuba, has called on the other governments to cancel Central America's debt to them. Honduras, whose banana crop was wiped out, has suffered more than \$3 billion in losses and Nicaragua \$1.6 billion. The two countries are burdened with foreign debts of \$4.3 billion and \$6.5 billion, respectively.

Cuba is supporting the request by the governments in the region that Washington suspend deportations of undocumented immigrants to Central America.

Cuba is offering medical scholarships to medical students from Central America for the next 10 years: 1,000 next year and 500 each subsequent year. On a suggestion by the Guatemalan foreign minister, Castro said, 50 percent of the scholarships will be reserved for students from Indian communities. The medical students will be trained with an eye to "serving the most isolated, the most difficult areas," Castro said.

'People of United States must know'

This international solidarity campaign, Castro noted, has been largely blacked out in the U.S. media. "It must be made known to the people of the United States. It's important," he emphasized. Cuba, he said, is campaigning not only through words but through deeds, internationalist actions that are not new but "an honorable tradition" of the revolution.

Washington "isn't sending doctors, it's sending soldiers" to Central America, mainly to rebuild some roads and bridges, the Cuban leader said. "It would be good for the people of the United States to know how much can be done with few resources, in other fields that are essential for the well-being of the people of Central America."

Castro stated, "We cannot conceive of the notion that, in face of tragedies such as these, we would limit ourselves to some first aid, to a little bit of reconstruction aid and nothing else, simply to turn the page and move on." A farther-reaching approach is needed to address the social problems faced by millions in the region.

Cuba's call for international solidarity, he said, is "important not only for Central America but for the rest of the world. This is what must be raised around the world, in this globalized world, which has so much technology, so much waste, so much inequality in the distribution of wealth."

In face of capitalism's globalization, Castro concluded, "What we must create is human globalization."

U.S. troops bring 'aid' with a dropper

BY HILDA CUZCO

Despite the unprecedented economic and social dislocation in Central America in the wake of Hurricane Mitch, the U.S. government has done little to respond to the urgent needs of millions of people there. Washington's reaction stands in sharp contrast with Cuba's generous and selfless solidarity (see above article).

Honduras and Nicaragua, already among the most exploited nations in Latin America, have been the hardest hit, with estimated losses of almost \$5 billion — nearly half their gross national product.

In Honduras 90 percent of banana production — the main export crop — was wiped out, and it will take years to recover. Dole and Chiquita, the U.S.-based agricultural giants, have suspended their operations in Honduras, laying off 17,000 farm workers. Hundreds of thousands of small farmers have had their livelihoods washed away. At the same time, the Central American nations remain crushed by foreign debt. Honduras has a debt of \$4.1 billion and Nicaragua \$6.2 billion.

Initially, U.S. officials announced a paltry \$3.5 million in assistance. Later Washington raised its pledge for Honduras and Nicaragua to \$290 million in emergency relief and food supplies.

On a recent swing through the region, White House representative Hillary Rodham Clinton announced a two-year moratorium on U.S. debt repayments, postponing 54 million the two countries were supposed to pay by the year 2000. Honduras has a debt of \$282 million and Nicaragua \$85 million to U.S. institutions.

International Monetary Fund chief Michel Camdessus, on a mid-November visit to the area, called for issuing new 30-year loans with 0.5 percent interest.

Even some big-business newspapers

in the region have noted the contrast with Cuba, which canceled Nicaragua's \$50 million debt. Paris and a few other imperialist governments have reduced or canceled Central America's debt.

While Cuba has sent volunteer doctors to Central America, Washington is deploying its soldiers to provide "aid." The initial U.S. military presence of 1,500 is expected to grow to 5,600. This includes the 500 U.S. army and air force troops permanently stationed at the Honduran air base of Soto Cano, whose official role is "counter-narcotics missions" and removing the deadly mines that U.S. military forces planted along the Honduran-Nicaraguan border in the 1980s.

At that time Washington trained, armed, and directed a mercenary army against the workers and farmers government that had taken power in Nicaragua. It turned Honduras into a massive military base for U.S. forces, pouring billions of dollars into the *contra* war.

So far, the U.S. military has delivered about 1,250 tons of supplies in Honduras, including food, water, medical supplies, and clothes, using military helicopters to transport provisions and personnel. The U.S. Southern Command, which is overseeing the "aid" effort, is staffing a second military task force near the international airport in San Salvador to organize relief operations in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala.

U.S. Marine Corps and other military engineers are building bridges, clearing roads, and providing limited medical care in the region. The *Washington Post* reports that the recent U.S. war moves against Iraq, "which required the deployment of thousands of troops and tons of equipment to the Persian Gulf, slowed the flow of supplies into Honduras."

Steelworkers' walkout solid at Continental General Tire Co.

BY DAN FEIN
AND FLOYD FOWLER

CHARLOTTE, North Carolina — Members of United Steelworkers of America Local 850 entered the third month of their strike against Continental General Tire Co. "More united than ever," was how Jimmy Carpenter, one of the pickets on duty November 20, put it in an interview with *Militant* reporters, describing the morale of the strikers.

Pickets and union officials all said only six or seven strikers have crossed the line and returned to work, none of them union members. Despite a state "right-to-work" law, all but a handful of the 1,450 workers belong to the union. These laws prevent a "closed shop," allowing the bosses to pressure workers into not joining the union in a workplace that's organized.

In the wake of a well-attended solidarity rally November 5, the company sent out video cassettes and letters to strikers homes in an unsuccessful attempt to generate pressure to return to work.

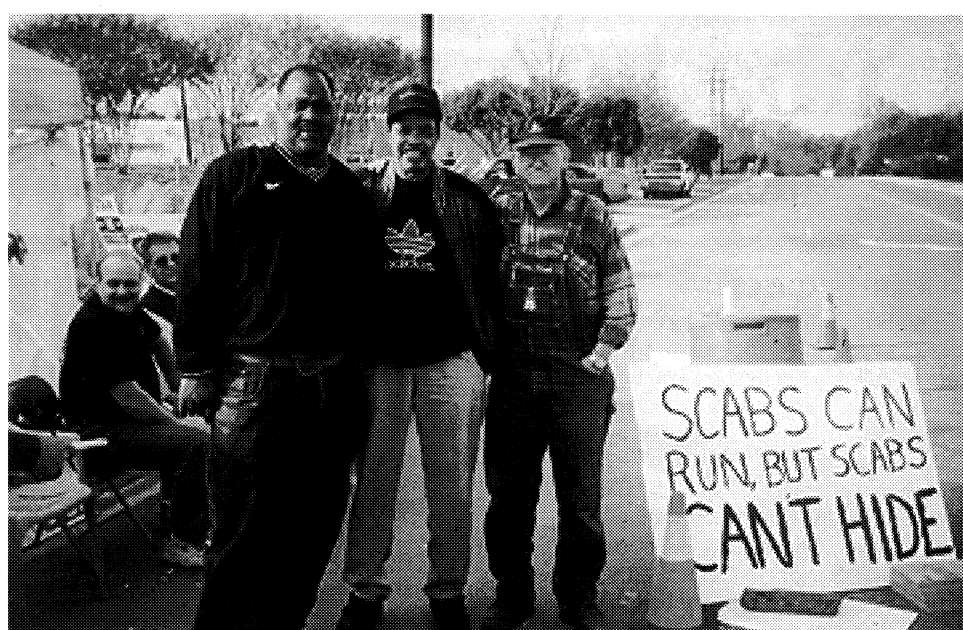
"After we got the letter my wife Lisa called the plant and spoke to the man they said for us to call, asking all kinds of questions," said Ralph Bryant. "Of course he

couldn't answer her. Then I took her to the union hall and they were able to. That was the deciding factor for her to join in and give me all of her support."

Between 500 and 600 strikers had a video tape smashing party on the street in front of the plant November 14. "She got to smash one too," Bryant said, referring to his wife, "to show how she felt about the company."

The company then publicly announced that the last day any striker could return to work was November 17, after which they would be permanently replaced. The evening of that day, as the last minutes of the company offer ticked away, several hundred strikers who had gathered at the plant gate staged a mock "return to work" action. But they stopped with much fanfare at the General Tire property line. "It was like a New Year's eve countdown," said H.O. Burns with a smile. "It was our way of rejecting that company letter. It'll be a cold day in hell before they break this strike."

Continental General claims to be producing 10,000 tires a day. The company has hired 250 scabs and says they will hire another 85 each week. Before the strike the plant produced 33,000 tires a day.



Militant/Dan Fein

Striking members of USWA local 850 at picket line against General Tire in Charlotte, North Carolina. Left to right, standing, are Willie Gray, John Froneberger, H.O. Burns.

"They've got management and office people doing production," said Burns, who has 17 years in the plant. "And a number of them have quit." While *Militant* reporters were here, a maintenance foreman some of the workers knew stopped at the picket line to say he had quit over unsafe working conditions and to wish them well.

Among the main issues in the strike is a decent pension at retirement. Many workers have more than 15 years in the plant. The union is fighting for \$41 a month per year of service for retirees.

John Massey is a veteran of the 1994-95

strike at Pirelli-Armstrong in Nashville, Tennessee. When the plant closed in November '96 he moved to Charlotte to work at Continental General. "The company expected from 250 to 500 strikers to cross last Tuesday, but were disappointed," Massey said. "For the first time in weeks the company didn't run ads for scabs in last Sunday's paper. We've turned around potential scabs here at the picket line." He figures the company is losing \$1 million a day.

Another worker passed around an Internet news story about Continental AG, parent company of Continental General Tire, purchasing a tire plant in South Africa just the past week.

"We're definitely more unified now," said USWA Local 850 executive board member Willy Gray. "We gave concessions in '95 and after the settlement this new corporate office building went up. They have money to buy other companies, and they want us to accept lower wages."

By the 4:00 p.m. shift change, more strikers were gathered at the gate, using a bullhorn to make clear to the scabs entering and leaving the plant what they thought of them.

At the union hall, about 60 workers were picking up strike pay, reading the latest union newsletter, and discussing the strike. The company had agreed to meet with union representatives and the federal mediator the next day. No one we talked to expected much to come of that meeting.

Several unionists said that workers fighting to bring in the union at Continental General's nonunion plant in Mt. Vernon, Illinois, collected \$2,125 and brought it to the union in Charlotte to show their support.

At the union hall *Militant* reporters met William, one of the many new hires on probation who walked out along with the rest of the workers September 17. He asked to be identified only with his first name. "I can't go along with more concessions," he said. "I was born union. My father was a miner in United Mine Workers of America Local 513 in West Virginia. When I took this job the company man told us there might be a strike. I told him then that I was pro-union. I won't cross anyone's picket line, least of all my own."

Dan Fein is a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1996 in Atlanta.

Canada: Paperworkers win 5-month strike

BY JOE YOUNG

GRAND-MÈRE, Quebec — After five months on the picket lines against Abitibi-Consolidated, 4,500 paperworkers, members of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers (CEP), voted nearly 74 percent in favor of a new contract that registered gains for the union. The results were announced November 19.

Abitibi-Consolidated is the world's largest newsprint producer and its biggest paper exporter. The strike affected about half of its production involving 10 mills in Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland. The contract establishes a pattern for 25,000 CEP members in eastern Canada.

Workers walked off the job June 15 when the company refused to negotiate with all the union locals together as had been the case in the past. Finally, at the beginning of October, the owners backed down and accepted negotiating major issues such as wages, pensions, and holidays in one contract.

The company tried to weaken the strike by threatening to close two mills if the workers didn't go back to work. While workers at the Wayagamack mill in Trois Rivières did return July 27, unionists at the Chandler mill in Quebec's Gaspé peninsula refused to give in to the bosses' threats. "It was important that Chandler stood fast. If they'd given up, everyone would have given up," said

CEP member Réjean Chevalier, who works at the Beauré mill near Quebec City.

At the ratification meeting at Grand-Mère, this reporter asked Pierre Buist who works in the heating plant and has 20 years with the company, what had been won with the strike. "We succeeded in negotiating together," he answered. "At a certain point, you have to fight. We rejected by 97 percent. There was nothing on the table." In the last week of October, union members rejected a company offer by 97.4 percent.

At Shawinigan, Denis Turgeon, a member of the strike committee with 25 years service, expressed the same opinion. "The first objective has been achieved," he said. "We are recognized as a group." He explained how the union ran the picket lines: "We planned to mix up the different groups of workers, the mechanics, the office workers, the production workers, in order to unite people."

Gérald Forget, who works at the mill in Iroquois Falls in northern Ontario, said in an interview, "We were going for signing as a group. They really tried to break us up and it didn't work. The Quebec mills really backed us up. I was afraid they'd walk out on us, but we really stuck together."

Many paperworkers who were not on strike contributed to the strike fund in an important act of solidarity. "We were fighting for everyone," Buist said. "We were receiving CAN\$189 (CAN\$1 = US \$.65) from all those locals." In addition to the basic strike pay of \$200 a week, the strikers received an additional \$189 a week from solidarity contributions, bringing their weekly strike pay to \$389.

Dennis Bertrand, president of CEP Local 109 in Iroquois Falls, said, "People were very very pleased because we did get very good support. From the CEP lots of unions sent in monetary support. We're still receiving support coming in from other unions. The community here backed us 100 percent."

The six-year contract includes a lump sum payment of \$2,750 followed by two annual increases of 50 cents an hour and then three annual increases of 2 percent a year. According to the chief union negotiator, Elmo Whittom, the average pension of a worker should increase by \$5,000 a year. According to Forget, this will give retirees 72 percent of their wages when all the provisions kick in four years from now. Strikers were not able to win their priority contract demand for retirement at 55. The retirement age remains unchanged at 58.

This led Denis Turgeon to say, "The young people don't stay here, there is no work here. This contract will not create jobs. That is my great disappointment." According to him, the contract was rejected in a very close vote in Shawinigan.

Asked about the length of the contract, Alain Boucher, a production worker with 10 years seniority at the Grand-Mère mill, commented: "It doesn't really bother me. I haven't always earned this wage. I was a landscaper at \$8 an hour." The starting wage is nearly \$20 an hour.

According to Bertrand, the company was aiming for 365-day-a-year operation. However, working Christmas, New Year's Day, and Labor Day remains voluntary.

The gains of the strike are significant when compared to the outcome of two other long strikes that took place in Canada over the last year ending in defeats for working people. The first was the nine-month strike by paperworkers in British Columbia in which workers were forced to concede to job "flexibility" aimed at eliminating jobs.

The other was the four-month strike by members of the United Food and Commercial Workers in Alberta and Ontario against Maple Leaf Foods, in which workers took wage cuts up to 40 percent in return for one-time lump sum payments.

Some workers like Gilles, who was at the meeting at Grand-Mère and didn't give his last name, thought that the other CEP members who had contributed to their strike should be asked their opinion on the contract because it established the pattern for other CEP paperworkers in eastern Canada.

Joe Young is a member of the United Steelworkers of America. Katy LeRougetel in Toronto contributed to this article.

Hundreds gather to oppose death penalty in Chicago

BY JOHN STUDER

CHICAGO — "My name is Randall Dale Adams. The state of Texas tried to kill me for a murder I did not commit," Adams told a crowd of hundreds of opponents of the death penalty at Northwestern University Law School November 14. Hundreds more watched on closed circuit television in other rooms at the school.

"I was sentenced to death in 1977 and released in 1989," Adams continued. "If the state had gotten its way, I would be dead today." Adams then went to a table across the stage, put a flower in a large vase, and signed his name on a statement opposing the death penalty.

Twenty-seven others, all of whom won their freedom after serving time on death row, joined Adams in reciting the facts about their situation.

The last was Sonia Jacobs, one of two women who spoke. She explained how she

was convicted in 1976 by the state of Florida and won release in 1992 after her supporters discovered evidence that she was not guilty. However, after Jacobs finished her story, she did not sit down.

"Unfortunately," she added, "the proof that I and my companion, Jesse Tafero, were innocent came forward too late for him. The state of Florida executed him in 1990."

The National Conference on Wrongful Conviction and the Death Penalty lasted three days and gathered hundreds of lawyers, law students, activists against the death penalty, members of local defense committees fighting for justice for those behind bars on false charges, and many news reporters.

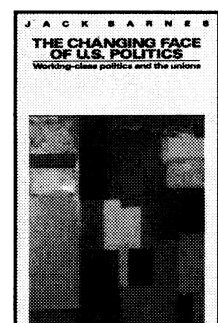
The conference came on the heels of the recent decision by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to let the death sentence against Mumia Abu-Jamal stand, and a few days before the scheduled execution of Willie

Continued on Page 11

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Alaska, Northwest workers in Seattle demand contract

BY AUTUMN KNOWLTON

SEATTLE — On November 25 workers from Northwest Airlines and Alaska Airlines gathered in front of the SeaTac airport here to demand fair contracts. For the maximum participation by workers, there were two rallies, one for those on swing shift and another for workers on day shift. About 65 unionists gathered for the noontime rally, and about 30 for the one in the afternoon.

The union members and others gathered at the main entrance to the airport on the one of the busiest travel days of the year to draw attention to the workers' situation at the two airlines. Participants carried picket signs with slogans such as "Alaska profits, employees lose," and "We gave then, you give now." The rally was organized by the International Association of Machinists (IAM) locals 1040 and 2202. Also participating were members of Teamsters Local 2000, which represents flight attendants at Northwest.

Workers picketed at the busy corner and chanted "What do we want? Contract! When do we want it? Now!" and "2-4-6-8, come on Northwest, it's getting late!" Among the participants in the afternoon rally was a striker from the United Steelworkers of America local of about 300 members

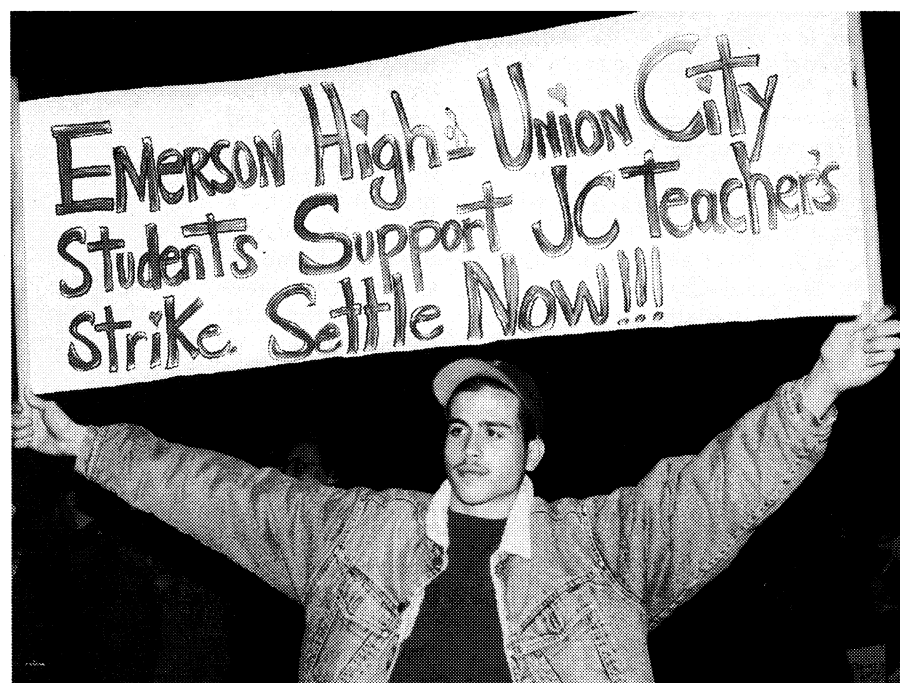
who have walked out against Kaiser Aluminum. He spoke during the rally to offer solidarity and explain the issues of the USWA strike, which include pushing back the company's demands to eliminate seniority, subcontract work to nonunion companies, and give a meager wage increase that doesn't even keep up with inflation.

The rallies came after a series of demonstrations around the country earlier in the year organized by Northwest flight attendants to demand a fair contract. Most of the major work groups at Northwest — flight attendants, ticket agents, customer service agents, cleaners, stores workers, mechanics, and baggage handlers — have been working under the terms of the expired contract for 25 months. The pilots are the exception to this, winning a favorable contract through a brief strike in September.

Workers at Alaska Airlines have been working under an expired contract for 15 months. These include mechanics, cleaners, stores workers, warehouse workers, baggage handlers, and customer service agents.

Autumn Knowlton is a member of the Young Socialists and of the International Association of Machinists Local 2202 at Alaska Airlines.

Jersey City teachers make gains through strike



Militant/José Aravena

After a week on strike, some 3,500 teachers in Jersey City, New Jersey, members of the Jersey City Education Association, won a contract that included a 12.3 percent wage increase. The workers forced the state education board to back off on many other concessions, particularly the "surprise" evaluations. The strikers defied a court order to return to work November 20, the day after walking out. Teachers won widespread support for their fight. Above, one of many students who supported the strike at a solidarity rally November 24. About 2,000 students in West New York, New Jersey, walked out November 20 to support their teachers' fight for a contract.

Electricians in London win strike over safety

BY CELIA PUGH

LONDON, England — More than 500 electricians employed by Drake and Scull on the London Underground Jubilee line extension (JLE) won their strike November 25 after 10 days of picketing. The action fol-

lowed the transfer of 12 workers to another site on the 10-mile construction project after they demanded company action on safety at London Bridge station. Sixty workers were left underground during a fire evacuation because of inaudible fire alarms. The Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union (AEEU) members saw this as victimization by their employer who refused to reverse the transfer.

At a mass meeting November 27, AEEU members of the union shop voted to go back to work. They cheered the company agreement to reverse the transfer and re-

turn all 12 electricians to London Bridge. Two days earlier Drake and Scull project manager Chris Raven told the London *Evening Standard* that such a step "clearly is not acceptable to us." At the November 27 meeting, unionists agreed with a 12-point settlement plan negotiated between national AEEU officials and the company. The *Evening Standard* reported, "Although today's agreement made clear that neither side would claim a victory in the dispute, it meant a dramatic climb down for JLE's principle contractors Drake and Scull."

Union pickets were in a confident mood. Striker Glen Fletcher told the *Militant*, "We've got what we wanted. We're not going to be pushed around." Commenting on the return to work Fletcher said "There will be more problems until they learn that."

Trade unionists from other workplaces and industries followed the strike and some

visited the picket lines in solidarity. Brett Sparkes was one of 11 rail workers employed by South West Trains who came to the picket at Waterloo station. They are members of the Rail Maritime and Transport union (RMT). Sparkes told the *Militant*: "If they [electricians] win, it will show there's no going back. These aren't a load of hotheads. Their fight is about safety and union rights."

Celia Pugh is a member of the AEEU at Prestolite in London, England. Pamela Holmes, also a member of the AEEU, contributed to this article.



Militant/Pete Clifford

Striking electricians on Jubilee Line, during walkout for safety.

San Diego students protest racist beating of Black Marine

BY SYLVIA HANSEN

SAN DIEGO — More than 400 students from the predominantly white West Hills High School in Santee, California, marched from the school grounds to a nearby park November 5 to protest the racist beating of Lance Cpl. Carlos Colbert. The spirited students carried signs reading "End racism" and "Stop the hate" and chanted, "Hey, hey, ho, ho, racism's got to go!"

Colbert, a marine who is Black and is stationed at Camp Pendleton here, was attending a party May 30, when he was beaten by white supremacists yelling, "Get that nigger!" and "White power." Several other marines, some of whom came under attack themselves, were able to remove Colbert from the scene and take him to Camp Pendleton for medical treatment. Doctors there determined that his neck had been broken. Colbert has remained paralyzed from the neck down since then.

The November 5 march culminated in a rally during which several students read letters to Colbert denouncing the attack on him. Jonathan Kakacek, a West Hills student, quoted from Nelson Mandela's 1994 inaugural address to stress to those present that their actions can make a difference. A total of 2,000 solidarity letters written by students were presented to Colbert's unit.

The rally coincided with a court hearing to decide whether the five men arrested for the assault will be tried. Following the hearing three of the five were charged with conspiracy, assault resulting in great bodily injury, and commission of a racist crime. Two were indicted on lesser charges. All five have been ordered to stand trial.

Chicago conference opposes death penalty

Continued from page 10
Enoch in Illinois.

Lawrence Marshall, a law professor at Northwestern, and others decided to organize the conference more than a year ago after a number of victories that forced the release of falsely convicted prisoners on Illinois' death row.

Nine people sentenced to death in Illinois since the U.S. Supreme Court reinstated the use of the death penalty in 1976 have later been proven not guilty. They were the victims of police and prosecutors' frame-ups, confessions beaten out of prisoners, testimony from jail-house snitches, and other miscarriages of justice.

Leaflets documenting the cases of dozens of inmates on death row fighting to overturn their convictions and win their freedom were available in the literature room. Among the list were Aaron Patterson in Illinois, William Mayo in Ohio, and Erskine Johnson in Tennessee.

Prominent opponents of the death penalty from around the world attended. Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, former middleweight boxing champion, who was sentenced to death in New Jersey and now lives in Canada, as well as Serio D'Elia of Hands Off Cain in Italy.

Many of the panels at the conference were oriented to lawyers and law students, focusing on topics such as how to use DNA evidence to overturn convictions, how to defend the mentally ill or seriously retarded, and how best to use the media to apply pub-

lic pressure.

Other opponents of the death penalty used the conference to strengthen their protest efforts.

"The death penalty has been abolished once before in this country," said Robert Meeropol, son of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, who were executed during the 1950s anti-communist witch-hunt. "The next time, we have to make sure that it stays abolished for good."

Conference organizers identified 75 people around the country who had won freedom from death row after being framed up. The 29 attending the conference included Rolando Cruz, who, along with Alejandro Hernández, was framed up in Naperville, Illinois; two of the "Ford Heights Four," named after the Chicago suburb where they lived; and Clarence Brandley from Texas.

Brandley was one of five high school janitors at a school where a 16-year-old was raped and murdered. Brandley was the only Black. "We need someone for this," the cop who arrested Brandley told him. "Since you're the nigger, you're elected."

Jay Smith, a Pennsylvania high school principal framed for the murder, told the conference that his case was ironic because when he was young he had demonstrated against the execution of the Rosenbergs.

According to material from the NAACP Legal and Educational Defense Fund distributed at the conference, there are currently 3,517 people on death row in the United States.

The conference concluded with the establishment of a national Innocence Network, composed of law schools around the country who pledge to assign at least one professor to work on attempting to overturn death penalty cases and to institute classes on police and prosecution frame-ups.

One theme at the conference was the need to fight to overturn the execution of Willie Enoch in Illinois, scheduled for November 18.

"We will succeed in getting this execution stopped," Jed Stone, Enoch's attorney, told the *Militant*. "Willie was convicted in 1983. Last year we won a fight to allow DNA testing of evidence used to convict him. But we have been denied the right to see the evidence, denied the right to see the test results, and denied the right to have it tested ourselves."

"The guy who tested it for the court, William Frank, has been proven to have falsified DNA testing results before," Stone said.

On November 16 Stone presented a letter to Gov. James Edgar from two of the jurors in Enoch's trial urging that fair DNA tests be allowed. He also presented a letter from 16 scientists, including four Nobel laureates, urging the DNA tests be turned over for review. A demonstration on behalf of Enoch was held in Chicago that afternoon.

The next day, the Illinois Supreme Court granted Enoch a three-month stay and ordered that the DNA evidence be released.

John Studer is a member of United Steelworkers of America Local 1011.

Freeman coal miners expand picket lines

Continued from front page

years at the Crown 2 mine, commented on why the show of force was called at precisely the time they were ordered back to work: "We're saying, here we are. We want a contract. And until we get one, we're staying outside."

In recent weeks the company has escalated attacks on the union. Company negotiators are pressing the UMW to give up seniority rights in job bidding and for recalling miners from layoff.

On November 17 the company filed a million-dollar lawsuit against the UMW International and the three striking locals. Freeman challenged the union's basic right to strike and charged the strikers with violent acts, including "assaulting persons," "damaging the property of Freeman," and "physi-

cal obstruction of public and private roads."

The company and police agencies have continued to harass and try to intimidate miners and their families. On the night of the expanded pickets, a helicopter passed over the home of striking miner David Yard five times. It hovered so close as to rattle windows. Yard is a member of Local 1969 and a trustee on the UMW's Miner's Relief Fund.

FBI agents had showed up at the home of Georgia Yard, David's grandmother, November 6, demanding to search a tool shed on her property. When she demanded to see their search warrant, the federal agents left only to return three days later with the warrant. They found nothing and were told to leave.

The miners publicly opposed this attack on the strike and one of their members, passing out leaflets describing the FBI harassment and sending letters to the editors of newspapers in the area. The local press has given prominent coverage to the FBI visit.

"The company is definitely upping the ante," Steve Norman explained. "As we started zeroing in on the health-care issue and it looked like we were approaching an agreement, then they came in with the attack on seniority."

David Yard commented, "By raising seniority they show they have no intention of resolving things. They know we can never accept the attack on seniority."

The UMW International is preparing to file an unfair labor practice charge against Freeman United claiming the company is bypassing the union and unlawfully dealing directly with the striking employees.

In a November 24 union press release UMW international president Cecil Roberts reiterated the goal of reaching an agreement that "continues to guarantee each and every worker and retiree health-care coverage for life — and a promise that their seniority rights will remain intact."

George Hobson, a member of the union safety committee who has worked for 21 years at Crown 2, was one of many who explained why the miners will not back down.

"Seniority is something that we've fought for over the years. It's basic. Blood has been



Sign in Farmersville, Illinois, outside UMW headquarters.

Militant/Betsey Stone

shed over this."

He and others explained that if you don't have a system of job bidding by seniority, union fighters and outspoken workers will be victimized in hiring, layoffs, and job assignments.

The seniority system also helps prevent the company from dividing workers by playing favorites.

"Freeman has always played the divide and conquer game, pitting the three locals against each other," Hobson said. "This strike has brought all the

union brothers closer together. We meet each other on these picket lines and learn the truth about the rumors we heard about each other."

Solidarity and donations to the strike continue to come in from union locals around the country. More is needed. The striking UMW locals are organizing a Christmas dance on December 12 for strikers and supporters and a December 20 Christmas party for the children of striking miners.

For information about the strike, to request a speaker from the striking miners, or to make a contribution to the food pantry or Miners' Relief Fund, contact the UMW Strike Headquarters, P.O. Box 107, Farmersville, Illinois, 62533 or call (217) 227-3233.

Cappy Kidd is a member of United Auto Workers. Betsey Stone is a member of the International Association of Machinists.

Affirmative action is under assault in the United States

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Affirmative action and school desegregation programs across the United States have received several blows recently. These include a federal court ruling in Boston and a reactionary ballot measure that passed in Washington State last month.

On November 19, the First U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the affirmative action admissions policy at Boston Latin, the nation's first public school, "risks setting a precedent that is both dangerous to our democratic ideals and almost always constitutionally forbidden." Circuit Court Judge Bruce Selya charged that Boston Latin's admissions policy "offends the Constitution's guarantee of equal protection." The ruling is binding on the Massachusetts school system and other school districts in Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Puerto Rico.

The court decision addressed a lawsuit filed by the father of a student who is white who claimed his daughter was "denied admission in favor of less-qualified minority students." According to school statistics, Boston Latin has a student body that is 51 percent white, 21 percent Asian, 19 percent Black, and 9 percent Latino.

The Boston court decision followed similar judicial action in Arlington, Virginia, where a federal court barred affirmative action admissions policy at two public schools last summer. Two years ago the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals eliminated affirmative action in the admissions policy of the University of Texas law school. Affirmative action has also been barred from admissions to universities in Louisiana, California, and Mississippi.

At the November 3 elections, a ballot measure passed that banned state-sponsored affirmative action programs in Washington State. This legislation will have a big impact on higher education for students from oppressed nationalities. Blacks account for 2.8 percent of the undergraduates at the University of Washington, the state's only public university. With a yearly enrollment of 37,500 students, the university has graduated in three decades just over 5,000 students who were admitted through its affirmative action program — just under 170 per year on average.

Ward Connerly, chairperson of the so-called American Civil Rights Institute, led the campaign for the ballot initiative to eliminate affirmative action programs in Washington, which would be officially known as the Washington State Civil Rights Act. Connerly, who is Black, was also the front man for a similar effort in California and is looking to campaign against affirmative action programs in Florida, Nebraska, and Michigan.

Meanwhile, as the assault on affirmative action broadens, the ruling class is chipping away at desegregation. Two lawsuits aimed at dismantling school desegregation policies in Montgomery County, Maryland; and Charlotte, North Carolina are pending. In recent years court decisions have ended desegregation programs in Nashville, Tennessee; Wilmington, Delaware; Denver, Colorado; Cleveland, Ohio; and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

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Report Back from the Young Socialists Convention. Fri., Dec. 11, 7:30 p.m. Dinner 6:30 p.m. 2724 Douglas Ave. Donation: Program \$4; Dinner \$4. Tel: (515) 277-4600.

MASSACHUSETTS

Boston

Building a Working-Class Youth Organization: Report from Young Socialist Convention. Speakers: Members of the Young Socialists

and others. Fri., Dec. 11, 7:30 p.m. 780 Tremont St. Donation: \$4. Tel: (617) 247-6772.

MINNESOTA

St. Paul

What Ventura's Election Means for Workers. Speaker: Tom Fiske, Socialist Workers candidate for governor in Minnesota in 1998. Fri., Dec. 11, 7:30 p.m.

Free the Puerto Rican Political Prisoners! Fri., Dec. 18, 7:30 p.m.

Both events to be held at 2490 University Ave. W. Donation: \$4. Tel: (651) 644-6325

NEW YORK

Brooklyn

What's at Stake in Coal Miners Strike against Freeman? Speaker: Cecelia Moriarity, member United Steel Workers of America in Pittsburgh, and of Socialist Workers Party Trade Union Committee. Sat., Dec. 12, 7:30 p.m. Dinner 6:30 p.m. 59 4th Avenue (corner of Bergen). Donation: \$10, dinner and program. Program \$5. Tel: (718) 399-7257.

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SWEDEN

Stockholm: Vikingagatan 10 (T-bana St Eriksplan). Postal code: S-113 42. Tel: (08) 31 69 33. Compuserve: 100416,2362

Malcontents — "On the day after soldiers killed at least eight demonstrators and wounded more than 100 others, tens of thousands of students and poor people filled a high-



Harry Ring

way [November 14] in front of the [Indonesian] parliament building in what seemed an unfocused and unguided outpouring of discontent." — *New York Times*

Potemkin City — Giant U.S.

investment bank Merrill Lynch ensured that there would be no unpleasant sights when the Queen of England visited their huge trading floor at the City, London's Wall Street, when it instructed other departments to fill the 400 empty desks of recently fired employees and "look busy."

Now if it were bombs to Iraq — In Los Angeles, with its large Central American community, relief for Hurricane Mitch victims piled up quickly. In fact, some 300 tons of food, clothing, and medicine is still piled up. The organizers of the collection don't have the bundle of cash required to ship it and the government, apparently, is too busy.

Thugs Inc. — Pinkerton's, assertedly the world's biggest private police agency, notorious for its union-busting record, signed an eight-year, \$1.1 billion contract with General Motors. Which somehow reminds us that back in our neighborhood when someone said to be very well financially, the saying was, "He's making money like a cop."

Not garden variety capitalist politics? — The top man in Japan's defense agency quit and an investigation is under way of charges that the country's giant electronics company was permitted to inflate defense contract costs in exchange for cushy jobs for retiring bureaucrats.

The spirit lives — The British House of Lords voted that the Lord Chancellor, who presides over the Chamber, is no longer required to wear ceremonial garb, including britches, tights, and buckled shoes. Lord Irvine, the Labour Lord Chancellor, will not, however, preside in blue jeans. He's ordered trousers at £300 (\$500) a pair. (He's the chap who made news with the bill he submitted for decorating his new London flat, including £650,000 for wallpaper.

It must have been dreadful — Beverly Center, a pricey Beverly Hills shopping center, has been running full-page ads declaring "Construction near Beverly Center is complete. Good thing. Those or-

ange vests [worn by road construction workers] were hideous."

If they were people? — "A police force disgraced by the conviction of three officers for cruelty to dogs has suspended another for alleged brutality to horses. Essex Police is investigating an officer following allegations that he deliberately hurt a horse he was riding while on duty." — *Daily News*, London.

Of bulls and bears — Page 1 of a recent business section of the *L.A. Times* pointed to the Dow Jones industrial average "rocketing to a new high." Meanwhile, a note at the bottom of page 4, same issue, reported: "Dow Jones Inc. said it will cut costs by firing 118 employees...."

Birth of the communist movement in the U.S.

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the birth of the communist movement in the United States, the 70th anniversary of the founding of the *Militant* and Pathfinder Press, and the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Socialist Workers Party. For the next several weeks, this column will be devoted to publishing materials related to these important hallmarks in the history of the workers movement in this country. As the first installment, we reprint below excerpts from *The First Ten Years of American Communism: Report of a Participant* by James P. Cannon.

A traveling organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World before and during

BOOK OF THE WEEK

World War I and a leader of the working-class left wing of the Socialist Party, Cannon became a leader of the Communist Party of the United States following the October 1917 Bolshevik revolution in Russia. He was expelled from the CP in 1928. A founding leader of the Socialist Workers Party, Cannon served as SWP national secretary until 1953 and was national chairman emeritus at his death in 1974.

The excerpt is taken from Part I of the book, "Letters to a Historian," and it is titled "My thesis." It was written on March 2, 1954. It is copyright © 1962 by James P. Cannon. Reprinted with permission.

BY JAMES P. CANNON

My writings on the early history of American communism are mainly designed to illustrate my basic thesis, which as far as I know, has not been expounded by anyone else. This thesis can be briefly stated as follows:

The Communist Party originally was a revolutionary organization. All the original leaders of the early Communist Party, who later split into three permanent factions within the party, began as American revolutionists with a perspective of revolution in this country. Otherwise, they wouldn't have been in the movement in the first place and wouldn't have split with the reformist so-

cialists to organize the Communist Party.

Even if it is maintained that some of these leaders were careerists — a contention their later evolution tends to support — it still remains to be explained why they sought careers in the communist movement and not in the business or professional worlds, or in bourgeois politics, or in the trade-union officialdom. Opportunities in these fields were open to at least some of them, and were deliberately cast aside at the time.

In my opinion, the course of the leaders of American communism in its pioneer days, a course which entailed deprivations, hazards and penalties, can be explained only by the assumption that they were revolutionists to begin with; and that even the careerists among them believed in the future of the workers' revolution in America and wished to ally themselves with this future.

It is needless to add that the rank and file of the party, who had no personal interests to serve, were animated by revolutionary convictions. By that I mean, they were believers in the perspective of revolution in this country, for I do not know any other kind of revolutionists.

The American Communist Party did not begin with Stalinism. The Stalinization of the party was rather the end result of a process of degeneration which began during the long boom of the Twenties. The protracted prosperity of that period, which came to be taken for permanence by the great mass of American people of all classes, did not fail to affect the Communist Party itself. It softened up the leading cadres of that party, and undermined their original confidence in the perspectives of a revolution in this country. This prepared them, eventually, for an easy acceptance of the Stalinist theory of "socialism in one country."

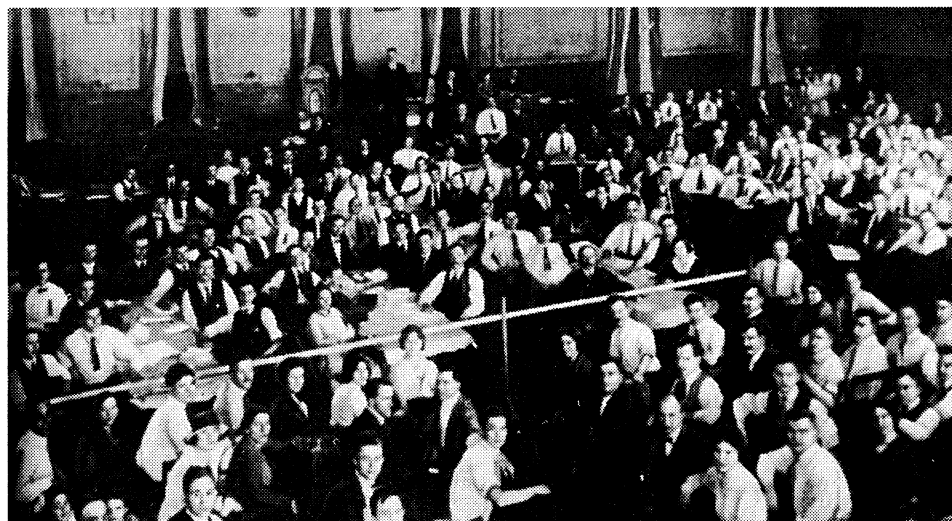
For those who accepted this theory, Russia, as the "one country" of the victorious revolution, became a substitute for the American revolution. Thereafter, the Communist Party in this country adopted as its primary task the "defense of the Soviet Union" by pressure methods of one kind or another on American foreign policy, without any perspective of a revolution of their own. All the subsequent twists and turns of Communist policy in the United States, which appears so irrational to others, had this central motivation — the subordination of the struggle for a revolution in the United States to the "defense" of a revolution in another country.

That explains the frenzied radicalism of the party in the first years of the economic crisis of the Thirties, when American foreign policy was hostile to the Soviet diplomacy; the reconciliation with Roosevelt after he recognized the Soviet Union and oriented toward a diplomatic rapprochement with the Kremlin; the split with Roosevelt during the Stalin-Hitler pact; and the later fervent reconciliation and the unrestrained jingoism of the American Stalinists when Washington allied itself with the Kremlin in the war.

The present policy of the Communist Party, its subordination of the class struggle to a pacifistic "peace" campaign, and its decision to ally itself at all costs with the Democratic Party, has the same consistent motivation as all the previous turns of policy.

The degeneration of the Communist Party began when it abandoned the perspective of revolution in this country, and converted itself into a pressure group and cheering squad for the Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia — which it mistakenly took to be the custodian of a revolution "in another country."

I shouldn't neglect to add the final point of



First convention of Communist Party of the United States, Chicago, Sept. 1-7, 1919.

my thesis: The degeneration of the Communist Party is not to be explained by the summary conclusion that the leaders were a pack of scoundrels to begin with; although a considerable percentage of them — those who became Stalinists as well as those who became renegades — turned out eventually to be scoundrels of championship caliber; but by the circumstance that they fell victim to a false theory and a false perspective.

What happened to the Communist Party would happen without fail to any other party, including our own, if it should abandon its struggle for a social revolution in this country, as the realistic perspective of our epoch, and degrade itself to the role of sym-

thizer of revolutions in other countries.

I firmly believe that American revolutionists should indeed sympathize with revolutions in other lands, and try to help them in every way they can. But the best way to do that is to build a party with a confident perspective of a revolution in this country.

Without that perspective, a Communist or Socialist party belies its name. It ceases to be a help and becomes a hindrance to the revolutionary workers' cause in its own country. And its sympathy for other revolutions isn't worth much either.

That, in my opinion, is the true and correct explanation of the Rise and Fall of the American Communist Party.

—25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



December 14, 1973

BROOKSIDE, Ky. — "They ain't going to scab this mine. They can close it down, but they ain't going to scab it." It is in this spirit that members of the Brookside Women's Club gather every morning on the picket line outside the Eastover Mining Company here.

The club is a determined group of wives, daughters, aunts, and friends of miners who are in their fourth month of a strike against Eastover.

Last summer, the men voted by more than 2 to 1 to be represented by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), rejecting the Southern Labor Union, a company union that had been installed by the coal operators. The vote was 113 to 55.

But Eastover — which is owned by Duke Power Company — has refused to accept the UMWA contract terms. These include a tripling of payments for miners' health and retirement funds, improved safety, and the right to strike.

As a result of the women's activities several have been arrested for so-called violations of the court order limiting picketing. The judge fined the women \$500 each and then sent them to jail because they couldn't afford to pay this exorbitant sum.

A few of the women, whose husbands were also arrested, had to bring their children to jail too, since there was no other way to care for them. Dorothy Johnson, for example, brought her three daughters, age seven, six, and two, into the cell with her.

Johnson told *The Militant* that a man

from the child welfare department had the nerve to try to take away the children because a jail was not a "fit" place for them to live! "We run him out of the jail," she added.



December 13, 1948

Costa Rica having signed the Treaty of Rio de Janeiro, this military pact drawn up 15 months ago at the Brazil Conference under General Marshall's guidance became binding upon all Latin America and the United States Dec. 3.

If the United States now engages in war against the Soviet Union, or any other country... every Latin American country is obligated to take the following measures outlined in the Chapultepec Act. "Recall of chiefs of diplomatic missions; breaking of diplomatic relations; breaking of consular relations; breaking of postal, telegraphic, telephonic, radio-telephonic relations; interruption of economic, commercial and financial relations."

Ratification of the pact thus places the official stamp upon Washington's effort to commit all Latin America in advance to give up neutrality in the projected World War III.

In addition to armed attack, the pact becomes operative if "any American state should be affected by an aggression which is not an armed attack or by an intra-continental or extra-continental conflict, or by any other fact or situation that might endanger the peace of America." Any squabble anywhere in the world could be interpreted as "aggression" under this sweeping clause.

FROM PATHFINDER

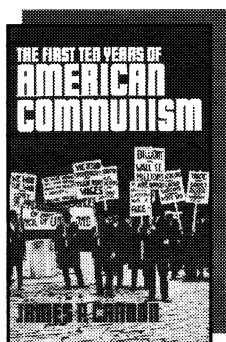
The First Ten Years of American Communism

Report of a Participant

James P. Cannon

An account of the early years of the U. S. Communist movement, by a founding leader.

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Defend affirmative action!

All working people should join in fighting to defend affirmative action, and denounce the reactionary chatter about "low test scores" of "minority students," lawsuits against admitting "less qualified" students, and claims that affirmative action is "reverse discrimination."

Racial and national discrimination is institutionalized in capitalist society. The very way that capitalism operates day in and day out constantly reproduces and reinforces inequalities, to the benefit of the wealthy class that runs this cutthroat system. Left to their own devices, the capitalists will never enforce measures to ensure equality in hiring, promotions, education, and housing. The bosses use these divisions to weaken workers' ability to fight for jobs, better wages, working conditions, and other social entitlements for everyone.

The increasing devastation of working-class communities that are Black over the last two decades is the product of the workings of capitalism. Broad layers of workers and farmers who are Black have been driven into poverty and into social conditions that are even more segregated — by race and by class — than the late 1960s or early 1970s. U.S. government figures for 1995 report that 41 percent of Black children lived below poverty level compared to 15 percent of white children. In July 1998 the unemployment figure for Blacks was 10.4 percent, more than two and a half times the overall rate. The median family income of African-Americans is less than 60 percent that of whites and the gap was substantially wider in 1996 than in 1967. Meanwhile, African-Americans make up more

than half of those imprisoned since 1980 and they comprise more than 50 percent of inmates who have been executed, although Blacks make up less than 12 percent of the U.S. population.

Working-class fighters and defenders of democratic rights must champion affirmative action in admissions at every level of education. The argument that students of oppressed nationalities are "less qualified" at the high school and university level is a reactionary justification for perpetuating the discrimination and inequality youth who are Black face from the primary level on.

Affirmative action is also needed to combat widening wage inequality, where a disproportionate number of those working minimum wage jobs are young, Black, Latino, or female. That's why the fight for affirmative action in hiring and promotion — with quotas — is essential for building working-class unity.

More demonstrations are needed like the thousands of students in California, Texas, Washington State, and elsewhere, who have taken to the streets to defend affirmative action. Working people must throw their weight behind this fight to counter the broadening assault on this social gain, won through the massive struggle of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and '60s.

The victory over Jim Crow segregation was a historic conquest that strengthened the working class politically. It is only along this road that a social movement can be built that will ultimately sweep away the discrimination and racist cancer that are a cornerstone of capitalist society.

Free Puerto Rican patriots

Working-class fighters and other supporters of democratic rights should participate in and build the upcoming December 10 rally at the United Nations to demand the U.S. government free Puerto Rican patriots held in U.S. prisons.

For workers in the United States, fighting to end Washington's colonial domination of that Caribbean island is not only just; it is a necessity. The imperial subjugation of the Puerto Rican nation reinforces racism, national chauvinism, anti-immigrant prejudice, and other divisions that weaken the labor movement. It stifles the political consciousness, human solidarity, and fighting capacity of workers in struggle.

The U.S. rulers use their iron-fisted rule over Puerto Rico to rationalize the erosion of democratic rights of working people in the United States. FBI spying and harassment of Puerto Rican independence fighters, unionists, and other supporters of Puerto Rican self-determination is well documented. This is a familiar scenario to striking coal

miners in Illinois today, who are facing FBI probes aimed at choking their battle to maintain their union. The bosses and their media try to slander independence fighters as terrorists, just like they attempt to smear the miners and other striking workers with accusations of violence.

"U.S. imperialism controls our country socially, politically, and economically," said Puerto Rican *independentista* Rafael Cancel Miranda in the Pathfinder pamphlet *Puerto Rico: Independence Is a Necessity*. "We are a militarily occupied country — we're saturated by U.S. military bases."

An advance in the struggle for Puerto Rican independence is in the interests of all working people, especially those in the United States, much like the battle to defeat Jim Crow racist segregation imposed on Blacks in the South. Building the December 10 rally and getting Cancel Miranda's pamphlet in the hands of working people are important ways to boost the struggle for Puerto Rican self-determination.

'British justice — no justice!'

A blow was struck *against* justice November 25, when the highest court of the British imperialist state decided that Augusto Pinochet, the former military ruler of Chile, could face extradition to Spain. This further assault on the sovereignty of an oppressed nation, which began with Pinochet's arrest in London, has been celebrated by liberals and social democrats. But it should be condemned by class-conscious workers and all anti-imperialist fighters.

Britain's ruling rich, their Spanish counterparts, and the U.S. rulers who supported Pinochet's regime are the greatest violators of human rights in the world. They have no moral right to sit in judgment, let alone try and punish Pinochet for his crimes; that task belongs solely to the working people of Chile. The decision puts London and Washington, disguised as champions of human rights, in a better position to win acceptance for the slaughter of thousands of workers and farmers in Iraq and advance their military aim of overturning the worker's state of Yugoslavia and reimposing capitalist rule there.

Trade unionists will note that one of the liberal judges who voted for this decision is the same Lord Nicholls who participated in the legal assault on the National Union of Miners during the 1984-85 miners strike.

Irish freedom fighters, among whom the slogan "British justice — no justice!" is rightly popular, will recognize the hypocrisy of London's efforts to pose as the defender of the families of thousands "disappeared" under Pinochet. They know the brutality meted out by the British state against the Irish, including frame-ups, torture, and cold-blooded murder.

Fighters for Black rights will see the duplicity of a judicial system which allows racist cops to act

with impunity — harassing and killing Blacks and enabling the racist gang who murdered Stephen Lawrence to escape justice.

Whatever the exact outcome of this affair, after the months of legal wrangling and the tactical debates in ruling circles, this so-called "landmark" ruling opens the road to greater interference in the affairs of oppressed nations. Already Laurent Kabila, the current president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, has been targeted for prosecution by "human rights" groups in France in the wake of the Pinochet arrest.

The liberal forces pushing the prosecution of Pinochet explain that the November 25 ruling builds on the "principles" established by the Nuremberg trials of the defeated Nazi German leaders at the end of the Second World War. But as the *Militant* explained in October 1942, under the headline "Yes, Punish the War Criminals" the British imperialists fought the war not to destroy fascism but "to preserve their empire." The U.S. rulers fought it to extend theirs. The 1946 Nuremberg Trials were a fake. The victorious war criminals put the defeated war criminals in the dock so that the "democratic" imperialists could cover up their crimes, their responsibility for the slaughter.

Once a loyal servant of the "Godfathers" in Washington and their British allies, as Cuban revolutionary leader Fidel Castro put it, Pinochet can now be thrown on the scrap heap to help the imperialists advance their war aims.

But it is the imperialist "Godfathers" who should go on trial. The growing struggles of working people today — such as the victorious electricians and striking catering workers in London and the striking miners in Illinois — will bring that prospect closer.

Black farmers fight

Continued from front page

is no compensation for the communities devastated by the large numbers of Black farmers who were driven off the land. There are no options: take it or get nothing.

"And they have not removed any perpetrators from office. How do you say these people did it, discriminated against Black farmers, and these people are still there? What are the assurances we have that this will be implemented. After the Secretary of Agriculture announced a moratorium on farm foreclosures for Black farmers claiming discrimination, some foreclosures continued."

Georgia farmer Eddie Slaughter, vice president of the Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association who attended the Selma meeting, remarked, "Over 50 percent of Black farmers are facing foreclosures. They need a settlement as soon as possible. The proposal is inadequate. It does not redress past grievances and will allow future discrimination. Black farmers have to come together. And we need to make the whole working class more aware of this."

Black farmers are losing 9,000 acres of land per week. Between 1920 and 1992, the number of farms owned by Blacks decreased from 925,000 to 18,616 — a 98 percent drop.

Spirited discussions at meetings

During the meetings, the settlement proposal sparked spirited discussions. "Is this the best offer you could get for us?" James Stephenson, a farmer from Dermott, Arkansas, asked the lawyers at the Pine Bluff meeting. Gwendolyn Stephenson, who is married to James, added, "Why can't they get rid of those people who discriminated against us? Those of us continuing to farm will still have to deal with them."

David Howard, a farmer from Tchula, Mississippi, who attended the Selma meeting, said, "Fifty thousand dollars is not a lot, not even for one crop season. The government is guilty of the charges we have made against them. All his life, my father didn't get one loan on time. In all of Holmes County [Mississippi], not one Black farmer got disaster relief in the drought of 1993 that destroyed the cotton."

A number of farmers at the meetings support the proposed settlement terms. But virtually every farmer pointed to the failure to address the root cause of the problem, racist discrimination that has always been part of the exploitation of working farmers in the United States through the rents and mortgages system.

John Bonner, a farmer from Dinwiddie, Virginia, at the Durham meeting, said, "The offer is pretty fair. I'd like to get rid of the government debt and I don't have a lot of other debt. And I don't want to wait years to try to get a better settlement. But there is nothing in there to change anything about how the system works." The Bonner family joined the fight against the Agriculture Department when they tried to purchase a farm in 1983. "We tended the farm for a white fellow for 21 years, Bonner explained. "When he died his grandchildren wanted to sell it to us. We applied to USDA for a loan. First they said they lost the application. Then they said we didn't have enough cash flow."

Announcement of the settlement proposal was preceded by an op-ed piece by U.S. secretary of agriculture Daniel Glickman in the November 13 *Washington Post* titled "Fairness for Black Farmers." Glickman referred to discrimination by the USDA as an event of the past, "an Agriculture Department that reflected our nation's misgivings on race." He claimed discrimination by the USDA started to change "when I began unearthing these old complaints as part of my own civil rights initiative."

USDA: 'The last plantation'

But civil rights at the USDA only became an issue after Black farmers started demonstrating in Washington in December 1996 and newspaper stories reported the blatant discrimination by the department known to many farmers as "the last plantation." One farmer after another at the November meetings reported on continuing discrimination. Sandy McKinnon from Rowland, North Carolina, showed a "Dear Debtor" letter he just received from the USDA demanding repayment within one month of loans he got in 1984. The USDA reminds him that "additional interest is accruing daily." And they warn, if he doesn't pay up or prove he filed for bankruptcy, "the United States Department of the Treasury will be notified to collect the delinquent amount... from... certain Federal benefit payments, such as Social Security, Railroad Retirement and Black Lung benefits."

Lester Bonner, from Dinwiddie County, Virginia, said he will file a discrimination complaint with the USDA. "This year they denied me a disaster loan for losses resulting from drought while white farmers in the county got the loans."

The *News-Observer*, the daily newspaper in the Raleigh area, which is not known for its support to the rights of Black farmers, criticized the proposed settlement in a November 25 editorial titled, "This land is their land." A segment on the CBS television news program "60 Minutes" on November 29 gave a glimpse to a national audience for the situation faced by some of the Black farmers involved in this fight.

Most farmers who owe money to the USDA also have debts to local banks, chemical and seed companies, tractor dealers, and others. "Those creditors would be on the \$50,000 like flies on sugar," North Carolina farmer David Strickland said at the Durham meeting. "We'd never see a penny of that money."

Attorney Stephon Bowens of the Land Loss Prevention Project in Durham pointed out that as soon as the debt to the USDA is written off and those liens removed from farmers' land, other creditors would aggressively go after the same land. Black farmers land has been partly protected in the last two years by the USDA foreclosure moratorium.

Although the reporters on "60 Minutes" said that a settlement of the case could be announced in a week, the attorneys report they are still involved in negotiations with the government over terms for a general settlement and are continuing to negotiate individual settlements for the lead plaintiffs. February 1, 1999, is still scheduled for the beginning of the trial if no settlement has been reached.

Stu Singer is a member of the United Transportation Union in Washington, D.C. Arlene Rubinstein from Atlanta and Pat Leamon from Raleigh contributed to this article.

CORRECTION

A photo on page 3 of the December 7 *Militant* was incorrectly identified as an immigrant rights protest in Paris. The photo, taken by Bob Cantrick, was of a November 18 teachers demonstration in Montreal.

Crown workers in Alabama get support in their fight for a contract

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

longest of the six strikes in 25 years by workers at the Peterbilt assembly plant outside Nashville. Only 15 of the 1,200 striking UAW members crossed the picket line. Peterbilt is owned by PACCAR, Inc., the sec-

pensions of some workers. But all of the strikers fired by the company for alleged "misconduct" will return to work.

Outside their contract meeting the UAW members' opinions reflected the widespread view that the workers had stood up to the company's assault on their union. The spirit of the strikers was expressed well by June Stalter. "I got married the day before we went on strike. I had to put off my honeymoon to walk the picket line," she said. "Tomorrow is the scabs' last day and we'll be there to watch them leave."

Jay Hunter is one of the workers suspended for 30 days. He started at the truck plant in 1969 when the plant opened. According to Hunter, he cussed out a scab in a restaurant parking lot three miles from the plant. Strom Engineering, the private scab-herding outfit hired by Peterbilt during the strike, happened to be on the scene and got the confrontation on film.

"It was a set up deal," said Hunter, adding: "A 30-day suspension is nothing compared to seven months. I would've bet my home that we wouldn't have been out this long. I'm proud of the young people in this strike. We're about as strong as a 1,200 people as you could find."

One of the younger workers is Bounphet Phet, one of ten workers from Laos who has worked in the plant for less than five years. "The strike was tough on us," said Phet. "We didn't expect to be out for so long. But we have to stick with the union." Peterbilt is Phet's first union job and he was proud of the fact that no Laotian worker crossed the picket line.

Some strikers felt the company was being let off the hook.

"I feel like we could've done a little bit better on certain issues," said Tony Sanders. "We did damn good as far as retirement and insurance benefits. But I feel like we're owed back pay since the lockout September 10. I feel like all the brother and sisterhood should've been returned to work, the charges



Militant/Susan LaMont
A picket line/news conference in front of Crown gas station in Fairfield, Alabama, November 12, to support the locked-out Crown refinery workers' fight in Houston, Texas. Crown worker Danny Duncan is in front on right.

ON THE PICKET LINE

short items to this column as a way for other fighting workers around the world to read about and learn from these important struggles. Jot down a few lines about what is happening in your union, at your workplace, or other workplaces in your area, including interesting political discussions.

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama — A successful picket line/news conference was held in front of a Crown gas station in Fairfield, Alabama, November 12, to support the locked-out Crown refinery workers' fight. The event was covered by three TV stations and drew enthusiastic support from passers-by at the very busy shopping area.

Members of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA); United Food and Commercial Workers and the Retail, Wholesale and Distributive Workers; the Molders union; the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists; and other activists supporting the fight of the locked-out workers at Crown Petroleum's Houston refinery participated.

The action came after a month of work in Alabama by Danny Duncan, a representative of Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Local 4-227. He has been speaking about their two-and-a-half-year fight to win a contract and get their jobs back at Crown, as well as the union's antidiscrimination suit against the company. Duncan has been welcomed at union meetings and political events in Birmingham, Tuscaloosa, and Gadsden.

Peterbilt workers hold off company assault

NASHVILLE, Tennessee — Workers at Peterbilt Motors' truck factory, members of United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 1832 approved a new contract November 24 by a vote of 740 to 187.

The truck workers struck May 3, making the seven-month strike the

ond largest manufacturer of heavy trucks in the world. PACCAR also owns Kenworth Trucks.

As the first weeks of the strike turned into months, the strike changed from a seemingly ordinary fight for a new contract into a battle by the workers against a head-on company assault on the union.

Four months into the strike the UAW offered to return to work without a contract and continue negotiations. The company refused the union's offer. Instead, the company hired some 700 strikebreakers and cranked production up to 36 trucks a day, compared to 54 before the strike.

The union declared the strike a lockout and filed unfair labor practice charges against Peterbilt with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The NLRB found the company guilty and scheduled a hearing for January 1999 where the company could have been held liable for back pay to the strikers since the beginning of the lockout in September.

As the strikers held their ground, Peterbilt was losing millions of dollars in unfilled truck orders. The company had record profits in 1997 and the truck market has been booming this year. By November, Peterbilt was forced to negotiate a new contract with the workers.

During the strike, increased pensions and retirement benefits emerged as the key contract issues. The new 44-month contract includes increased pension payments and substantial cuts in health insurance costs for retired workers. For example, health insurance costs for a retiree and spouse will go from \$519 per month to \$140. The agreement also makes it easier to retire at age 62 without significant pension reduction. The contract also includes a 12.5 percent pay raise over the life of the contract.

Along with the contract gains, the workers took some casualties in the form of 30-day to six-month sus-

ropped, and nobody reprimanded for conduct on the picket line."

Hunter added, "I think we got all we're gonna get, but this will leave a bitter taste in people's mouths."

The truck workers fight got support from other unions. UAW Local 1832 president Richard Burnett said that union members and others reached out to truck drivers at truck stops and truck shows to inform potential Peterbilt customers that the plant was on strike and the trucks were being built by scabs.

After the contract ratification vote, striker B.G. Bowling said, "The biggest victory was the solidarity that came out of the strike. They didn't bust our union and they asked us to come back!"

Betty Bates expressed the view of many. "We fought for a lot of good reasons. We might not have gotten everything we asked for, but we're going back together and we still have our union. And we're going back a stronger union."

Hotel workers march in San Francisco

SAN FRANCISCO — In the largest demonstration to date, hotel workers and their supporters rallied in front of the downtown Marriott Hotel November 17, demanding a contract at one of seven nonunion hotels here.

During the evening rush hour, more than 800 chanted, "Contract now!" "We got the power, union power!" as passing city bus drivers honked their approval. The event drew workers from many Bay Area unions who demonstrated their solidarity with members of Hotel and Restaurant Employees Local 2 (HERE) in their two-year battle with one of the largest U.S. hotel chains.

The Marriott — which opened in 1989 — refuses to accept a contract for more than 1,000 janitors, housekeepers, and maintenance workers; a largely immigrant, multi-national, multi-lingual workforce. Workers won union representation in 1996. Since then, they have been fighting for a contract on a par with the city-wide agreement at the other union hotels. HERE's demands include seniority rights, overtime pay, and a pension plan.

During this two-year struggle, workers have organized regular pickets in front of the hotel and periodically called larger mobilizations drawing workers from unions throughout the Bay Area.

Transit workers, Machinists, Steelworkers, flight attendants, farm workers, Teamsters, nurses, long-shoremen, and members of many other unions took part in the action. NABET-CWA Local 51 Workers from KGO-TV Channel 7 joined in with picket signs from their afternoon rally. National Association of Broadcast Employees & Technicians union has been locked out of the ABC-owned stations since November 3.

HERE members garnered support through speaking and distributing multilingual — Chinese, Spanish, and English — leaflets at union meetings and other gatherings.

Susan LaMont; Rich Stuart, member of the USWA; and Ronald Martin, member of International Brotherhood of Boilermakers Local 108, all in Birmingham, Alabama; Osborne Hart, member of United Transportation Union Local 239, and Larry Lane, member of International Association of Machinists Local 1781, in San Francisco contributed to this column.

— LETTERS —

Paul Montauk

I enjoyed your recent articles on the life of Paul Montauk, and I recalled a letter from him in the early 1980s that illustrated his ongoing attention to education.

The San Antonio branch of the SWP received a message from Paul, in which he alerted us to an important chapter in the city's history. This was out of the blue — he had no way of knowing that we had discussed organizing classes to educate ourselves on the development of the class struggle in our area.

We followed Paul's lead, and learned about a group of revolutionaries — many of them German immigrant "forty-eighters" — who functioned in San Antonio in the 1850s. Led by a Marxist named Adolf Douai, they published a newspaper, held public meetings, and joined in the deepening struggle over slavery.

Proslavery intimidation and violence closed the San Antonio Zeitung and drove Douai out of

Texas in 1856, but some of his comrades remained. In 1863 — in wartime, under Confederate rule — they participated in street protests against slavery.

So we learned from Paul that our political work in San Antonio had a long precedent. His initiative, you might say, introduced us to some cofighters in our own city.

Steve Marshall
Detroit

More on 'liberalism'

The most recent years and months have seen a powerful rise in the resistance of workers, farmers and young people. From the UPS strike to the General Motors work stoppage to the fight of workers and young people of Indonesia, we can see the resurgence.

What has also followed is an adaptation by bourgeois politics known as liberalism. This phenomena that is a component of bourgeois politics is one of the most im-

portant for working-class fighters to explain. However, the *Militant* has carried only the occasional mention of liberalism. In fact, an internet search through the *Militant* reveals that the word "liberalism" has appeared only once during 1998.

As an activist, I find myself looking to use the *Militant* in order to explain the road forward for workers and youth fighting for a just and humane future. As a member of the Young Socialists, and someone who uses the *Militant* extensively, I think that now would be an opportune time to explain the term.

Liberalism is an adaptation to real movements and is not in itself a movement. It is designed to suck the life out of any movement of any real consequence by announcing itself as the leader of what might otherwise be true, powerful and just demands. In this manner the bourgeoisie can adapt to political movements and drive them into the ground.

It will not benefit real Affirmative Action demands if Democratic party candidate Grey Davis is the governor of California instead of Republican Dan Lungren. They both have goals of stabilizing the current system for further exploitation. They disagree on strategy. They disagree on how much to pretend to have the same interests as us.

We should learn from the election after election betrayal by the Democratic Party during the Vietnam War, and more recently, the bipartisan welfare slashing.

From the perspective of the capitalists, the two-party system is an effective means of sapping the strength out of movements from Black liberation to Chicano liberation to Immigrant Rights to all workers' rights.

The Young Socialists will never commit itself to liberalism. Liberalism will ultimately expose itself as the cancerous force that it is.

Furthermore, it is not sectarian to denounce liberalism, but rather a

declaration of time-tested principles. It is an affirmation of the fact that the capitalists and their parties have interests that are completely counterposed to those of workers, farmers and young people seeking a humane and just future.

The Young Socialists has been and will continue to be committed to fighting with any organization or tendency that is interested in advancing the struggle of oppressed against oppressor.

Jacob Perasso
Santa Cruz, California

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.

Australia: Aborigines win land rights

BY LINDA HARRIS

SYDNEY, Australia — On November 24 the Miriung and Gajerrong peoples won a victory for Aboriginal land rights in the Federal Court here. Justice Malcolm Lee upheld their claim to a 7,653-square-kilometer tract of Kimberley land in the far north of Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

The Miriung-Gajerrong claim was lodged more than four years ago by Ben Ward on behalf of 100 traditional owners. They have been fighting for the past 30 years to have their rights over the land recognized.

The decision extended native title rights further than the 1996 High Court ruling in the Wik case, which legitimized native title on a case-by-case basis on pastoral leases. Lee ruled that pastoral leases may regulate or suspend native title but not extinguish it under any circumstances. He said that Aborigines had occupied the land for at least 40,000 years and had traditions and customs that connected them to the land.

This case is being welcomed as the first successful native title claim on the mainland. "This is the most significant decision of all because it takes into consideration areas of freehold, lease land, pastoral land, waterways, the whole lot," said Dennis Egginton, the Aboriginal Legal Service chief executive.

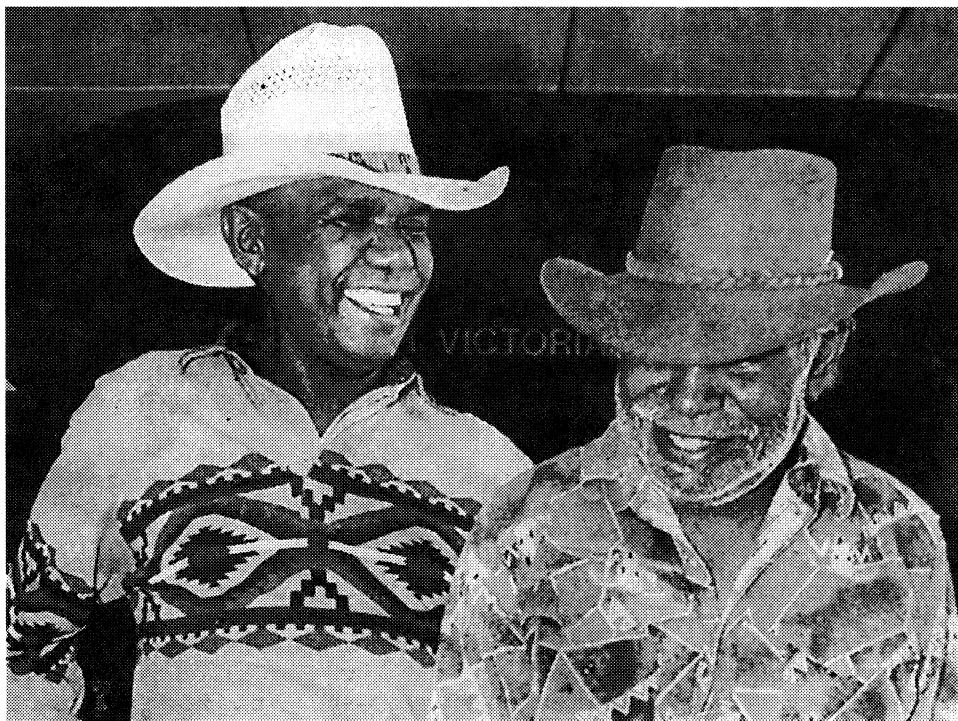
The claim included large areas of resource-rich land. The judgement awarded the claimants the right to decide how the land should be used and to receive a share of any resources taken by others. Assistant director of the Association of Mining and Energy Exploration Companies Tamara Stevens said that mining companies were alarmed and confused. "This judgement is too...open ended," she stated, and "it doesn't bode well for [the mining industry's] future development."

Reflecting the polarization on the question of Aboriginal land rights, Greg Smith, a Liberal member of the West Australian state Parliament, claimed that the judgement meant Aboriginal groups could put a toll gate at the entry to the Kimberley region. Robert Hannan, the spokesperson for the Miriung and Gajerrong families said that it was never their intention to block development or stop people coming into the area. "Our intention is to protect and preserve our cultural heritage and sacred areas, and any negotiations on development or anything else would be done in that context."

However, the Federal Court ruled that native title had been extinguished over some parts of the claimed land, including roads, public reserves, some land surrounding the town of Kununurra, and the Ord River dam and power station.

From the time the claim was lodged, the governments of the Northern Territory and Western Australia opposed it, spending millions to fight the case.

In April 1997, the Federal Court ruled that only people of the same gender are permitted to hear evidence about Aboriginal "secret men's and women's business." The West



Native claimant Ben Ward, left, with his father, Jeff Chunama, celebrate Miriung and Gajerrong peoples' victory for Aboriginal land rights in Australian Federal Court.

Australian government appealed unsuccessfully to the full bench and then to the High Court against this ruling.

Now West Australian premier Richard Court indicated he would appeal to the High

Court against the final ruling. Court has also signaled his intention to push ahead with his government's native title legislation, which would extinguish Aboriginal land rights on large tracts of land including those

covered by Lee's ruling. This would trigger a compensation claim that Richard Bartlett, who represented the Miriung and Gajerrong peoples, said could be worth massive amounts of money.

The Federal Court judgement undermines the Howard government's legislation that amended the Native Title Act in July, restricting the rights of Aborigines to negotiate over land title. The bill, narrowly passed in the Senate, was in response to a rightist campaign to nullify the Wik ruling spearheaded by wealthy pastoralists and Pauline Hanson's ultrarightist One Nation Party.

Aboriginal leaders have hailed the ruling as the most significant since the High Court's Mabo ruling of 1992, which recognized the native title rights of the Mer people in the Torres Strait. An editorial in the November 26 *The West Australian* called it "a significant landmark in the evolution of law on Aboriginal land claims."

The message from the judgement, which reaches beyond the borders of the Miriung-Gajerrong claim, said Aboriginal leader Pat Dodson, is regardless of how protracted, bitter, or expensive the process, Aborigines will continue to pursue their rights to native title. "We have got to accept that native title is here. Indigenous people are going to exercise their rights to protect it."

Linda Harris is a member of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union

British court sets imperial precedent by ruling Pinochet can be extradited to Spain

BY TONY HUNT

LONDON — Britain's highest court, the judiciary committee of the House of Lords, decided November 25 that former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet could face extradition to Spain on charges of torture, genocide, and kidnapping.

The 3-2 judgment overturned an earlier ruling of a lower court that Pinochet was entitled to "sovereign immunity" as a former head of state. Whether or not Pinochet is actually extradited is now in the hands of Labour Home Secretary Jack Straw and could be the subject of weeks of further legal proceedings.

Whatever the outcome, the decision effectively establishes the right of the British imperialists — who are guilty of brutal violations of human rights in Ireland and around the world — to interfere in the affairs of oppressed countries like Chile. The ex-dictator, who came to power in a bloody, U.S.-supported military coup in 1973, was arrested October 16 in London by British police acting on a Spanish warrant.

Liberal and social democratic forces, celebrated the decision. The director of Amnesty International in Chile said the decision "created a universal precedent that crimes against humanity must be brought to justice." The New York-based Human Rights Watch and the International Commission of Jurists in Geneva, Switzerland, also praised the ruling. Spain's Socialist Party leader José Borrell welcomed the decision and criticized the right-wing Spanish government for efforts to halt the work of judge Baltasar Garzón, who issued the arrest warrant.

Two of the three judges who voted for the judgment were reported to hold liberal views. One of them handled "contempt of court" proceedings against the National Union of Miners during the 1984-85 miners' strike. The two judges who voted against the ruling are reportedly conservatives.

Some rail workers watching TV coverage at the Waterloo station in London applauded the court ruling. Backers of Pinochet's arrest have

falsely painted the British rulers as defenders of human rights and "justice." The Chilean/British Ad Hoc Committee for Justice said "Britain has acquired enormous and incalculable prestige by arresting Pinochet..."

Welcoming the House of Lords decision, Sheila Cassidy, who was tortured in Chile during the dictatorship, said, "It's a great moment for England and for Chile. I feel proud to be English." Clary Torres, a Chilean exile in Britain, told the *Daily Telegraph*, "Our faith in British justice has been restored." Another exile living in Spain said, "Thank God for British justice."

Leaders of the Socialist Party (SP) and Communist Party (CP) in Chile joined celebrations of the verdict in Santiago at the headquarters of the Association of the Relatives of the Disappeared. Thousands of trade union fighters and others were executed, tortured, or exiled during the dictatorship. The SP and CP were members of the coalition government of SP leader Salvador Allende overturned in the 1973 coup, which was aimed at crushing growing struggles by workers and peasants. Both parties refused to arm workers and peasants to defend themselves as it became clear that the military was preparing a coup.

An article in the November 26 *Daily Telegraph* entitled, "Which leader will be next?" said that other capitalist governments in Europe were moving to assume powers to intervene in the affairs of oppressed countries under the guise of defending human rights. "Within the next few months, most of Europe could have asserted the right to try torturers and the architects of genocide, wherever those crimes occur."

During the French-African summit in Paris on November 28, two French human rights groups tried unsuccessfully to launch criminal proceedings against Laurent Kabila, president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on alleged torture charges. Pressed on the matter by reporters who cited the arrest of Pinochet in Britain as a precedent, Charles Josselin, the French minister responsible for relations with African countries, said the only difference was Pinochet was no longer in power.

The British Labour government meanwhile has stuck to its line that the Pinochet affair is a "judicial" and not a political mat-

ter. But the London *Times* stated bluntly in an editorial, "The Pinochet case has had a political dimension ever since the first arrest warrant was issued." The *Times* editors, reflecting the debate in ruling circles, expressed concern that the House of Lords ruling left "the government of virtually any country exposed to internal terrorism vulnerable to prosecution."

The *Economist* dismissed these concerns and favorably reported the support given by the Labour government to a proposal to establish a tribunal to try Iraqi president Saddam Hussein.

During a November 29 visit to Britain, Chilean foreign minister José Insulza, a member of Chile's Socialist Party, floated the idea of Pinochet being sent back to Chile to face charges there. This proposal was condemned by left-wing Labour Member of Parliament Jeremy Corbyn.

The stance by social democratic, centrist, and other forces of the bourgeois left has given an opening to the right wing to pose as defenders of national sovereignty.

Former Conservative prime minister Margaret Thatcher and current Conservative leader William Hague called on Straw to use his executive powers and release Pinochet. Thatcher said "the national interests of both Chile and Britain" were being damaged by his detention. Hague condemned Labour's handling of the affair. Chile is "a long-standing ally of our country," he said.

Teresa Gorman, another Conservative, told Straw not to "kow-tow to his left-wingers. Pinochet should be allowed to go back to Chile."

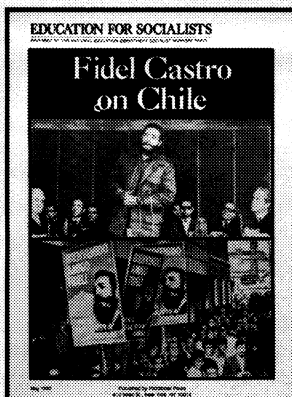
In Chile, rightist supporters of the ex-dictator, who have posed as the defenders of Chilean national sovereignty, demonstrated in the capital Santiago on hearing the House of Lords' decision. British and Spanish flags were burned, the British embassy was pelted with eggs and tomatoes, and a BBC television news crew was violently attacked. Some Pinochet supporters called for another military coup. Several rightists were arrested.

Students and other opponents of Pinochet who also took to the streets in Chile were violently attacked by cops and arrested. Some of those who cheered the British court ruling and joined the anti-Pinochet protests in Chile marched with British flags.

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