

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

NAACP demands gov't probe voting rights violations

— PAGE 5

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## Bush will continue bipartisan antilabor course

BY GREG McCARTAN

U.S. president-elect George W. Bush has announced his first cabinet and other top appointments, heading into office with a strong public display of bipartisanship. This tone was in marked contrast with the sharp factional infighting between the two big-business parties of the previous month, which subsided rapidly after the December 12 Supreme Court ruling ended the attempts by Democratic candidate Albert Gore to reverse Bush's electoral victory.

Bush demonstratively met with Republican and Democratic officials in Washington December 18 and held a press conference with the leaders of both parties in the House and Senate, where he promised to help heal "whatever wounds may exist" from the election. The next day he held meetings with both President William Clinton and with Gore. Vice president-elect Richard Cheney also met with senators and congresspeople from both parties.

Gen. Colin Powell was the first cabinet member named, with the position of secretary of state. Powell was chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Pentagon in 1989-93, including during the U.S.-led attack on Iraq that led to the slaughter of at least

Continued on Page 5

## Tel Aviv, U.S. press Palestinians for deal

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

Israeli and Palestinian representatives arrived in Washington in mid-December for renewed negotiations under the sponsorship of U.S. president William Clinton. The talks, which registered a strong push by Washington and Tel Aviv to come to an agreement with the Palestinian leadership, occurred against a backdrop of continuing Israeli military brutality in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. That brutality includes a policy of assassinating prominent Palestinians.

Unable to end the unrest and stabilize the situation, Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak is operating under two deadlines. One is the January 20 end of term for a U.S. administration that has been among the most pro-Israel in U.S. history. The other is the prime ministerial election in Israel, scheduled for February 6. An agreement would give Barak an advantage over rivals for the candidacy of his Labor Party, and also over the front-running Likud candidate, Ariel Sharon.

Clinton is also pressing hard for an agreement in the last weeks of his presidency, after previous attempts to sponsor such talks have ended in failure.

Israeli negotiator Shlomo Ben-Ami has reportedly offered the Palestinian Authority

Continued on Page 3

## California farmers facing crisis seek federal relief

Raisin growers demand fair prices for their crop

BY ROLLANDE GIRARD AND NED WEBSTER

EASTON, California—Hundreds of raisin farmers have turned out for a series of meetings across the San Joaquin Valley in California to demand a fair price for their crop. Taking advantage of a record harvest, raisin-packing companies are trying to push the price they pay to farmers to almost half of what was paid for last year's crop.

Faced with looming economic disaster, farmers held five meetings recently and formed the California Raisin Growers for Reform of the Raisin Administrative Committee. There are about 5,000 raisin farmers in California, the majority of them small farmers.

The Raisin Administrative Committee (RAC) is a panel that oversees the inventory and flow of raisins under a Federal Raisin Marketing Order, which is used to regulate how many tons of raisins are placed on the market or held in reserve. The packing companies control the reserve.

There are 16 companies involved in the negotiations, including American Raisin Packers Inc., Biola Raisin Co., Central California Packing Co., Sun Maid Growers, and others.

This year's crop is a record 427,396 tons, a 43 percent increase over last year. The raisin harvest has been enlarged by a surplus of Thompson seedless grapes that farmers could not sell to companies for wine or concentrate. The RAC claims that there is only a market for 233,344 tons, or almost half the crop.

The Raisin Bargaining Association



Published with permission from The Fresno Bee/John Walker

Farmers attend October 4 meeting of Raisin Administrative Committee. Raisin farmers are demanding adequate prices to meet production costs and a decent living.

(RBA), which negotiates the price with the packers on behalf of 2,000 growers, made a final offer of \$1,025 a ton—\$400 less than for the 1999 crop. The packers claim that a decline in worldwide consumption and increased foreign competition are the reasons why they can't offer a better price.

At the last meeting of the new organization on December 7, farmers began circulating a petition addressed to the U.S. secretary of agriculture. Demands included reform of the RAC and the Federal Raisin Marketing Order. Among the demands made

Continued on Page 4

## Volunteers advance Pathfinder project

BY MAGGIE TROWE AND NORTON SANDLER

NEW YORK—Volunteers are rapidly nearing completion of a special project that will help strengthen and streamline the distribution of Pathfinder books around the world. The international volunteer project, which began December 14, will be completed on December 24, in time for a big wrap-up party and celebration.

Sixty-nine participants joined the effort as of December 20. They came from around

New York and 23 other U.S. cities, as well as from Australia, Canada, France, Iceland, and New Zealand. A few dozen more are expected to join the project for the final push to completion.

"The labor these volunteers are contributing is part of a broad effort to increase the access by workers and farmers to the revolutionary books they need," said Angel Lariscy, a project organizer from Brooklyn.

The three New York City branches of the Socialist Workers Party are hosting the

project and organizing housing and other arrangements for the volunteers. Each day at 7:30 a.m., Lariscy explained, volunteers attend an orientation session at the offices of the Garment District branch of the SWP, located in the mid-Manhattan industrial district where thousands of garment workers converge every day to their jobs as sewing machinery operators, pressers, and bundle handlers.

At the morning meetings, volunteers hear a report and discuss the progress they are making toward completion of the work allocated for this project as well as the schedule for the day. They discuss how their work is connected to the worldwide efforts to expand the sales of Pathfinder titles on street corners in workers districts like the New York Garment District, to factory floors, to the commercial outlets and libraries where working people go to find books.

Classes on Marxism have been organized in the evenings by both the Upper Manhattan and the Garment District branches of the party. On December 16 and 21, volunteers from out of town joined the teams that distribute Pathfinder books and pamphlets along with the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* in Washington Heights, the Garment District, and Brooklyn's Sunset Park area.

The volunteers are transferring thousands of items of data from an old software program to an Internet-based accounting software system that can be accessed at numerous computer work stations. This includes

Continued on Page 6

## Pennsylvania miners reject contract

BY TONY LANE

BENTLEYVILLE, Pennsylvania—Members of United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) Local 1248 at the Maple Creek mine here rejected a proposed contract on December 7 by a vote of 335 to 10.

The terms of the proposed contract, which would have run to the end of 2006, would have tied the parties to most of the terms in agreements signed between the UMWA and the Bituminous Coal Operators of America (BCOA), but not wages. The rejected contract provided for a 30-cent-an-hour increase every year beginning with the signing of the contract. The current agreement expires at the end of 2002.

Maple Creek is owned by an independent coal operator, Robert Murray. His operations at Maple Creek began in July 1995. The previous January, U.S. Steel shut down its

operations there, laying off miners. When the mine was reopened, miners agreed to a concession through which they fell almost \$1 an hour behind the BCOA wage agreement. Because of the wage freeze in place since then, miners at Maple Creek have fallen almost \$3 behind the national agreement. All the larger mines in southwestern Pennsylvania, union and nonunion, have wage rates at the level of the national agreement or better.

Murray was seeking this agreement as part of his plans to open a new mine, New Century, which is adjacent to Maple Creek and where miners would transfer over to as the current mine ends operations.

The company was surprised by the overwhelming margin of the vote against the contract proposal. The day after the vote,

Continued on Page 10

Palestinian jailed on 'secret evidence' is released — page 3

# London must honor pact, says Sinn Fein leader in Australia

BY DOUG COOPER

SYDNEY, Australia—"There is an assertiveness and confidence among nationalists we've never seen before," stated Martin McGuinness, a central leader of Sinn Fein, the party leading the struggle for a united Ireland free of British rule or interference, during a visit to Australia. In contrast, he said, those political forces that favor continued union with Britain are "divided and fighting amongst themselves."

McGuinness spoke at events in five cities during a December 2-6 whirlwind tour of Australia. The visit flowed from the successful tour of Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams in early 1999, when a two-year visa ban on Adams imposed by the Australian government was lifted. The tour was sponsored by three state branches of Australian Aid for Ireland, the Casement Group in Melbourne, and Friends of Sinn Fein.

McGuinness is one of the 18 Sinn Fein members in the recently reestablished Northern Ireland Assembly, and one of the two who hold ministerial posts. He has the education portfolio, while Bairbre de Brún has responsibility for health.

McGuinness noted he came "of my own free will, unlike the Irish transportees of 200 years ago. It shows how far we have come in challenging the historic injustice in our country that I come here as an Irish minister, the first Sinn Fein minister ever to visit Australia."

The Sinn Fein leader spoke to supporters of the Irish freedom struggle in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, and Canberra.

He also met with state and federal education ministers, state premiers, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, opposition Labor Party foreign affairs spokesman Laurie Brereton, former prime minister Paul Keating, and others.

In a tour highlight, he addressed the National Press Club in Canberra December 4. The speech and questions from the media were broadcast nationally and into Asia by the Australian Broadcasting Corp. on De-

cember 6, giving millions the opportunity to hear an uncensored presentation of the politics of the Irish freedom struggle.

"The British have not lived up to commitments made on May 5-6, in negotiations between [British prime minister] Tony Blair and Gerry Adams and me," McGuinness noted in Sydney. Key issues, he said, include policing and the demilitarization of the British military presence.

"They are more intent on saving David Trimble than in implementing the terms of the Good Friday agreement. Saving David Trimble is not a price we are prepared to pay," McGuinness said.

Trimble is the leader of the Ulster Unionist Party and first minister of the Northern Ireland Assembly. The 1998 Good Friday agreement established the assembly under a limited self-government plan agreed to by London.

## Criticizes policing bill

McGuinness particularly criticized the policing bill to "reform" the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). The RUC is hated among nationalists as one of the armed enforcers of British rule. The bill was introduced by Peter Mandelson, the British secretary of state for Northern Ireland, and became law at the end of November. It "emasculated" the more than 170 recommendations by the Patten Commission for changes to policing in the British-controlled six counties of northern Ireland, McGuinness explained.

"We cannot stand up and recommend that nationalists join or support this new police force," he said.

Responding to arguments that British demilitarization isn't possible because of armed actions by forces opposed to the Good Friday agreement on both sides, McGuinness explained, "What's the best way to defend the Good Friday agreement? With thousands of British soldiers or with



Martin McGuinness speaks at December 2 fund-raising dinner sponsored by Australian Aid for Ireland in Sydney. "The British have not lived up to commitments," said the Sinn Fein leader.

Militant/Doug Cooper

the power of the people? The power of the people is much stronger than the British army."

The task, he said, is "to face down the rejectionists, be they Unionists or republicans. Blair must make it clear to the rejectionists, especially Ian Paisley, that they're not going to succeed." Paisley is the leader of the rightist pro-British Ulster Democratic Party.

McGuinness applauded the political contributions made by recently imprisoned Irish republicans. Virtually all were released from prison by the end of September. "They play an incredible role," he remarked. "The level of political acumen they have gathered to themselves during their incarceration will further enhance our work and the peace process."

Likewise, he saluted the "people at the coalface for the last 30 years. Sometimes people give us too much credit. The credit for courage goes to ordinary people.

"We're their voices," he added.

McGuinness also took up the pretext used by supporters of continued British rule that "decommissioning" of Irish Republican Army (IRA) weapons is the stumbling block to the implementation of the provisions of the Good Friday agreement. "In 30 years of struggle in the north they couldn't defeat the IRA.

"Events in the next couple of weeks will be crucial," McGuinness explained. "We sometimes dwell too much on the Unionists and David Trimble. Key in all this is the British government. If they don't have the will to face down the rejectionists within Unionism and the British establishment, then [the political process is] in big trouble.

"What are we going to do? Keep our nerve. The tide of history is in our favor."

Doug Cooper is a member of Australian Aid for Ireland and the Maritime Union of Australia.

## THE MILITANT

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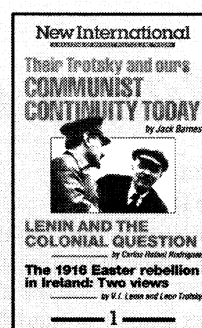
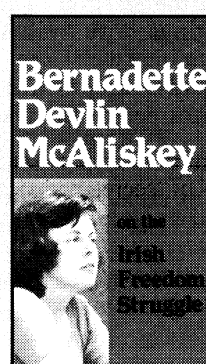
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# Tel Aviv, Washington press Palestinians for deal

Continued from front page

ity sovereignty over the Haram al-Sharif compound in East Jerusalem, also known as the Temple Mount. In exchange, Ben-Ami demanded the Palestinian leadership drop its call for the right of Palestinian people to return to Israel.

Millions of Palestinians were driven off their land and into neighboring countries by the Israeli state. They live as refugees in camps in the occupied territories and throughout the Middle East. Their status dates from the Zionist terror campaigns of the 1940s, and the 1948 war that formed the state of Israel.

As a sweetener to this negotiating position, Israeli officials claim to offer increased openings for immigration into a future Palestinian state.

Ben-Ami described the first round of talks, held at the Bolling Air Force base on December 19, as "very fruitful." Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat said, on the other hand, that "we're facing major difficulties and serious differences."

The Palestinian leadership faces hurdles in winning support for any such deal among Palestinians, who have to endure the siege conditions imposed by Tel Aviv over the last 12 weeks. Palestinian working people confront soaring unemployment, increasingly desperate living conditions, and the constant threat of Israeli military and police violence. More than 330 people have died since late September, the vast majority of them Palestinian.

## Assassination policy

The Israeli armed forces have changed tack in recent days, openly carrying out assassinations of Palestinians who they claim are associated with the resistance. The December 14 *Financial Times* observed, "Israel has stopped bombarding the police and



Israeli tanks block road in front of Palestinian youth in Netzarim, the Gaza Strip, in late October. Tel Aviv's military has been systematically targeting Palestinian leaders.

security offices of Mr. Arafat's forces, admitting it was counterproductive," instead singling out for assassination "Fatah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad fighters over the past four weeks."

An Israeli army officer told the *Times* that

their strategy is about "maximizing our effectiveness in targeting local Palestinian field commanders."

In a typical incident, military sharpshooters shot and killed 28-year-old Hamas loyalist Anwar Ahmed Himran on December

11. Palestinian witnesses contradicted the official claim that Hamran had opened fire first, reporting that he was hit while walking to a taxi stand. Another Fatah activist, Yousef Abu Swayeh, was shot 17 times by Israeli soldiers outside his West Bank home on December 12.

The Palestinian authorities have come under pressure from Hamas and the Tanzim militia associated with Fatah to provide protection to those who are known or suspected to be on the target list and therefore in line for assassination.

## Tel Aviv justifies assassinations

"The IDF [Israeli Defense Forces] and the Shin Bet [secret service] are visibly satisfied with the work done by the special units...against Palestinian field activists," reported *Ha'aretz*. Deputy Defense Minister Ephraim Sneh spoke in justification of the policy on December 12, claiming that the units strike "at those who are leading the shooting cells." An IDF statement the next day said it uses "effective methods against those who hurt Israelis."

In another indication of the brutal logic of Israeli policy, the head of the army's Southern Command has informed Zionist settlers in the northern Gaza Strip that he is considering erecting a \$15 million electric fence to separate their communities from Palestinian areas. An additional company of troops will be assigned to patrol the fence if it is constructed.

## Barak's weakness behind new elections

Barak's prospects for reelection improved somewhat on December 18 when Benjamin Netanyahu of the opposition Likud Party withdrew from competition with the party's official leader, Ariel Sharon, for the party's candidacy.

Netanyahu pulled out of the race after the Israeli Knesset, or parliament, refused to dissolve itself and force a new parliamentary election. "I will not run unless general elections are held," he stated, claiming that a stable government would be impossible within the current divided Knesset.

The Likud leader used the announcement of new talks to launch a characteristically demagogic attack on the Palestinians, claiming that "every position they receive is merely a forward position...for the next unleashing of violence."

Barak faces a challenge for the Labor candidacy from Shimon Peres, who poses as a "tireless" advocate of "peace" with the Palestinians.

On December 18 the United Nations Security Council voted to reject a call by Arafat and other Palestinian leaders for a UN-sponsored force to be sent to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Washington's UN ambassador, Richard Holbrooke, had pledged to veto the measure if it received the necessary majority of nine votes. The vote on the resolution was eight in favor, with seven abstentions.

## Palestinian jailed on 'secret evidence' is freed

BY LYNN HILL

A Palestinian man jailed by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) on the basis of "secret evidence" has been released in the wake of widespread public outrage. The U.S. government is now seeking to deport him.

Mazen Al-Najjar was released on bail December 15, having spent three and a half years in prison without being charged with a crime.

Al-Najjar, formerly a professor at the University of South Florida, helped run an institute for Middle Eastern affairs and the Islamic Committee for Palestine, which U.S. officials claim were fronts for "terrorists." They asserted that he was associated with an organization in Palestine called Islamic Jihad and called him a threat to "national security."

In May, a district court judge in Miami ruled that Al-Najjar's detention violated the constitutional right to due process and ordered a hearing in which, for the first time, the defendant would be able to confront his accuser and the evidence presented against him.

An immigration judge ruled on December 6 that the summary Al-Najjar had received did not have enough information for him to be able to defend himself, and that he should be released on bond. Neither judge, however, has ruled on the alleged evidence itself.

U.S. attorney general Janet Reno initially issued a stay to block Al-Najjar's release on bail from an INS detention center near

Tampa. She later reversed her order, authorizing his release December 15. Instead, her Justice Department is now aggressively seeking to deport Al-Najjar.

"The nation has been well-served by the efforts of the INS to remove Mr. Al-Najjar expeditiously from the country," Reno stated. "We anticipate that he could be deported from the United States soon."

On December 7 Reno initially ordered a 45-day stay of release for Anwar Haddam, an Algerian man jailed four years in Virginia, then took no further action. Haddam was quietly released that same night.

For his part, Al-Najjar has stated that he will fight the deportation order, and will also speak out about others who are wrongly jailed. "I'll be an advocate of human dignity every day of my life," he said.

Since the 1996 Antiterrorism and Effec-

tive Death Penalty Act, signed by the Clinton administration with bipartisan backing in Congress, the INS has been allowed to arrest or detain noncitizens without identifying either their accuser or the evidence against them. At least 13 of these cases have been overturned on appeals.

According to the *St. Petersburg Times*, there are more than two dozen individuals nationwide, almost all of whom are Arab and Muslim, who are being held on the basis of "secret evidence," even though federal judges have ruled that the practice of using secret evidence violates constitutional rights. The INS admits to only 11 of these, including Hany Kiardeeen, a Palestinian man who was held for 19 months before being released last October, and Nasser Ahmed, an Egyptian man held for three and a half years.

## FBI agents march against clemency for Peltier

BY HILDA CUZCO

In an unprecedented action, around 500 FBI agents marched December 15 in Washington to oppose any possibility of a presidential decree of clemency for Leonard Peltier, a longtime activist in the fight for the rights of Native Americans.

The agents marched two-by-two around the White House, wearing their FBI badges and blue memorial ribbons, and carrying pictures of their colleagues, Ron Williams and Jack Coler. Peltier is serving two consecutive life sentences in the federal prison at Leavenworth, Kansas, for a conviction on frame-up charges of killing the two FBI agents.

John Sennett, the president of the FBI Agents Association, carried a petition signed by 9,500 active and retired law enforcement officers opposed to Peltier's release.

*New York Times* reporter David Johnson was one who was struck by the "highly unusual" cop demonstration. "For a civilian agency steeped in paramilitary tradition, the protest was a serious break from discipline," he wrote.

Another 100 FBI agents staged a similar demonstration in El Paso, Texas, in front of the agency's headquarters. Their head officer, Edmundo Guevara, read out a statement opposing any clemency for Peltier.

While they did not grant the Washington

march official sanction, FBI Director Louis Freeh and other officials expressed approval of the action. Freeh, who spoke at a memorial service for Williams and Coler before the march, has written to President William Clinton and Attorney General Janet Reno expressing his "abhorrence" over the possibility of Peltier's release.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Henry Hyde and 21 other members of the U.S. Congress have also written to Clinton recommending denial of Peltier's request for clemency.

Clinton has been noncommittal in his brief remarks on the case—one of a number he has been asked to consider in his last days in office—saying only that "I know it's very important to a lot of people, maybe on both sides of the issue," and that he would give the matter a "look-see."

Peltier, who is 56, has already served more than two decades in prison. He has repeatedly denied involvement in the deaths of the agents, stressing in an interview earlier this year with the *Seattle Times* that "I didn't kill those people."

## 25-year frame-up

Williams and Coler died from shots to the head in June 26, 1975, on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota. The FBI claims they were searching for robbery suspects at

the time. Peltier was on the reservation to help defend the rights of local people under attack from tribal council goon squads. At the April 1977 trial, the government argued that Peltier possessed a weapon of the type claimed by investigators to have been used in the killings.

According to the decision of the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals, Peltier's trial and previous appeals had been riddled with FBI misconduct and judicial impropriety.

"It has been established that no one knows who fired the fatal shots," said Jennifer Harbury, one of Peltier's attorneys, who contends that Peltier was convicted on false testimony and fabricated evidence. "FBI agents coerced and intimidated witnesses, intentionally used false testimony, and concealed from the defense a critical ballistic test reflecting his innocence," she said.

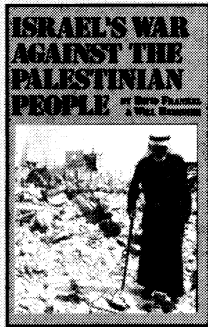
Peltier's fight for justice has gained widespread support in the United States and around the world.

Thousands held a march December 10 near the United Nations in New York to demand Peltier's release. Among the many well-known figures who have voiced their support is former South African president Nelson Mandela.

Peltier was denied parole in a hearing earlier this year. He does not become eligible again until 2008.

## for further reading

### Israel's War Against the Palestinian People



by David Frankel and Will Reissner  
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# YS in Iceland joins actions in support of Palestinian struggle

The Young Socialists is an international organization of young workers, students, and other youth fighting for socialism. For more information write to the Young Socialists, P.O. Box 33, Times Square Post Office, New York, NY 10108, or call (212) 695-1809, or send an e-mail to: [young\\_socialists@hotmail.com](mailto:young_socialists@hotmail.com)

BY ÓLÖF ANDRA PROPPÉ  
AND ARNAR SIGURDSSON

REYKJAVIK, Iceland—On December 9 a demonstration opposing Israeli repression against the Palestinian people was organized here by the Iceland-Palestine Organization in front of parliament. The demonstration drew 50 people, some of them Palestinians.

The Young Socialists along with other supporters of the *Militant* took part in the action. They set up a literature table and carried signs saying "Israeli army out of the occupied territories." Four copies of the *Militant* were sold.

Speakers from the Left-Green Party and the Social Democratic Coalition expressed their view that United Nations "peacekeeping" troops should be sent to Palestine to establish "order."

"I think the Palestinian people would soon recognize their old colonial rulers if they came back in the form of so-called peacekeeping troops," said Young Socialist Sigurður Jóhann Haraldsson. He spoke at a combined forum and rock concert held later that day, organized by youth supporting the Palestinians' fight. Haraldsson also raised the centrality of the demand for a democratic, secular Palestine and for self-determination for the Palestinian people.

The event, which lasted six hours, was held at a youth activity center. Many youth came to a literature table set up by the Young Socialists and discussed the situation in the Middle East and other political questions. Five copies of the *Militant* were sold in addition to the Pathfinder pamphlet *Palestine*

and the Arabs' Fight for Liberation and a couple of other titles. A young Australian staying in Iceland to work for a few months noted when buying the *Militant*, "It is good to be able to get a different and a broader perspective."

In the last couple of months, numerous events have taken place in Iceland supporting the fight for a free Palestine and condemning the assaults by the Israeli regime.

The Young Socialists here helped to organize a demonstration on October 13 initiated and led by Palestinian youth. The 100 protesters marched from the Icelandic government office building to the Israeli consulate and to the U.S. embassy. Fida Tamimi, a young Palestinian woman, addressed the demonstrators, saying, "We are protesting in front of the U.S. embassy to let them know that we know they support Israel."



Militant/Hallbjörn Þór Guðmundsson  
YS members in Iceland have participated in several protest actions, including a sit-in of 70 people at the Ministry of Finance to support a teachers' strike for higher wages. Signs above read "Agree to teachers' demands" and "More money for education."

## Skinheads in Sweden attack immigrant worker

BY DANIEL AHL

STOCKHOLM, Sweden—Two ultrarightist skinheads carried out a savage beating of a 41-year-old Hungarian-born worker, in a northern suburb of Stockholm. At about 1 a.m. on December 8, he was assaulted as he was leaving the Hallonbergen subway station, where he works as a ticket collector. After knocking him to the ground, the thugs kicked him in his face with steel-toed boots and finally jumped on his head. The immigrant worker remains hospitalized with eye and facial injuries and skull fractures.

Since the ultrarightist thugs, both 17, took the money the worker had in the ticket booth, cops have labeled the murderous assault a case of "robbery." Chief prosecutor Bo Josephson claims it was not an anti-immigrant attack. One of the skinheads has been found guilty of assault three times within less than a year; as a minor he was

sentenced to "community service."

A public meeting was held December 15 outside the Hallonbergen subway station to condemn the assault. The action, called by the Network against Racism and Local 20 of the Service and Communications Union (SEKO), attracted some 100 people, many of them workers and youth who joined the demonstration on their way home. A co-worker of the assaulted worker expressed the sentiment of many of the workers when he told the *Militant* at the rally, "How can you do such a thing? These people are monsters."

### Ultrarightists mobilize

In another case involving skinheads, some 1,000 ultrarightists marched December 16 through Salem, a mainly working-class suburb southwest of here. The killing of a nazi skinhead there the week before was used

by the rightists to mobilize for this action.

The skinhead had been confronted by a group of youth and attacked by some of them. Although some of the youth tried to stop the beating, the 17-year-old skinhead received a lethal stab wound. According to police spokesperson Lars Richter, he was "known for belonging to Swedish nazism." An 18-year-old Salem youth accused of the stabbing is in custody and faces a first-degree murder charge.

Protected by the cops, the ultrarightists mobilized in Salem December 16 from around the country. The action was organized by Robert Vesterlund, a notorious nazi.

In 1999 Vesterlund, who worked at a warehouse, was expelled from the union he was a member of, after being pointed out as a nazi by Björn Söderberg, who worked at the same place. Four weeks later, Söderberg was shot and killed in his home by associates of Vesterlund. After one of the largest mobilizations in many years—30,000 people in 20 cities and towns around the country—the thugs were convicted of first-degree murder. The district attorney dismissed accusations that Vesterlund had ordered the murder.

Reporting on the rightist protest, the daily *Expressen* stated, "Although the nazis had not applied for permission for the demonstration, the police closed off several streets for Vesterlund so he could carry out the three-hour meeting. Police also shoved media away from the meeting when the nazis aggressively demanded it." The cop official in charge said he regarded the meeting as a "public gathering."

Several other notorious Swedish nazis participated in the rightist action. Among them were Pierre Ljunggren, sentenced in 1995 for the murder of Ivory Coast immigrant Patrick Nadj in Klippan. According to *Aftonbladet*, Erik Hägglund, another well-known nazi, declared, "This is the biggest national demonstration ever!" Representatives of the Sweden Democrats, a fascist party, were also present.

The mobilization was preceded by a campaign in the big-business media decrying "violence," which the rightists used to portray themselves as victims. *Dagens Nyheter* quoted a cousin of the skinhead who was killed who claimed he used to be "harassed by an immigrant gang" when he was younger.

Local capitalist politicians sought to prevent counterprotests, distributing leaflets in four languages urging people not to disturb the ultraright marchers.

Daniel Ahl is a member of the Industrial Union in Stockholm. Dag Tirsén contributed to this article.

## California raisin farmers demand fair prices

Continued from front page

are for a drastic reduction in the size of the RAC's board of directors, term limitation for board members, and a requirement that board membership be limited to raisin growers. The farmers asked that the government purchase the reserve pool of raisins for use in the military and school programs.

The petition says the farmers "have come together for the purpose of insuring fiscal integrity, grower equity and fairness in the operation of the raisin marketing order" by the RAC because of the "ongoing turmoil within the raisin industry, the dissension and debate occasioned by disagreements with positions taken by the RAC regarding pricing, free tonnage, and the recommended

percentage of reserve raisins, coupled with the conflict of interest existing between the producers and the packers."

Because the packers have rejected the price proposed by the farmers, the matter goes into mediation. Until the negotiations are resolved, which can take months, the farmers are unable to receive money for their crop.

Mike Jerkovich, a grower from Kerman who is a leader of the newly organized group and a third generation raisin farmer, told the *Militant*, "For the first time since 1920 my family will have to borrow money. Otherwise, we can't start the pruning right now."

Pointing to another aspect of how farmers are treated, Jerkovich said that since 1998 "the packers have sold raisins from the

reserve and we received no money from them." The RAC has decided that 46 percent of this year's crop will be held in reserve. This means that the farmers get paid for only 54 percent of the crop they deliver to the packers. Farmers say it costs \$750 to produce a ton of raisins.

To reverse this problem, one of the demands on the petition is to establish a central storage facility, which would be owned by the growers.

The pricing dispute has an impact not only on the growers, but on farm workers as well. It is now the pruning season and farmers are hiring fewer workers. Other farm workers haven't been paid for their work during the harvest. Some currently working are hoping to be paid when the farmers get their money.

Several raisin farmers attended a December 14 meeting of two dozen people in Fresno to discuss joining a class-action lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for discrimination. The suit, with three farm families as plaintiffs, is seeking compensation of \$20 billion in damages on behalf of 20,000 Latino farmers around the country over the last 20 years. The suit was filed in Washington October 13.

Several of the farmers at the meeting described how they were denied loan and disaster relief when they qualified for it.

Latino farmers in California are mostly Chicano and Mexican. The raisin farmers were joined at the meeting by peach farmers, cattle farmers, and produce farmers.

The Latino farmers are following the example of farmers who are Black and Native American, who filed similar lawsuits against the USDA in 1997 and 1999, respectively.

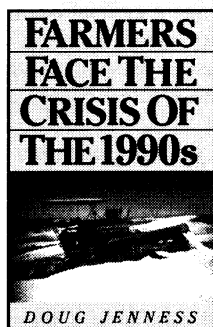
Rollande Girard is a meat packer and a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1288 in Selma, California. Ned Webster is also a meat packer.

### From Pathfinder

#### New International no. 4

The Fight for a Workers and Farmers Government in the United States  
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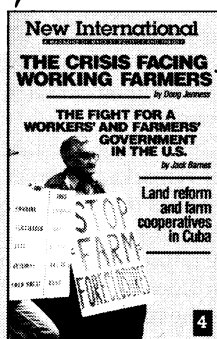


#### Farmers Face the Crisis of the 1990s

by Doug Jenness

Examines the deepening economic and social crisis in the capitalist world and explains how farmers and workers can unite internationally against the mounting assaults from the billionaire bankers, industrialists, and merchants of grain. \$3.50

Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 8, or write Pathfinder, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014. Tel: (212) 741-0690. Fax: (212) 727-0150. When ordering by mail, please include \$3 to cover shipping and handling.





# Bush will continue bipartisan antilabor course

Continued from front page  
150,000 Iraqis in 1991.

At a press conference in Texas, Powell addressed the incoming administration's determination "to go forward" with an anti-missile system, stating that it is "an essential part" of U.S. military policy. The missile system was a top priority of the administration of William Clinton, who drove to conclude a series of tests in order for construction of a system to begin while he was still in office. The aim of deploying an anti-ballistic missile defense system is to give Washington nuclear first-strike capacity that can be used against the workers states in Russia and China especially.

While Democrats and Republicans have expressed differences of degree in the scope and pace of development of such a military system, Clinton's active pursuit of a "limited" antimissile plan has paved the way for Bush, who advocated a larger system during his campaign.

Powell said the weapon system "takes away the currency associated with strategic offensive weapons and the blackmail that is inherent in some regime having that kind of a weapon and thinking they can hold us hostage." This echoes the campaign the Clinton administration has waged to brand North Korea and other governments as "rogue states" supposedly threatening the United States with nuclear-armed intercontinental ballistic missiles.

As to resistance to the antimissile system expressed by Washington's imperialist rivals in Europe, as well as by the governments of Russia and China, Powell said he expects "tough negotiations," and that "they will have to come to the understanding that we feel this is in the best interest of the American people."

Like his Democratic predecessor, Bush's cabinet and appointees are solidly pro-big-business. His initial cabinet appointments include oil executive Donald Evans as commerce secretary, Alcoa Corp. chairman Paul O'Neill as treasury secretary, and former California Department of Agriculture chief Ann Veneman as U.S. secretary of agriculture. Melquiades Martinez, Bush campaign cochair in Florida and a county official who is Cuban-American, was named housing secretary.

Others include Condoleezza Rice, former provost at Stanford University, as national security adviser; Bush campaign spokesperson Karen Hughes as a counselor to the president; and Alberto Gonzales, a Texas Supreme Court justice, as general counsel in the White House. All are longtime Bush associates.

## Clinton hails final appropriations bill

Meanwhile, the 106th Congress passed a \$450 billion omnibus appropriations bill December 15 by a vote of 292 to 60 in the House and by a voice vote in the Senate after final negotiations were concluded with the president. The legislation was in line with a number of bipartisan policies that have been carried out by Clinton and the Republican-dominated Congress over the past half-decade.

In addition to pointing to additional appropriations for the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, Clinton praised the legislation for including more than \$1 billion to put 50,000 more cops on the streets. The measure also adds 500 agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms as well as 600 "gun prosecutors" nationwide. This is on top of Clinton meeting his commitment "to help communities hire 100,000 new police officers," the White House bragged in a statement. More cops, and "anticrime" and "antiterrorist" legislation targeting the rights of working people, have been a hallmark of the last six years of the bipartisan assault on workers and farmers.

"Anticrime" laws are having a big impact on working people who are under parole restrictions. Some 600,000 people will be released from state and federal prisons in 2000, up from 170,000 in 1980. With harsher enforcement, such as parole officers revoking parole for minor violations, the number of those being sent back to prison has skyrocketed. In California, the percent of people admitted to prison in 1999 on parole at the time tripled: from 21 percent in 1980 to 68 percent—nearly 90,000—in 1999.

The appropriations bill also included a temporary revival of a provision to allow some 700,000 immigrants to apply for green



June protest in Huntsville, Texas, against execution of Gary Graham. Bush, like Clinton administration, will continue to use death penalty as weapon against working people.

cards while residing in the United States. This provision had expired in 1998, reverting to the terms of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, signed by Clinton in 1996, which forced thousands to leave the country and return to their homelands for several years while applying for U.S. residence.

The new legislation, however, also kept in place the draconian terms of the 1996 law that retroactively defined a range of misdemeanors and other "crimes"—as minor as jumping a subway turnstile—as aggravated felonies for which a person could be deported.

In addition, Clinton touted the "sustained increase in defense spending" in the appropriations bill, in which an additional \$15.8 billion for war expenditures was added, to-

taling \$296.4 billion this year.

## Clinton brags: 8 million off welfare

In a radio address the following day, Clinton said he was "pleased to announce that over the past eight years we've cut welfare case loads by more than 8 million people," citing it as one of the central accomplishments of his administration. In carrying out his campaign pledge to "end welfare as we know it," Clinton, together with the Republican majority in Congress, eliminated Aid to Families with Dependent Children, carrying through the first big assault on social security. The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act put a five-year cap on any individual receiving welfare, a cutoff millions will face in 2001. In 1999 up to 50 percent

# NAACP demands probe of voting rights abuses

BY GREG McCARTAN

The NAACP is pursuing its request that the U.S. Justice Department investigate numerous complaints of harassment of voters who are Black and of other oppressed nationalities, as well as other election irregularities leading up to and during the November 7 election in Florida.

NAACP leaders are upset that, despite verbal assurances by Clinton administration officials such as Attorney General Janet Reno that they would "review" the organization's request, the government has not responded seriously to its call for an investigation.

On December 12 NAACP president Kweisi Mfume led a march of 1,000 people from Miami Arena to Miami-Dade County Hall that called on authorities to "count every vote." He said the NAACP was launching an 18-month voter turnout campaign, aimed at the midterm elections. The civil rights group actively campaigned for Democratic Party candidates in the recent elections.

On November 16 the NAACP presented the Clinton administration's Justice Department with a transcript of a public hearing held five days earlier, in which U.S.-born Blacks, Haitian-Americans, and Latinos had exposed a range of obstacles, abuse, and other voting rights violations they faced in attempting to cast a ballot. Mfume said the national organization "was appalled to hear testimony of conduct that would clearly adversely impact the voting strength of Florida's minority voters and that could be reasonably considered an intentional effort to deny the franchise to voters of color."

## 'Justice Dept. does not seem interested'

The NAACP said the transcript helps to "establish a public record in its appeal to the Justice Department, which does not seem interested in establishing a record" of the voting rights violations.

Included in the reports and testimony were stories of intimidation, of the names of registered voters missing from voter rolls, of the closing of polls while people were still in line, and of first-time Haitian voters—many of them newly naturalized U.S. citizens—being prevented from getting help from Creole translators.

Mfume said that the NAACP has a "moral obligation [to] insist that all voters be allowed to cast an unfettered ballot and be free from intimidation and harassment as promised by the Voting Rights Act of 1965. We abhor the countless horror stories from minority voters across the country and are incensed that no one seems to care."

The NAACP announced on election day that it had deployed 200 supporters to investigate reports that individuals in "Michigan, Virginia, and Florida have received calls from persons claiming to be NAACP officials soliciting support for Republican candidate George W. Bush. In Florida, investigators are also checking into complaints of racial profiling of black males by police near polling sites." The NAACP informed the Justice Department of its concerns.

On November 6 the Justice Department issued a press release stating that it "will dispatch 317 federal observers to 18 counties in nine different states." These are Alabama, Arizona, California, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, and Utah. The press release encouraged reporting of "complaints about discriminatory voting practices in this election," and included hot-line numbers to call.

## Gov't considers whether to investigate

But it was not until December 3 that the Justice Department dispatched two representatives to Florida "to determine whether the agency should open an initial investigation," in the words of the *Miami Herald*. A spokesperson stressed that the department remained in the "information-gathering" stage and had not yet determined whether to conduct an investigation.

Florida NAACP president Adora Obi Nweze told the press, "Democracy is not at work. They aren't taking it seriously because they don't want to get involved politically." The Justice Department announcement came days after the civil rights organization reiterated its demands and began to prepare a federal lawsuit in the case.

In contrast to the marked lack of interest by the Clinton-Gore administration in pursuing the NAACP's complaints of voting rights violations against Blacks and other oppressed nationalities, the Gore campaign went all out in the final days of the election

of those denied payments had no jobs, and most of the rest were doing make-work jobs paying minimum wage with no benefits.

The change in administration is also taking place in the midst of affirmations of support for the death penalty by both Clinton and Bush. A total of 84 people were executed in the United States in 2000, slightly fewer than the 98 put to death in 1999.

Bush, the governor of Texas, recently presided over the execution of the 40th person in that state—the largest annual number on record in any U.S. state since 1862, when the U.S. Army executed 39 Native Americans following an uprising in Minnesota. Bush set seven executions to occur during November and December, with one a day from December 5 to 7.

In September the Justice Department released a report documenting that four-fifths of the 682 defendants who have faced capital charges in federal courts were Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans, and that a handful of U.S. attorneys are responsible for 40 percent of federal death penalty cases. Citing these figures, Clinton issued a temporary stay of execution for Juan Raul Garza, the first federal prisoner scheduled to be put to death in 37 years. While handing the decision on Garza to Bush, Clinton made clear his support for the death penalty, as he has since his 1992 campaign, when he signed the execution order for Ricky Ray Rector, a mentally retarded man.

## Ruling-class relief at settling of election

Bush's electoral victory was sealed at 10:00 p.m. on December 12 when the U.S. Supreme Court, in a 5-4 ruling, rejected a recount of ballots in several Florida counties ordered by the Florida Supreme Court. The selective hand recount would have opened the chances for Democratic candidate Albert Gore to reverse his defeat in the state, which Bush is credited with winning by a very narrow margin. The high court majority ruled the recount as ordered did

Continued on Page 8

campaign to court the support of right-wing Cuban-American businessmen in south Florida. Democratic vice-presidential contender Joseph Lieberman visited leaders of the Cuban American National Foundation in late October, making a point of visiting the grave of the group's deceased founder, Jorge Mas Canosa, in Little Havana to pay his respects for the counterrevolutionary opponent of the Cuban revolution.

In the months leading up to the election, the NAACP conducted a voter registration and get-out-the-vote effort. More than 900,000 Blacks voted in Florida November 7, a 65 percent increase from the 1996 election, according to the *Washington Times*. This included a large number of Haitians, many of whom were recently naturalized citizens voting in their first presidential elections. About 8,000 Haitians are registered as voters in Palm Beach County alone.

Julian Bond, NAACP national chairman, responded to a *New York Times* question on "how President-elect Bush can bridge the gap between African-Americans and his party" by urging the new administration to "immediately acknowledge the well-documented charges of minority voter suppression in Florida and elsewhere, investigate them, and pursue civil or criminal action where appropriate."

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is slated to begin hearings in Tallahassee January 11 to review complaints of voting irregularities and other reports of intimidation, limited access to polling places, and other unconstitutional obstacles placed in the way of Blacks, Haitians, and others in the state.

Another aspect of the disenfranchisement of working people that has drawn attention is the legislation denying voting rights to people convicted of felonies, including those who have already served out their sentences. In Florida, more than 30 percent of all Black men are permanently barred from voting because of felony convictions on their records. As a result of similar laws in a growing number of states, some 4.2 million U.S. citizens cannot vote.

In June, the Philadelphia NAACP filed a lawsuit in a U.S. district court challenging a state law that prevents people with felony convictions from voting for five years after they serve their sentences.



# Volunteers advance project to streamline

## Ninety join year-end international effort in New York; Reprint Project won

Continued from front page

transferring lists of Pathfinder's customers—libraries and bookstores across the United States and in other countries—to the new system; as well as an up-to-date inventory of the 700-plus Pathfinder titles that are either paperback books, hard-bound books for libraries, or pamphlets.

In addition to listing the correct title of each book along with the number of them in stock, volunteers are entering the title's author, price, International Standard Book Number, and all the open records such as invoices due from bookstores and other customers, and money owed to vendors.

### New system a big advance

The new system will help simplify and improve the capacities of Pathfinder's accounting program, saving time and money by making it possible for more than one person in the offices where Pathfinder Press is housed to enter data at the same time. This is an improvement over the old software program, which could only be accessed from a single computer station, one computer at a time. Five outdated computers will be eliminated by the end of the project.

The volunteers are working in pairs, with one person reading data from a printout and the other entering new information. Then the first person proof-reads the data before submitting it. This method ensures a high rate of accuracy.

"The volunteers are highly motivated, so they learn fast," said Ilona Gersh, a volunteer who is a laid-off auto parts worker from Detroit. "Those who learn at 9:30 in the morning are often training others at 10:30," said Gersh.

After each segment of data entry is completed, the volunteers do a final proofread of the new data. "The teams of volunteers are working in a disciplined way and with enthusiasm, and as a result their rates are quite good," said Gersh, "and we get new people every day."

A few of the volunteers are seeing the project through from beginning to end. Others are taking off work or taking advantage of holiday shutdowns to come in for a few days. Many volunteers from the New York City area are coming in on their days off or for a three-hour stint in the morning or in the evening before or after their work shift.

Mindy Brudno, a rail worker from Albany, volunteered on her two days off.

Many of the volunteers from Pathfinder's printshop are taking part in the effort after their workday ends or before it begins.

Natalie Tremblay, 18, a student from Montreal, has been on the project from the start. "I really like meeting people in the socialist movement from different cities," she said. "And the work is great because you are doing it because you want to, you know it's important, and you learn from each other."

garment worker from St. Louis. "I was impressed at how many individuals send in catalog orders for Pathfinder books, and the geographical spread of the bookstore accounts," she said.

### 60 copies of 'Capitalism's World Disorder' ordered for college class

"Having the volunteers here from other cities is a boost to socialists in New York," said Ved Dookhun, organizer of the SWP

to workers and farmers at an expanded number of bookstores, libraries, and other small stores that carry books.

A good example of this came December 20, when Pathfinder's business office received a classroom order for 60 copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*, by Jack Barnes. This order was placed by an eastern Pennsylvania college, a result of the efforts by supporters from Allentown and Pittsburgh to expand sales.

On December 16, the English-language version of the pamphlet *Pathfinder was Born With the October Revolution* by Mary-Alice Waters came off the printing presses in time to be on display at a tamale dinner and party for volunteers and others, held in conjunction with the project and also a meeting here of the Socialist Workers Party National Committee.

The Spanish-language version of the pamphlet, *Pathfinder nació con la Revolución de Octubre*, was issued in November in time to be taken to the Guadalajara International Book Fair in Mexico, which 350,000 people attended. At that book fair, 570 Pathfinder books and pamphlets, a big majority in Spanish, were sold by a team of nine volunteers from around the United States.

### Books readied for Havana Book Fair

Two new Pathfinder books are being readied in time for the February 2-10 Havana International Book Fair. This event, now annual, is attended by tens of thousands of Cubans, and attracts others from various countries in the Americas and Europe. The first Pathfinder run of the Spanish-language version of *Making History*, which contains interviews with four generals of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba, will be off the presses in time for the Havana fair. That book was a collaborative effort between Pathfinder and Editora Política in Cuba, which published a limited edition in Spanish last year. That printing rapidly sold out.

Now, members of the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution have requested 300 copies of this title to be made available in municipal libraries throughout Cuba. The association is made up of politically active combatants encompassing several generations of experiences—from Cuba's revolutionary war in the late 1950s,



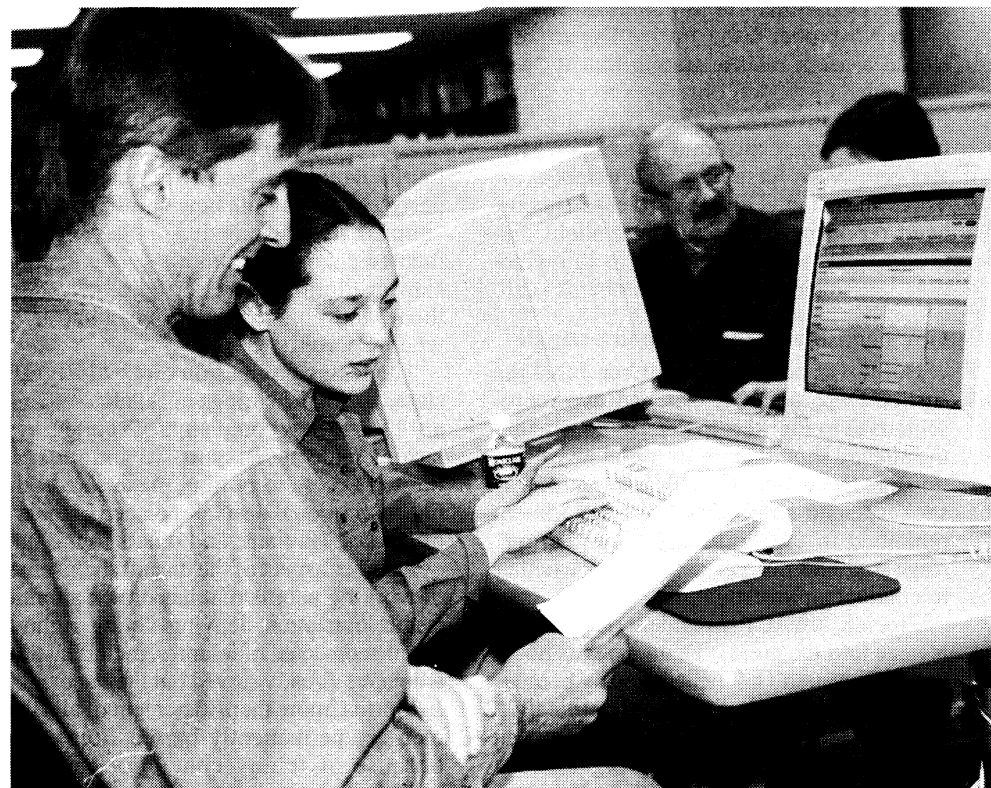
Militant/Jacob Perasso

Reading *Militant* at a display of Pathfinder books and pamphlets during recent World Federation of Democratic Youth meeting in New Delhi, India, where delegates prepared for international youth festival to be held in Algeria in August 2001.

Omari Musa, a socialist worker from Pittsburgh, said this was the first such volunteer project he had joined in a number of years. "I'm enjoying the camaraderie of working together to accomplish an important goal and see the bigger picture of where our efforts on the sales of Pathfinder books are headed," he said.

"It's interesting how many accounts Pathfinder has," said Alyson Kennedy, a

branch in Upper Manhattan and a volunteer in Pathfinder's printshop. "Volunteers from France and Quebec came to our class on Lenin's pamphlet *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*," he said. "And they also joined us selling books and periodicals from street tables in Upper Man-



Militant photos by Hilda Cuzco

Volunteers from across the United States and from Australia, Canada, France, Iceland, and New Zealand participated in the December 14-24 Pathfinder project. They entered data from outmoded accounting and spreadsheet program into Internet-based software, integrated into Pathfinder's computer network.



hattan last Sunday, after they had finished work on the project for the day."

The Pathfinder project is a key part of a series of advances being made by the publishing house and its supporters.

A recently launched effort is under way to increase sales of Pathfinder books city by city. This can lead over the next several months to Pathfinder titles being available

which led to the overthrow of the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship, to international combat missions in Angola and elsewhere in the world in the 1970s and '80s.

Also being prepared in time for the Havana book fair is *Fertile Ground: Che Guevara and Bolivia*. This new book is a firsthand account by Bolivian revolutionary Rodolfo Saldaña of his experiences in



# Pathfinder production

## Workers close in on goal to digitize books

...lping to organize support in the capital of Bolivia for the 1966-67 guerrilla campaign led in that South American country by revolutionary leader Ernesto Che

ing to requests by the NAACP to probe voting rights violations of Blacks, including recently naturalized U.S. citizens from Haiti, on election day in Florida, after work-

called cultural war, in which "the damage to society by divorce" will more and more be a rallying call of rightists.

Party leader Mary-Alice Waters reported on steps supporters of the communist movement are taking to expand sales of Pathfinder titles to bookstore and libraries. Supporters will organize this sales effort and keep the records of what is accomplished, she said, but this will require leadership attention and concerted work on the part of SWP branches.

Waters underscored Pathfinder's publishing priorities over the next couple of months and the important opportunities that exist for collaboration with publishing houses in Cuba on these and other new titles.

Jack Willey reported to the party leadership on the work being carried out by the party's branch organizing committees. These small units have been established in several cities over the past two years, said Willey, to concentrate on the openings that exist to be part of the resistance to the employers' attacks on meat packers, textile workers, garment workers, and coal miners, and to allow socialist

workers to integrate themselves more deeply in the struggles of working farmers. Willey emphasized the interest and openness among vanguard workers involved in these struggles to revolutionary and communist literature, especially since the end of the retreat of the working class that lasted for much of the 1990s.



Militant/Patrick O'Neill

**Volunteers meet to discuss previous day's progress and plan coming day's work at Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists hall in the New York Garment District. The hall, in the midst of buildings housing dozens of garment shops, is used as a center to distribute Pathfinder titles and socialist periodicals.**

Guevara. Guevara was killed by U.S.-backed Bolivian troops.

Saldña details why Bolivia was ripe for revolutionary struggle in the late 1960s, his experiences and the lessons learned working in the tin mines and helping recruit workers to the Bolivian Communist Party (PCB); how he and some other members of the PCB were won to backing Guevara's revolutionary effort; the political support they received from Cuba's revolutionary leadership, and the deadly obstacle the PCB leadership posed to successfully carrying out the guerrilla campaign.

### Reprint volunteers near goal

Pathfinder Reprint Project volunteers will format and proofread both of these new titles—part of their newly expanded responsibility for the production of Pathfinder books and pamphlets. In July the reprint volunteers took a goal of completing 30 books by year's end, which they are closing in on.

The more than 200 supporters of Pathfinder around the world involved in this project are also driving to complete in electronic form, on compact disc, seven more titles by the end of December. They organize their production and workflow on an Internet database that allows a volunteer to work on the project as easily in London or Auckland, New Zealand, as in Houston or Chicago.

The volunteer workers in Pathfinder's printshop are organizing blocks of time dedicated exclusively to Pathfinder book production on the shop's presses and in its finishing department so that the completed, digitized books are rapidly put back in print.

Simultaneous with the opening of this volunteer project, the Socialist Workers Party National Committee met in New York December 16-18. The party leadership heard a report by SWP national secretary Jack Barnes and discussed the roots and implications for the working class of the 35-day intensely factional dispute between the big-business Republican and Democratic parties that arose as a result of the unusually close presidential election. This conflict ended when the U.S. Supreme Court halted a recount of ballots in selected Florida counties and issued a ruling that resulted in George W. Bush being declared the winner of the 2000 presidential election, thus averting an extension of the factional warfare over the disputed election to the U.S. Congress.

SWP leader Barnes noted that the Democratic Party White House of the Clinton-Gore administration and its Justice Department have shown little interest in respond-



Militant/Carole Lesnick

**Members of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees rally in early 2000 in support of their union at RCR Classic Design in Los Angeles. Volunteers' labor in the Pathfinder project contributes to broader effort to increase access by workers and farmers to revolutionary books.**



Militant/Janice Prescott

**Pathfinder booth at book fair in Guadalajara, Mexico, held November 25-December 3. Pathfinder's titles on revolutionary politics drew interest of thousands at this major cultural event in Latin America. Some 570 books and pamphlets were sold, and valuable contacts were made with booksellers and librarians from Mexico, the United States, and other countries.**



# Bush will continue bipartisan antilabor course

Continued from Page 5

not meet “minimal constitutional standards” to be accomplished by the deadline—two hours later—after which the state’s electors would be open to a challenge in Congress.

When the November 7 vote total in Florida turned out to be close enough to require an automatic machine recount, the Gore camp began looking for a way to steal the election from Bush. Gore asked for hand recounts in three heavily Democratic counties where chances were best that the procedure would tip the scales in his favor. Out of 67 counties in Florida, Gore asked for manual recounts only in Broward, Palm Beach, Volusia, and Miami-Dade, where he won the vote.

Although casting his quest as a fight to get every vote counted, Gore never requested a full recount in the state. This was an issue raised by judges from the Leon County Circuit Court to the Florida Supreme Court to the U.S. Supreme Court. Bush attorney Benjamin Ginsberg scored his opponents, saying, “Going statewide, they’re [Gore’s campaign] really not sure they can win. Their overall mistake is being so hypocritical about what they are asking for.”

The Supreme Court ruled just two hours before the midnight deadline for certification of each state’s delegation to the Electoral College. If the court had not ruled, Florida’s 25 electors could have been challenged in Congress, where there was sure to be a public fight on the floor of the U.S. Congress and a factionally tinged decision by that body on the outcome of the presidential elections—something broad wings of the ruling class were relieved did not get posed.

This relief with the move by the Supreme Court to end the contest was palpable the following day in ruling circles. Leading figures in the Democratic Party urged Gore to end his legal challenges to the Florida vote. Edward Rendell, general chairman of the Democratic National Committee, urged Gore to “act now and concede.” Democrat Robert Torricelli of New Jersey urged “the people [to] accept the finality of the judgment. I think George Bush comes to the presidency in very difficult circumstances and it is incumbent on all of us to put the bitterness behind us and help him to succeed.”

Rep. Charles Rangel, Democrat from New York, urged the “American people,” according to the *New York Times*, “to rally around Mr. Bush for the good of the country.” In his concession speech Gore also urged “all Americans” to back the president-elect, as did Clinton.

## Antiwoman assault

For 35 days this legal maneuvering—with Gore fighting to get a narrow recount carried out and Bush opposing Gore’s moves—was the framework of the post-election battle. But the legal challenges were accompanied by a heated factional struggle, one that included demagogic attacks by liberals and Gore loyalists as well as right-wing

forces.

The coarse tone of this factionalism manifested itself in the personal, antiwoman assault unleashed against Florida secretary of state Katherine Harris, who was targeted by liberals when she moved to certify Bush as the winner of the state’s electoral vote. This included feature columns in the *Washington Post*, including one by journalist Robin Givhan, who wrote about Harris at a press conference that she “applied her makeup with a trowel.... Her lips were overdrawn with berry-red lipstick.... Her skin had been plastered and powdered to the texture of pre-war walls in need of a skim coat. And her eyes...bore the telltale homogenous spikes of false eyelashes.”

Facing protests over the article, the *Post* ran a defense of Givhan by columnist Geneva Overholser that added to the crude attack. “Harris was not born with a bulbous nose,” Overholser wrote. “She made cosmetics choices that are way out of the norm. If you watched her on TV and didn’t think so, the women in your life look different from the women in mine.” She said she was “delighted in this vigorous commentary by a woman [Givhan] with a strong point of view.”

Caryl Rivers, a professor of journalism at Boston University, decried this attack. She wrote in *Women’s e-news* that “a Democratic operative labeled her [Harris] Cruella de Vil, the villainess of ‘102 Dalmatians,’ and the term got repeated everywhere. The *Boston Globe* said maybe she was planning to unwind at a drag bar, because of all her makeup, and the *Boston Herald* called her a painted lady.” A *Herald* columnist wrote of the 43-year-old secretary of state, “There seemed to be something humiliating, sad, desperate and embarrassing about Harris yesterday, a woman of a certain age trying too hard to hang on.”

## Rightists seize on ‘military’ ballot issue

Right-wing forces seized on two questions. One portrayed the recount of absentee ballots as an attempt to target for disqualification votes from U.S. military personnel abroad. Some also asserted that the Democratic contender was trying to increase the number of absentee “ballots from Israel,” an unsubstantiated charge. This dovetailed with undercurrents of anti-Semitism from rightists and their appeal to layers in the military, especially the officer corps.

In a November 24 column in the *Wall Street Journal*, “Now we must fight for our country,” conservative commentator Peggy

Noonan wrote that during the recount of ballots, “there is no evidence that the absentee ballots of felons have been challenged. But the absentee ballots of members of the military were challenged. Many were thrown out.” Noonan claimed that the “Democratic army of lawyers and operatives marches into the counting room armed with a five-page memo from a Democratic lawyer, instructing them on how to disenfranchise military voters.”

Noonan quoted from what she says was e-mail received from “a Republican” in the counting room. The Democrats “succeeded in a number of cases denying the vote to these fine Men and Women. This was a deliberate all-out assault on the Armed Forces solely to sustain the Draft Dodger [Clinton] and his flunky.”

The right-wing Drudge Report, an Internet news sheet produced by Matt Drudge, carried a feature November 25 titled, “Surprise: Broward ‘finds’ 500 more ballots, many from Israel.” The article referred to is a news piece on the recounts, explaining that Broward county officials announced they “located 500 untabulated overseas ballots,” although there was no mention of Israel in the article. Broward is a heavily Democratic county with a substantial Jewish population.

## Coarsening of tone

The 35 days following the November 7 election marked the sharpest and most prolonged outbreak of the factional infighting within the wealthy ruling class since events two years ago leading up to and through the impeachment trial of William Clinton. One aspect of this is the coarsening of civil tone and public discourse and debate among capitalist politicians of all parties. Other aspects include demagogic attacks, especially by rightists, targeting the rights of immigrants and the gains that Blacks and women have won in their struggles for social and political rights.

These political battles and the coarsening of debate are a registration of the irresolvable divisions within bourgeois politics over how best to prepare for the social explosions and class battles that more and more of the U.S. rulers fear will come. The wealthy capitalists know that the economic expansion cannot go on forever and are already encountering resistance by wide layers of workers and farmers to employer and government assaults. They know they cannot make much more progress easily against unions, wages, and hard-won rights of work-

ing people, women, and oppressed nationalities; they will increasingly have to take on the strikes and struggles, and even larger class battles down the road.

Contrary to their triumphalist crowing at the opening of the 1990s, the U.S. rulers have discovered they must still confront a working class in the workers states of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe that will not willingly embrace oppression and speedup. Nor have they forced acceptance from peoples of the semicolonial countries of national oppression and the devastating social consequences of the world capitalist crisis.

As the changeover in administrations proceeds apace, the NAACP continues to demand the U.S. Justice Department headed by Attorney General Janet Reno look into widespread harassment of Blacks, Latinos, and immigrants seeking to cast their vote November 7 in Florida and several other states.

So far, the Clinton administration has failed to respond to the incidents and requests by the civil rights organization, except for the Justice Department’s announcement it will send two people to Florida to see if an investigation is warranted. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights has indicated it plans to investigate evidence of denial of voting rights in the election (see accompanying article on page 5).

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Jack Barnes

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# Illinois Machinists resist union busting

BY MARTHA RESSLER  
AND JAY RESSLER

EAST ALTON, Illinois—After two weeks, the strike by 2,700 members of International Association of Machinists (IAM) Local 660 against Olin Corp. remains strong. Some 450 members of four craft unions are honoring the picket lines. Only about 20 union members have crossed the picket lines.

Olin has hired strikebreakers through its public temporary hiring center in Eastgate Plaza here. The unionists have opened a strike headquarters at the plaza, just a few doors down from the hiring center.

Olin manufactures brass coils and sheets for a variety of uses, including for Winchester shell casings. One of the three struck plants is Olin's Winchester plant.

For 15 years a company-sanctioned fund initiated by workers, called the Winchester Club, has sponsored an annual Christmas party for the workers' children.

Workers contribute to the fund to help pay for the party. This year the company canceled the party. But a nearby Edwardsville law firm, Hopkins and Goldenberg, which like many businesses in the area has been aiding the strikers, stepped in and provided a skating party, gifts, fruit, and a Santa for the 1,200 children of the strikers.

At a visit to the picket line, *Militant* reporters spoke with two of the 500 newer workers at Olin, who are presently working at 85 percent of full wages. A major issue in the strike is to get rid of the two-tier wage setup.

A worker at the brass mill with one year and seven months in the plant said forced

overtime is also a big issue for the workers with less seniority. "It is not unusual for me to be forced over for three doubles in one week," he said. The worker, who asked that his name not be used, said he thought the company had tried to sway newer workers to vote for the contract with a \$1,000 signing bonus. "But I voted to strike anyway. If they had gotten away with their proposal on health insurance, they would have gotten away with anything," he said.

The strikers plan a rally on Saturday, December 23 at 2:00 p.m. in Vanpreter Park in East Alton. Several thousand people are expected to attend, according to union officials.

*Martha Ressler is a sewing machine operator and member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees in St. Louis. Jay Ressler is a meat packer.*



Militant/Jay Ressler

Strikers and family members on picket line against Olin in East Alton, Illinois.

## Philadelphia firefighters: honor the contract

BY JOHN P. CRYSDALE

PHILADELPHIA—December 16 marked the 12th day that 37-year-old paramedic Mary Kohler has been sitting in front of the door to the office of Philadelphia mayor John Street at City Hall. Kohler is among the 2,400 members of the Philadelphia Fire Fighters' Union who are demanding the city honor their union agreement.

Like hundreds of others in the union, Kohler has contracted hepatitis C through her work. This summer, an arbitration panel

awarded the union a contract that included a 7 percent raise, improved benefits, and reimbursements for sick leaves for workers with hepatitis C.

"The contract put us back to where we were in 1992. It wasn't wonderful, but we thought it was fair," Kohler told the *Militant*.

Hepatitis C is common among firefighters and paramedics, who come in contact with human blood, sometimes on a daily basis. Kohler said she has delivered

more than 50 babies, for example.

The city asked a judge to throw out the new contract after it was approved by an arbitration panel. The city claims that the panel overstepped its bounds and that the contract didn't comply with the city's budget.

**Sit-in in front of mayor's office**

With the full support of her fellow firefighters and paramedics, Kohler, whose health is declining daily, has stationed herself in front of the mayor's office refusing to leave until he meets with her. Other firefighters and paramedics have joined her or brought her gifts and food. On the second night 100 firefighters stood outside when the security police wouldn't permit them to check on her.

The union is going to court to force the city to enact the decision of the arbitration panel. Firefighters are not permitted to strike due to federal legislation, but the workers are fighting the city's decision. Some 500 people rallied at City Hall December 13 to show their support for the firefighters' struggle.

Many workers came from other unions, including nurses, service workers, and teachers. The firefighters' struggle against the city falls in the backdrop of a recent strike by 21,000 Philadelphia teachers and school workers two months ago.

"If the mayor can do this to us, he can do it to anyone going into binding arbitration," Kohler said. "This is the largest form of union-busting this city has seen." Tom O'Drain, vice president of the Philadelphia Fire Fighters' Union, added that Kohler isn't doing this for herself but for all the members of this union.

*John P. Crysdale is a garment worker in Philadelphia*

## Goodyear workers end strike, ratify contract

BY LEA SHERMAN

HOUSTON—After more than 60 days on the picket line here, striking workers at Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. ratified a new contract December 12. On October 10, some 350 members of Local 347 of the International Union of Operating Engineers walked out of this chemical plant, which makes emulsion rubber, the raw material used in making tires and other rubber products.

They turned down a company proposal that would have contracted out 150 jobs. Under the new contract the company will still contract out the jobs, but through attrition rather than layoffs.

"We took a big hit," said James Baca, 48, a process control chemist in the lab, who has worked at Goodyear for 12 years and was a member of the union's negotiating

committee. We're still going to lose the jobs, but workers will not be just kicked out."

The original proposal would have laid off union workers making around \$20 an hour, and immediately replaced them with contract workers making \$10 to \$12 an hour.

The new contract includes wage cuts of 25 percent—about \$5 an hour—for what the company considers "nonessential" workers, such as cleaners and warehouse workers, and a cut of about \$6.50 an hour for bailers, who package the plant's products.

Workers will now pay for a portion of their health insurance, which was previously provided by the company. Pensions were improved, with extra incentives for workers 55 and older to retire. Workers also receive a \$500 signing bonus.

Chris Hegman, 46, who has worked at the

plant for almost 18 years, went back for a meeting inside the plant and noted the strained and dour atmosphere. He explained that the "company forced a strike" and attempted a "death blow" to the union.

Sixty-nine workers crossed the picket line during the strike. The workforce of 600 includes maintenance workers and others, organized by several different unions under different contracts who continued working during the strike. Many replacement workers were brought in from the nonunion Goodyear chemical plant in Beaumont about 100 miles away.

Regarding the contract, Hegman simply said, "We didn't think we could get anything better." Still, he thinks those who struck are stronger now. "We stayed out almost 70 days," Hegman said. "We fought real hard."

## Seattle newspaper strikers rally to win support



Militant/Lisa Ahlberg

Striking newspaper workers rally in Seattle for a better contract. Nearly 1,000 members of the Pacific Northwest Newspaper Guild walked off the job November 21.

BY JEFF HAMILL

SEATTLE—A rally of 300 newspaper strikers and their supporters took place December 16 at Seattle's Steinbrueck Park. Almost 1,000 members of the Pacific Northwest Newspaper Guild have been on strike since November 21 at the *Seattle Times* and *Post-Intelligencer*.

"Our true family is here, those who understand what it means to stand together," said one of the strikers.

Members of several unions were present. Melissa Green, an officer of the Communication Workers of America, read a statement from her union. Among those identified by their signs were members of Teamsters Local 174, International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) Local 19, Office and Professional Employees Union Local 8, International Union of Operating Engineers Local 286, and the Inland Boatmen's Union.

There was also a banner from the Seattle Community Colleges Federation of Teachers Local 1789.

Speakers announced that the ILWU donated \$5,000 to the Newspaper Guild strike fund. The plumbers and pipefitters union pledged another \$5,000.

After the rally strikers marched to Westlake Center, where they handed out flyers explaining the strike and asking people to cancel their subscriptions to the two struck newspapers.

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# Join in defense of voting rights

Working people and all defenders of democratic rights have a stake in supporting and joining the fight being led by the NAACP to defend voting rights. The civil rights organization began appealing to the Clinton administration's Justice Department November 7 to respond to widespread incidents of intimidation and interference of the ability of Black people, both U.S.-born and Haitian-American, to cast a ballot on election day.

Despite this appeal and a November 11 hearing attended by hundreds, the foot-dragging Justice Department waited until December 3 to dispatch two representatives to Florida, not to investigate, but to determine whether an investigation will be carried out. This is in face of testimony at the hearing about numerous cases of police harassment of Blacks on their way to or from polling places—racist remarks, instances of individuals being delayed or prevented from voting by officials who claimed no registration information existed, cases where translation and assistance was unavailable in Creole for Haitians, and areas where polling places were shut down while people were still standing in line. The NAACP says it has 486 separate reports of these and other problems faced by U.S.-born Blacks, Haitians, and other members of oppressed nationalities, mostly working people.

This double outrage—denial of voting rights and the lack of a serious response by the federal government—should be protested by the unions, civil rights organizations, and all working people.

Winning and extending the right to vote has been a hard-fought struggle by working people since the founding of the United States. Struggles in this century have included those by women's rights supporters and the battles of the civil rights movement. The fight for universal suffrage has strengthened the working class. It has undercut the ability of the propertied ruling class to exclude whole sections of the population from the right to be free citizens, able to vote and run for office and practice politics in their own right—both in the electoral arena and in broader society.

One conquest of the civil rights battles is the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965, which places the responsibility on the government to insure "no person acting under color of law shall fail or refuse to permit any person to vote who is entitled to vote...or willfully fail or refuse to tabulate, count, and report such person's vote." The act

prohibited any "practice or procedure" to be used "to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color." It banned poll taxes, upheld the right of non-English speakers to be able to vote, and provided for stiff penalties for anyone who attempts to "intimidate, threaten, or coerce...any person for voting or attempting to vote."

The act gives the federal government broad powers, where examiners are present, to address violations of the act. Any allegations of problems with being able to vote, reported to an examiner within 48 hours, can be the basis for the attorney general to get a court order to allow any individual to recast their vote and require the vote be included in the total.

Millions of African-Americans have firsthand experience with racist practices in regards to voting. Not only the hundreds of examples in Florida, but the need to dispatch federal observers to nine other states are testimony to the ongoing denial of voting rights across the country. The abuses reported in Florida are standard operating procedure everywhere for Democratic and Republican politicians at every level of government.

Racism permeates every institution in the capitalist U.S.A., as will be the case until workers and farmers organize a revolutionary struggle to take power out of the hands of the wealthy ruling minority.

The violations of rights reported in Florida, and the federal government's lack of response to the NAACP's request for an investigation, are only part of the efforts to disenfranchise working people. In addition, a growing number of states deny all voting rights for people convicted of felony offenses—including those who have already served out their sentences—disenfranchising millions of workers and farmers. Some 4.2 million U.S. citizens cannot vote because of these laws. In Florida and Alabama, for example, 31 percent of all Black men are permanently barred from voting because of felony convictions on their records.

Joining in the call for a Justice Department investigation and prosecution of any individual found guilty of violating voting rights is crucial in defending democratic rights and hard-won gains. It will deal a blow to racist abuse and put working people in a stronger position to defend constitutional rights for all.

# Government relief for farmers

Small farmers across the country—from raisin farmers in California to hog farmers in the Midwest—are facing the deepest crisis in decades. Labor should join in their demand for immediate federal government relief.

Squeezed on one end by low prices received for their crops and on the other end by rising costs of production, working farmers are forced to take out high-interest loans to continue working the land. This situation drives them deeper into the hole, perpetuating their status as debt slaves to the wealthy rulers, who own the agricultural monopolies, railroads, factories, and banks.

Despite a record production year, California raisin farmers wound up in worse shape, as the raisin-packing companies seek to pay them half of what they received for last year's crop. The situation facing the raisin farmers is a graphic example of the irrationality of the capitalist economic system. Thousands of farmers are driven out of business every year. Food production under the profit-making system has nothing to do with feeding people or alleviating hunger—it is organized only to line the pockets of the agriculture barons, at the expense of working people in the cities and the countryside.

The root cause of the conditions facing working farmers is capitalism. In this, workers and farmers face a common problem and a common exploiter, making labor a necessary ally of farmers in the fight against debt slavery and the profit squeeze of big business.

The labor movement needs to back farmers' struggles for adequate prices to meet their production costs and pro-

vide a decent living. They should demand an end to all foreclosures on farmers' land, and call on the government to provide cheap credit to working farmers. Committees of workers and farmers chosen by farm organizations, unions, and consumer groups should be created that could oversee prices and the profits of the capitalist raisin companies.

The labor movement should also demand that the government pay unemployment compensation at union-scale wages to farm workers who have not been paid. They should receive health care benefits as well.

These measures are key to forging an alliance of workers and farmers that can challenge the prerogatives of the ruling billionaire minority. Through such a course of struggle, with the necessary leadership, working people in the city and countryside can build a revolutionary movement of millions that will replace the rule of the wealthy owners of capital with their own government and abolish the rents and mortgages system.

A living example of this kind of government is Cuba, where working people threw off the exploiting classes by carrying out a revolution that took power in 1959. Since then, the workers and farmers government in Cuba has guaranteed the right of the producers to the land they work. Not one farmer has been foreclosed on or driven off the land since the triumph of the Cuban revolution. And in revolutionizing their own society, farmers in Cuba have joined with working people worldwide in the fight for a society fit for humanity.

# Pennsylvania miners

Continued from front page

the company handed out a letter from Murray to every miner and sent copies to their homes. It claimed the rejection was "a deliberate effort by a small group of individuals" and alleged the agreement was "sabotaged." Statements like this only added to the anger of the miners, who knew exactly what they were doing in rejecting the contract.

The letter by Murray ended with an ultimatum: "Because we suspect mischief in this vote, I am giving the hourly employees of Maple Creek...until midnight on Monday, December 18 to approve" the agreement. The letter added that if the agreement was not approved then, Maple Creek would be unable to borrow the \$13.2 million needed for the New Century mine and would immediately begin "phasing down operations."

Frank Wydo, president of UMW Local 1248, said, "That's a dead issue. There will be no revote on the proposal, the vote was taken and the membership has spoken." In interviews with miners, the overwhelming majority feel they are underpaid and that the contract should fall under the national BCOA contract. They also don't like being dictated to by the owner of the mine.

The contract rejection sent a message to the Maple Creek bosses that the union is more unified and stronger than they thought.

Miners at Maple Creek struck for three days in October 1999. As a result of the strike, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the company and the union, which included an extension of the contract and gave the union coverage for the New Century mine.

Murray is ranked as the largest independent individual coal operator in the country. Besides Maple Creek, he owns longwall mines in Ohio and Illinois and other mining operations in Pennsylvania and Kentucky. In the last two years he has reported spending \$197 million on improving the Galatia mine in Illinois. Murray is also taking steps to open a mine in Utah and another mine in Ohio, and has been inspecting mines owned by American Electric Power in Ohio that are on the market.

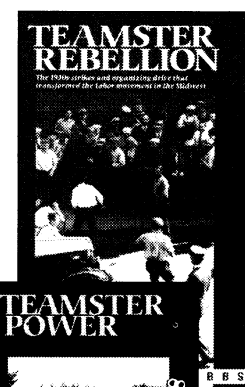
*Tony Lane is a member of United Mine Workers of America Local 1248.*

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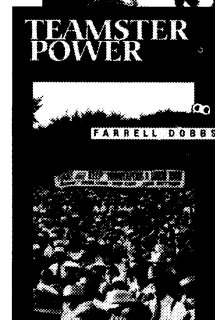
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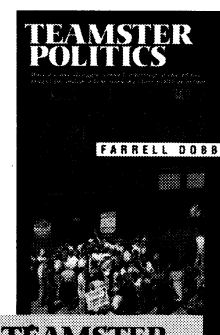


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## NOTE ON PUBLISHING SCHEDULE

The *Militant* will not publish the last week of December as part of its normal end-of-year schedule. The next issue will be published January 4.



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BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

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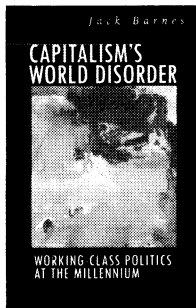
workers, and youth attracted toward them, don't primarily need interpreters or intermediaries. They need the words themselves, presented accurately and completely, translated honestly and clearly.

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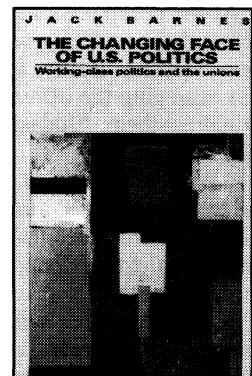
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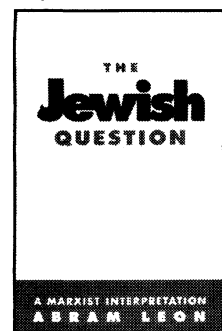
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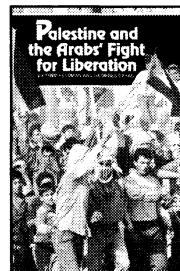
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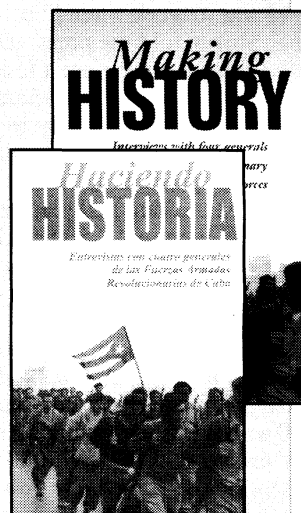
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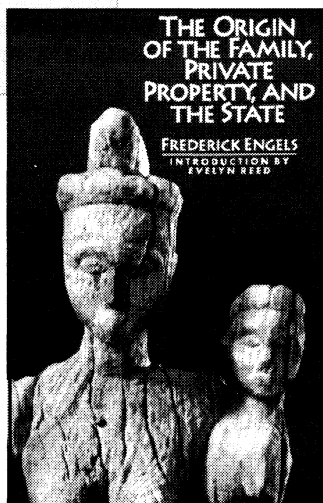
Cuban generals tell of campaigns in which they took part over four decades: from the Sierra Maestra in Cuba to internationalist missions in Africa and elsewhere. Includes accounts of the defeat of the Washington-backed counterrevolutionary forces at the Bay of Pigs in April 1961. The 40th anniversary of that historic victory for the revolution and its defenders will be celebrated over the coming year. **\$12.00** (Normally \$15.95)



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The sharp rise in the households headed by "single women" in the imperialist world outside Japan, and the implications of this process for the character of coming political and social conflicts. These effects are registered in the sharpening battle over the social wage, the fight for women's liberation, and on many fronts of the so-called cultural war.

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EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

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## Auto workers in UK protest GM layoffs

BY PAT SHAW  
AND CAROL BALL

LONDON—On two occasions December 13, groups of several hundred angry auto workers at the Vauxhall auto plant in Luton, north of London, walked off the job to protest the decision by General Motors to close the plant. Workers from each shift marched to the company's headquarters.

Vauxhall is the British subsidiary of General Motors, which is carrying out a wave of job cuts at its plants across Europe and North America.

At the company's headquarters workers demanded a meeting with Vauxhall chairman Nicholas Reilly, forcing their way in and besieging the offices until he came out to address them. "Judas!" "Liar!" "Resign!" they chanted.

"We should fight to save our jobs," said Felix, a worker at Vauxhall, speaking outside the plant gate. "We work relentlessly hard and then this happens two weeks before Christmas."

Alex Senville, who has worked at Vauxhall for 12 years, said, "We've given a lot. They guaranteed us that we'd save our jobs and they've fooled us." Senville was referring to previous votes by the workforce to accept "flexible" working hours and take a pay cut.

"We only found out they were closing the factory down by listening to it on the radio—I was in work when I heard it," Christopher Stirrup told the press. By announcing the closure just before a four-week seasonal shutdown, the company hoped it would minimize joint action by workers.

Throughout the following day, workers stopped the production line to protest the job cuts. At the Vauxhall plant in Ellesmere Port, near Liverpool, 1,500 workers walked off the job to show support for workers at the Luton plant, as did workers at a warehouse in Luton.

Workers at the General Motors plant in Antwerp, Belgium, also walked out to protest the job cuts, which will total more than 6,000 across Europe, including in Germany.

At least 2,000 of the 3,000 workers at Vauxhall will lose their jobs, initially through voluntary redundancies (layoffs) at the Luton and Ellesmere Port plants and at the IBC truck plant, a joint venture between GM and Isuzu.

The Vauxhall plant at Luton is the biggest factory in the town and the closure, scheduled for early 2002, will have a devastating impact locally. The Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) estimates that up to 8,000 jobs will be lost in the surrounding area, including in the auto parts industry.

In its cost-cutting efforts to gain a competitive edge over rival auto companies, GM is planning to cut jobs at its U.S. and Euro-

pean plants amounting to 10 percent of its total workforce. In the United States the company will phase out its Oldsmobile division.

Vauxhall blamed the closure on "a response to changing European market conditions and overcapacity in the car market." Although the company's car sales in Europe are running at a record 17 million units, this amount is much less than its factory capacity, which is 23–24 million units.

### Drive to cut costs at workers' expense

Overcapacity—that is, capacity to make more products than employers can sell at what they deem to be a sufficient profit—is a result of the declining rate of capitalist profit. In an attempt to increase the rate of return on their investment, each individual capitalist strives to increase productivity and competes to win new markets. The resulting overall increase in supply, however, depresses prices and, with it, profits. It also means too many companies chase too few buyers, and each individual company's market share goes down, not up, leaving it with the capacity to make more than it can sell at a profit.

Registrations of new Vauxhall cars fell by 6.7 percent in November, and the company was forced to cut prices on its Vectra model, made at the Luton plant, by an average of 9.2 percent to counter price cuts by its rival Ford. The European Union auto market as a whole contracted by 15.9 percent in July.

This vicious circle, and its impact on workers, has been evident in the auto industry for some years now, as manufacturers drive to cut capacity and increase pro-

ductivity. In November 1998, the chairman of Ford predicted that the world motor industry would shrink to six manufacturers, as a "global dogfight" forced the existing 40 manufacturers to "rationalize."

### GM attacks working conditions

GM has indicated it will attack the working conditions of auto workers at its remaining plants. In a statement released December 12, the company declared that "lean manufacturing implementation will be accelerated at European plants, to obtain the productivity levels currently demonstrated at the benchmark Eisenach facility." GM is still reviewing its European capacity and other decisions could yet be taken.

This message was echoed by bosses at the IBC plant, who announced that the company would need to "review working practices" after the announcement of the closure of the neighboring Vauxhall plant in Luton. GM's share price rose following the announcement of the job cuts.

Company chairman Reilly has tried to pin some of the blame on a recent consumer campaign to reduce car prices, saying the price cuts have undermined the company's profitability.

The British government indicated that it would not attempt to prevent the company from closing the Luton plant. "Our key aim will be to find new job opportunities to replace those being lost over the next year," declared Trade and Industry Secretary Stephen Byers. TGWU general secretary William Morris likened the government response to "sticking plaster around a broken arm."

Local Labour member of Parliament Kelvin Hopkins asserted that the high value of the pound was a reason for the planned closure. GM boss Richard Wagoner, however, played down attempts to blame the Luton closure on the British government's decision not to join the European single currency, the euro.

Union leaders expressed shock at the decision to close the Luton plant and called on the company to reverse the decision. Morris stated, "The company has shown a cynical disregard for the agreements signed with their workforce and the government. Only three months ago they confirmed commitment to continue production at Luton."

In response to union officials' charges of "betrayal" for planning to shut down the plant, the company chairman stated, "The agreement said that would be the intention unless there were major changes in the car industry. There have been huge changes in the industry." As one *Financial Times* commentator put it, "In the motor industry, there is no such thing as a secure future."

The Vauxhall announcement follows the decision by Ford to end production at its Dagenham assembly plant in March 2002 and the threatened closure in April 2001 of the Rover auto plant in Longbridge, Birmingham. At the Rover plant, following a campaign by workers and unions culminating in a march of 80,000 through Birmingham, the largest union demonstration in this country in nearly a decade, workers won some time as the government intervened to set up a deal for the buyout of the plant after the German owners, BMW, had threatened to close it.

## New Zealand sawmill workers occupy plant

BY TERRY COGGAN

TOKOROA, New Zealand—"We're looking after our safety on the job," union picket captain David Leslie told *Militant* reporters December 13 outside Carter Holt Harvey's sawmill here in this central North Island forestry town.

Sixty workers, members of the New Zealand Amalgamated Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union, are occupying the plant and maintaining a picket line on the state highway outside, refusing any longer to work the unsafe shift pattern imposed by the company.

Leslie explained that previously the mill had worked three eight-hour shifts, but that in August the company cancelled the day shift and required its employees to work alternate afternoon and night shifts. "They say they need the days to carry out major upgrades, but these were finished months ago. And anyway, carrying out maintenance has never been a problem in the past," he said.

On the morning of December 11 the workers themselves instituted a day shift, and worked for an hour before the company shut down the machines.

Workers then began a round-the-clock occupation of the mill, following a three-shift roster. "We're here and willing to start work at anytime, if the company agrees to real negotiations about future shifts," said Leslie.

Workers on rotating shifts at the mill point out that they need the week on day shift to let their bodies regain a natural rhythm, and to reestablish social contact with family and friends. They cite two accidents as evidence of increased levels of fatigue since the company imposed the two-shift roster.

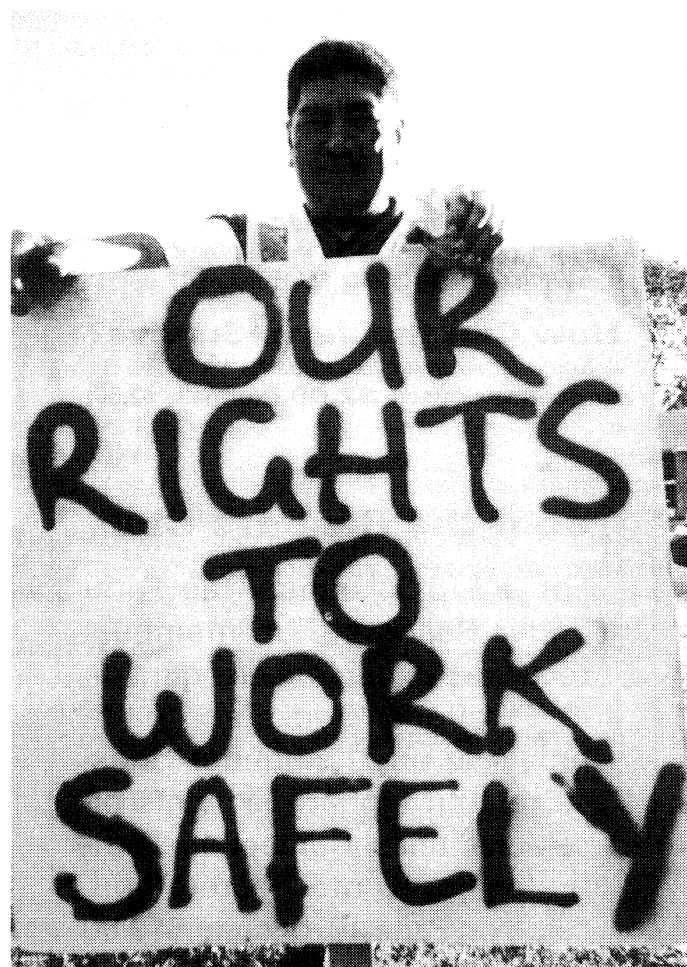
Hotio Ngata, who is married to a mill worker, said "The shifts led to stresses and strains in a lot of families, but all the wives and partners have found it within themselves to come forward and support the workers." Ngata also gave examples of support in the town for the stand taken by the mill workers. "The local marae [Maori community centre] has sent mattresses, and several local businesses have donated food and other supplies."

Workers from other factories in the area,

especially from the 1000-strong workforce at the nearby Kinleith pulp and paper mill, also owned by Carter Holt Harvey, have visited the occupation to offer their support. Victoria Toraro, one of six women production workers at the mill, told the *Militant*, "The company is using the day shift thing as a weapon against us to get what they want." She explained that earlier this year the company made 60 workers at the plant redundant, despite union actions like marches in Tokoroa and a picket at Carter Holt Harvey's head office in Auckland protesting the job losses. Since then the company has been trying to introduce a system of two 10-hour shifts. The first shift would start at 4:30 in the morning, and the second at 5:00 in the evening, with a "window" in the middle of the day for maintenance. The union has rejected the company's proposals. "That's not much better than what we're doing now," Tarano said.

Tony, one of the picketing workers, pointed out, "The company is using our side as a test. If they can get the new conditions through here, they will run them through the rest of their sites, including Kinleith."

Carter Holt Harvey is also facing resistance from workers on another front. In late November and early December, Waterfront Workers Union members and supporters staged pickets to defend their jobs and union rights in the South Island ports of Bluff and Port Chalmers after the company contracted a new outfit—Mainland Stevedoring—to



Militant/Terry Coggan

Workers picket outside sawmill they occupied in Tokoroa, New Zealand, to protest unsafe shifts.

load ships with logs. Mainland employs casual labor, and has just registered a company union.

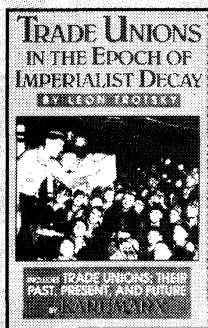
Mainland's director, Greg Dickson, touts his company as "New Zealand-owned" in contrast to "overseas-owned" competitors. According to the *National Business Review*, he claims to offer "alternative services to port users [and] exporters...when wage pressure [is] building significantly on the waterfront."

Terry Coggan is a member of the National Distribution Union in Auckland.

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