

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

'Militant' supporters to mark paper's 75th anniversary

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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## UMWA union locals in West back locked-out Utah miners

BY ANNE CARROLL

HUNTINGTON, Utah—United Mine Workers locals in the western coalfields have been getting behind the battle for a union by workers at the Co-op mine, located in Huntington Canyon just outside this town. They have been visiting the picket line and bringing solidarity.

On September 22, 75 miners at the Co-op underground coal mine were locked out by the company. That day, the company suspended a worker with intent to discharge for refusing to sign a disciplinary slip. This was the third attempt to suspend a worker in several weeks.

The miners halted production and gathered at the bosses' office and tried for several hours to negotiate with the company to get the worker's job back. The company refused, called the local sheriff,

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## Calero defense committee wraps up successful fight against deportation

BY JOHN STUDER

NEW YORK—Following the successful completion of his international "Fight to Win! ¡Sí se puede!" tour, Róger Calero, *Perspectiva Mundial* associate editor and *Militant* staff writer, and the leaders of the Róger Calero Defense Committee have taken steps to wrap up the work of the defense committee.

The files containing the record of the successful fight to prevent the deportation of Róger Calero have been organized for shipment to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin in Madison. When offered the files, Helmut Knies, head of Collection Development at the society, expressed great interest in receiving them.

Last December, Calero was seized at Houston Intercontinental Airport by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) when he returned to the country from a reporting assignment to Cuba and Mexico. The government's immigration police—*la migra*—threw Calero into detention and began "exclusion" proceedings

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# Worker and peasant revolt sweeps Bolivia

Having forced out president, indigenous majority demands relief from crisis

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

"We are really happy with what we've done so far. But we must keep fighting. It's not over," Jorge Khana, a peasant, told reporters October 20 at a rally of tens of thousands of working people in La Paz, Bolivia's capital. Three days earlier, massive popular mobilizations had forced the resignation of President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada.

Having forced out one president, workers and peasants across Bolivia—the large majority of whom are Aymara or Quechua Indians—remain poised to take further action to defend their interests. "We'll give the new government time to do things," said Gertrudes Abarado, a teacher who had helped organize street blockades in El Alto, an industrial suburb of La Paz. He was referring to vice-president Carlos Mesa, who assumed the presidency after Sánchez de Lozada fled to the United States. "If it doesn't, well, we'll explode again."

The protests by working people are driven by the intolerable conditions of life faced by the majority, and the widening gap between them and a handful of privileged families who are accumulating wealth through bru-

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Reuters/Carlos Barria

Bolivian workers and peasants march October 14 in El Alto, an industrial suburb of La Paz, against government of President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, who resigned three days later. "Goni, murderer," says sign, using hated president's nickname.

## Cuban doctors in Venezuela operate free neighborhood clinics

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS  
AND CAMILO CATALÁN

CARACAS, Venezuela—"You can find the Cuban doctors at the clinic until noon, but then they continue visiting people in the neighborhood, house-to-house. It doesn't matter what time it is, they are always there when you need them," said María Elena León. "What the Cuban doctors have done, Venezuelan doctors have never come close to. I had a terrible lower back pain from December 16 to June 19. I lost 18 kilos [40 pounds]. No one could tell me what was wrong. I finally went to a Cuban doctor who diagnosed the problem and now, after the treatment I got for free, I have recovered."

León, a resident of the January 23 neighborhood, a working-class district on the hills overlooking downtown Caracas,

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Granma/Ricardo López Hevia

Nilda Collazo, doctor from Las Tunas, Cuba, examines Norge, the son of Jesús Menéndez (right), a peasant, at Los Portones, in July. This is a rural community in Duaca municipality, on the Corora mountains in state of Lara, northwestern Venezuela. Collazo is one of 14 Cuban doctors volunteering there, as part of the Barrio Adentro (Inside the Neighborhood) plan. Under this program—which has come under fire from the Venezuelan bourgeoisie—more than 2,000 Cuban doctors now offer their services and medicine for free in areas where working people have had little or no access to health care.

## Contribution from Belgium supporters puts 'Militant' camera fund over \$2,500

"*Militant* supporters in Belgium have contributed a total of \$450 to the photo equipment fund," wrote Eric Wils from Antwerp, Belgium, October 18. "The fact that the new camera is already being used by the reporters in Venezuela proved to be a good reason to contribute." This and other donations put the camera fund at \$2,569.

In September the *Militant's* brand-new digital camera and three lenses were stolen at an event in New York—a \$4,000 loss. A fund appeal was launched to help replace this equipment. In response to events in Venezuela, however, funds were borrowed to buy new equipment right away. Your contribution is needed now (see address on page 2).

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# Brewery workers in Quebec sign pact, end 3-month strike

BY SÉBASTIEN DESAUTELS  
AND SYLVIE CHARBIN

LASALLE, Quebec—After a three-month strike, unionists at the Labatt brewery here approved a new agreement September 17 by a 72 percent margin. The workers belong to the Labatt Brewery Workers Union, which is affiliated to the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN).

Two weeks earlier, the unionists had voted to reject the company’s “final offer” after the bosses attempted to split the union by offering a much improved pension plan for the 380 workers who will be eligible to retire in the next four years. Labatt employs some 950 workers at its plant here in Lasalle, a Montreal suburb.

At the onset of the strike, the most contentious question centered on the company’s efforts to do away with a clause in the old contract that virtually prevented it from contracting out production, warehouse, and delivery jobs to nonunion outside agencies. Under the new agreement, the company can hire from outside agencies, but only after all negotiated recall rights have expired.

“We protected most of our union members, but not the jobs themselves,” said Pierre Rousse, a forklift operator who has worked at Labatt for 16 years. “The door is now open for contracting out and I’m worried about what the company is going to do over the life of the contract.”

One of the main demands of the strike was for access to full-time jobs for nearly 150 temporary workers. In a press release issued on the first day of the strike, Robert Daneau, the union president, explained: “These temporary workers have been here for 10 to 15 years, with no seniority and no benefits. Yet they do the same jobs for half the paycheck.” The new contract will allow 104 of these temporary workers to get permanent jobs within the next three years. Workers hired after 1998 will have recall rights only for one year in case of layoffs.

Union members also won wage in-

creases totaling 14 percent over the life of the seven-year contract.

From the outset of the strike, Labatt hired Best, a private security firm, to insure the free circulation of delivery trucks to help break the strike. Best agents often harassed strikers, sometimes cutting them off when they attempted to follow these trucks to identify drivers and their destinations. A court injunction limited the number of pickets permitted at the gate.

The union, for its part, registered a formal complaint against Labatt for multiple violations of Quebec’s “antiscab” law. The complaint points to the use of managers to do an array of beer production and delivery jobs. And although the law allows for the company to liquidate stocks, weeks after the strike began government inspectors pointed to the fact that levels of beer stocked in tanks were higher, not lower than at the beginning of the strike, an indication that beer was being trucked in from other plants to meet high-season demands.

Labatt is owned by the Belgium-based company Interbrew, the world’s third largest in the industry. Workers at the Lasalle



Unionists at Labatt lead rally outside the brewery on June 5, less than two weeks before launching strike. Sign in middle reads, “No contracting out.”

brewery, the biggest in Canada, had been without a union contract since December 31. Workers had decided to leave the Teamsters and the new union obtained its accreditation with the CSN on February 28.

“In some ways, we went back with less than what we had when we went out,” said Rousse. “But on the up side, we’ve seen our boss’s real face. Like all bosses, Labatt wants to get rid of relatively well-paid union jobs. We held them back a little on that.”

A few days before the contract vote at Labatt, the recently elected Liberal gov-

ernment of Quebec premier Jean Charest announced its intention to broaden the use of contracting-out in both the public and private sectors. In an opening shot against the unions, Charest is taking aim at Article 45 of the Quebec Labor Code, which stipulates that when a company is bought out or moves to another location, the union maintains its standing at the company for a year.

*Normand Faubert, vice-president of the Labatt Brewery Workers Union, contributed to this article.*

## Workers and peasants revolt sweeps Bolivia

Continued from front page

betal class exploitation. The catalyst for the popular revolt was the government’s plan to begin exporting natural gas to the United States. It was widely seen among workers and peasants as a project to further plunder Bolivia’s natural wealth, fatten Wall Street coffers, and deepen the impoverishment of the majority.

“The peasant unions and workers no longer want to watch Bolivia from the mountains,” wrote columnist and former government minister Manfredo Kempff in *La Razón*, a Bolivian newspaper, on October 19. “They want to watch it from the balcony of the government palace.”

Germán Jiménez, a teacher of Quechua origin, expressed similar sentiments to re-

porters during the final La Paz protest before Sánchez de Lozada resigned. He had hitched, walked, and bicycled hundreds of miles to get to the capital from his home city of Potosí. “Before, we let other people speak for us,” he said. “Now, we say the original nations are ready to rule our own affairs. We are ready to impose our own democracy.”

Celebrating the president’s downfall, demonstrators marched into the center of La Paz from El Alto, a center of the earlier protests, on October 20. There they were addressed by Mesa, who had been sworn in as the new president the previous day. Mesa pleaded with the crowd to “give me time, give me space.”

There are strong indications, however, that the Bolivian toilers have run out of patience and that the new administration is taking only cosmetic measures that are likely to inflame their wrath once again.

Mesa has promised to organize a referendum on the government’s earlier plan to begin exporting natural gas to the United States, which has now been suspended. Sánchez de Lozada had made a similar promise in his final days, seeking to head off the movement for his resignation.

The new president is an historian and journalist who was part of the government the rebellion has been directed against. Mesa’s new cabinet includes a number of academics and economists who, like him, style themselves “independents,” in an attempt to fool the working masses into believing that they are not tied to the hated capitalist parties that have ruled the country

for decades.

Like its predecessors, Mesa’s cabinet is made up overwhelmingly of whites, in a country where about 60 percent of the population is indigenous, speaking mostly Aymara or Quechua as their first language. Of the two exceptions, one is the cosmetic addition of an “Ethnic Affairs Ministry,” headed by Justo Seoane, an Indian from eastern Bolivia. The ruling parties and big business have been monopolized by wealthy white and mestizo (mixed) families.

The October 20 rally was also addressed by Felipe Quispe, leader of the United Confederation of Workers and Peasants of Bolivia (CSUTCB)—the union of Aymara peasants and farm workers. Quispe and Evo Morales, the leader of the coca farmers federation, are the two most prominent figures in the opposition. They are both members of Congress.

If Mesa fulfills his promises, Quispe told the rally, “He will be our friend.” If he doesn’t, he is “a friend of the gringos and will be our enemy.”

Quispe has said that the CSUTCB, which spearheaded many of the mobilizations over the past month, will take down roadblocks its members have set up around Lake Titicaca on the border with Peru but will reconsider the move in 90 days if its demands are not met. Quispe has called for the cancellation of the gas projects, and an end to the eradication of coca crops—a campaign that has devastated peasants’ livelihoods.

Barricades in El Alto that had choked

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## THE MILITANT

### Toilers rebel throughout Latin America

*The rebellion by Bolivian workers and peasants is the latest demonstration of the explosive social conditions in Latin America, as imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation bear down on working people. ‘Militant’ coverage of these struggles includes firsthand reports from Venezuela. Don’t miss an issue!*



October 16 protest in La Paz, Bolivia.

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# UMWA locals back locked-out Utah miners

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and ordered the miners off the property. The miners were told that everyone was fired and not allowed back to work.

For several weeks before the lockout, the miners had been in contact with the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) and were having meetings to organize a union. They were responding to unsafe job conditions, low pay, lack of pension and health-care benefits, and abusive treatment by the bosses.

The company began threatening and suspending workers in an attempt to intimidate them. At one point the company threatened to bring in the immigration police. Most of the miners are originally from Sinaloa state in west-central Mexico.

Lou Shelley, president of UMWA Local 1769, led a delegation of the local's officers to the picket line on October 16. The 250 members of this local work at a large underground coal mine, Deer Creek, just a few miles from the Co-op mine. They asked the workers on the picket line what kind of food and other assistance was needed because they were going to begin a food drive. A few hours after leaving, they came back with food and sodas for the pickets. They reported to the Co-op miners that Local 1769 members were making contributions by payroll deductions out of their paychecks.

Later that day, six other Local 1769 members visited the picket line. They told the picketing workers that they had just come from their local union meeting, where this fight had been one of the top items on their agenda.

The miners said the local had voted to contribute \$500 and was organizing local members to come to the picket line on a regular basis. Two members of the Local 1769 delegation were Mexican-born workers and were able to help translate the lively discussion that took place among the miners.

## 'We've got to do something about this'

That same week, another worker, Ernie Herrera, a former union miner who had worked for 23 years at the nearby Hiawatha mine until it closed, came to the picket line on his own. He got out of his car and exclaimed, "I'm proud of you guys. Everyone knows the Kingstons have been abusing the people at this mine for years. They think they're above the law. We've got to do something about this. And now you have the will to stand up!"

This visible support from other workers has been important in strengthening the fight, as the company tries to step up the pressure. Picketing began on October 3. For more than a week, workers reported, no coal trucks were coming out of the mine. On the afternoon of October 17, pickets reported that coal trucks had started going in and out of the mine. The trucks were from a company in Huntington, Utah.

Two workers from the union-organizing battle at the Co-op mine were invited to speak at a meeting of UMWA Local 9959, where they received a donation of \$1,000. This local is made up of 52 workers at the local landfill near the town of East Carbon, Utah. Members of the local also said they would collect winter jackets for the pickets and organize a delegation to visit the picket line.

## 'Immigrant Miners Take on Kingstons'

The union fight here was one of the front-page stories in the Sunday, October 12, issue of the *Salt Lake Tribune*. "Immigrant Miners Take on the Kingstons" was the headline of a lengthy article that interviewed several union supporters. "While having three young children at home made it difficult for [Celso] Panduro to stop working, he says he had to 'because I couldn't close my eyes anymore. The day we united against the owners, it was because we had hit a wall. Every time we had asked for better working conditions they told us to keep our heads down and keep working or we could be out the door,'" the paper reported.

Miners report that the UMWA sent a letter to Co-op asking the company to begin negotiations to get the miners

back to work, and that on October 15 the union received a letter signed by Carl Kingston, one of the owners. It said there was already a "union" at the mine and the workers were "represented." Kingston demanded that the UMWA "cease and desist from unlawful acts" or they would be sued.

At the mine there is a company union. All the officers are mine bosses, workers there reported. There are no "union" meetings or elections of "union" officers.

The miners have also begun distributing a fact sheet on their fight at the other mine portals. They said most of the mines they plan to leaflet in Utah are nonunion. There are only two UMWA-organized mines in the state.

They also are beginning to visit local stores and businesses to get contributions and support. A manager of a local convenience store agreed to put a donation box on the counter. She told the miners, "I support you guys 100 percent. You can leave the box there all week."

## UMWA statement backs Co-op miners

**The following press release was issued by the United Mine Workers of America on Oct. 6, 2003. It was titled "United Mine Workers of America Supports Struggle of Coal Miners Unjustly Fired from Utah's Co-Op Mine for Fighting to Join the Union" (see accompanying news article on this struggle).**



At the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) Special Convention last week in Las Vegas, UMWA International President Cecil Roberts pledged the union will assist the coal miners—mostly from Mexico—who were fired from C.W. Mining Company's Bear Canyon mine (known also as Co-Op mine) in Huntington, Utah. Seventy-four miners' jobs were terminated after they protested the firing of one of their leaders for seeking union representation.

Seven of the fired Co-Op miners joined Roberts at the convention hall podium where their spokesman, Jesus H. Salazar Jr., described their plight—earning between \$5.25 and \$7 per hour with "no health insurance and no benefits in an unsafe, underground mine."

"We stand with these workers in solidarity as they fight for justice and dignity," Roberts



Militant/Tanya Ross

**Locked-out miner at C.W. Mining (Co-op) in Huntington, Utah, picks up canned vegetables donated by unionists and others to aid the union-organizing drive.**

told more than 500 convention delegates at the closing session Sept. 30. "We call on all American workers to support their struggle because we believe 'an injury to one is an injury to all.'"

"We are here looking for the UMWA's indispensable support because we were unjustly fired for defending our rights and protesting the mine's unsafe working conditions," Salazar said. "We are determined to fight until this mine becomes UMWA territory and we can put an end to the abuse and extreme level of exploitation we have endured." Currently, 75 percent of the mine's 83 hourly workers have signed a representation petition with the UMWA.

"It was heartwarming to see our union delegates' overwhelming support of the Co-Op miners as they struggle for workers' rights and fairness," said UMWA District 22 International Executive Board Member Mike Dalpiaz of Price, Utah. "We'll be with them from the beginning to the end of their fight."

The Co-Op workers struck the mine on Sept. 22 after management—controlled by the Kingston family—had suspended one of their co-workers, UMWA supporter William Estrada, for refusing to sign a disciplinary warning the week before. It was the com-

pany's third attempt to victimize a UMWA supporter in recent weeks, according to the Co-Op miners.

"We all walked out in defense of our co-worker," explained Salazar, who has worked at the Co-Op mine for four years. "The company refused to cooperate with us and fired us. We have been locked out because of our pro-union activity. Now, we're fighting back, and we want to be part of the UMWA. We are at a critical point in our fight. The company expects us to come back begging for our jobs."

"We won't go back to work until we get everybody back to work," said fired Co-Op miner Alyson Kennedy of Price, Utah. "We won't stop fighting until we get union representation." Describing the mine's "bad working environment," she noted there is no bathroom where female miners can change clothes.

"We demand that our workers be reinstated with back pay, and we demand fair wages," said the Co-Op delegation to the UMWA convention. "We are tired of the abuses, lies and trickery of the fake company-led 'union' that Co-Op has maintained for years in the workplace. Our plea to the UMWA is to help us defend our dignity and our families."

## Bolivia: worker-peasant revolt continues

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traffic on roads into the city and to the airport during the earlier mobilizations have been lifted. At the same time, reporters have noted that "flags of protest" are still flying from workers' homes.

### Movement to force resignation

In the last few weeks leading up to Sánchez de Lozada's October 17 resignation and flight to the United States, La Paz—a city of 2 million—had been virtually shut down by the largest mobilizations of working people in decades. Strikes and demonstrations had spread to Potosí, Oruro, Cochabamba and other major cities.

The protests were called by the main peasant groups and the Bolivian Workers Central Organization (COB). By mid-October, protests were widespread in this South American country of 8.7 million people, bringing growing numbers into the streets of other major cities. Strikes involved industrial miners and other industrial workers, as well as teachers and even doctors. In Cochabamba, 48,000 transport workers went on strike. "Nothing opened in the city," reported *Clarín* of Argentina.

In Cochabamba miners defended themselves against police attack using dynamite, rocks, and slingshots. Workers from the country's tin mines, who have a long tradition of militant unionism and political rebellion, put their stamp on the mobilizations in La Paz.

In the final week before the president's resignation, troops fatally shot at least 80 protesters. The killings only steeled the determination of working people to get rid of Sánchez de Lozada.

Demonstrators carried the bodies of the

dead through El Alto, chanting, "murderers, murderers," and "Goni must go." Only one soldier was among the dead, reported the local media. He was executed by his commanding officer after refusing to open fire on demonstrators.

The demonstrations and strikes were fueled by anger at the increasingly intolerable social conditions, the devastation of peasants' livelihoods by the U.S.-backed destruction of coca crops, and the drive to sell off the country's nationalized enterprises and natural resources to the highest bidder—to the benefit of imperialist and Bolivian capitalists.

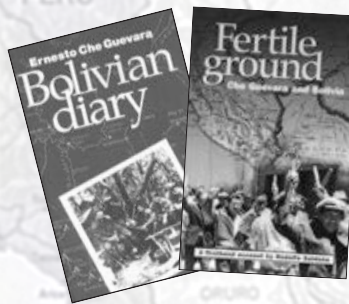
Washington's crude intervention in Bolivian politics on the side of the hated president further inflamed the protests. U.S.

State Department spokesperson Richard Boucher said October 14 that the U.S. government "will not tolerate any interruption of constitutional order." The U.S. embassy had issued a statement the previous day saying, "We express our full support for this government... [which] must not be replaced by one brought in by force or violent delinquency." It said, "Sticks and stones are not a form of peaceful protest"—as army troops were shooting down demonstrators in the street.

By October 15 up to 100,000 people were in the streets of La Paz demanding the president's ouster. "Columns of students, Indians and miners brandishing sticks of dynamite threaded past street barricades, shouting,

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### Further reading on struggle against imperialism in Bolivia



#### Fertile Ground: Che Guevara and Bolivia

A firsthand account by Rodolfo Saldaña, one of the Bolivians who joined ranks with Ernesto Che Guevara to forge a revolutionary movement of workers, peasants, and young people to overturn the military dictatorship in Bolivia and open the road to socialist revolution in South America. Saldaña talks about the battles of the tin miners, peasants, and indigenous peoples of his country that created "fertile ground" for Guevara's revolutionary course. \$9.95

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# ‘Cuba: socialist revolution has made resistance to U.S. imperialism possible’

## Pathfinder president Mary-Alice Waters speaks at Rutgers University event

BY PATRICK O’NEILL

NEWARK, New Jersey—“It is only because Cuban working people carried out a socialist revolution that they have been able to stand down Washington for more than four decades and not only survive, but continue to advance,” said Mary-Alice Waters at an October 1 meeting at Rutgers University. She was speaking in response to a member of the audience who had asked about Cuba’s ability to withstand the pressures from Washington.

The exchange was part of a lively give-and-take following a presentation by Waters, the president of Pathfinder Press, on “U.S.-Cuba Relations: Why Washington’s Cold War Doesn’t End.”

The initiative to invite Waters to speak as part of the Student Government Association (SGA) sponsored lecture series had come from students who in July had participated in the Cuba-U.S. Youth Exchange trip to the Caribbean island, four of whom go to school at Rutgers. In preparation for that trip, a number had bought Pathfinder titles on the Cuban Revolution.

SGA president Ikramud Wadud opened the meeting and introduced Waters, explaining that she is the editor of more than a dozen Pathfinder titles on Cuba. Attended by some 50 people, the meeting attracted both Rutgers students and others from the area who had heard about the event held at the Paul Robeson Student Center. It was chaired by Ryan-Katherine Sisco, who participated in the Exchange trip to Cuba.

“To understand the Cuban Revolution,” Waters emphasized, “you always have to place it within the world.” You need to start with the invasion and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan; with the millions in Africa who face the ravages of AIDS but are denied access to medicine by the profit-driven drug monopolies; with the smoldering volcano of struggles erupting in Latin America; with the spreading depression conditions and attacks on the rights and standard of living of working people in the United States.

“Most important,” Waters said, “is the increased resistance to these real consequences of capitalist exploitation both here and internationally. This is the world in which Cuba’s example shows a different road forward for humanity.”

Why does Washington target Cuba with such ferocity? “Because it is a deep-going popular revolution,” Waters said. “The example of working people taking power into their own hands, transforming themselves in the process, as well as Cuba’s record of internationalist solidarity, are a threat to U.S. imperialist domination of the Americas and worldwide.”

Waters’s talk described the social measures initiated by the new revolutionary government from 1959 on as Cuban workers and farmers mobilized in their millions to carry out a literacy drive and land reform, to provide health care for all, and to implement other far-reaching measures. In the process they discovered they couldn’t advance without breaking the chains of imperialist economic control; without challenging the property rights and social privileges of the Cuban capitalists and foreign owners; without nationalizing land, factories, and mines to thwart the economic sabotage orchestrated by Washington; without workers and farmers taking greater and greater control of every aspect of their workplaces, lives, and future. In short, without making a socialist revolution.

“This is what Washington seeks to crush, needs to crush, because of its example,” she said.

Talking about that example in the world today, Waters pointed to the impact of the world capitalist economic crisis on Cuba over the past decade as the island faced the loss of preferential trade agreements and aid from the former Soviet Union. Confronting this crisis, working people in Cuba have emerged stronger and more self-confident, and leaders of new generations have taken on growing responsibilities, Waters explained. She pointed to the hundreds of thousands of young people who have been drawn into a massive campaign to expand educational, medical, and cultural opportu-

nities in Cuba today, as well as the thousands of internationalist volunteers who selflessly have taken, and are taking medical care and literacy training around the world, from the nations of Africa to the poorest urban and rural areas of Venezuela.

Waters also pointed to the example of the five Cubans living in the United States who have been framed by the U.S. government on charges of conspiracy to commit espionage and sentenced to draconian terms in U.S. prisons. “Our Cuban brothers are in prison,” she said, “because they were successfully collecting information, and exposing plans by ultraright-wing paramilitary groups in Miami to attack targets in Cuba. For that they themselves became special targets of the U.S. rulers. For that, they deserve our respect and solidarity.”

### Who dictates U.S. policy toward Cuba?

The presentation sparked a variety of questions and comments from the audience. In response to a question about the influence of counterrevolutionary Cuban-American groups in the United States, Waters replied, “Cubans in Florida and New Jersey don’t dictate anything about U.S. foreign policy.” They are the puppets, not the puppeteers, although the U.S. rulers try to make you believe the opposite. Through every Democratic and Republican administration since 1959, she said, Washington’s hostility to Cuba has been the most consistent aspect of U.S. foreign policy.

“Did the fact that the Cuban leadership paid more attention to the ideological aspects of the struggle for socialism than the leaders of the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic, and other countries of Eastern Europe, help it survive, in spite of the imperialist onslaught?” asked another.

The differences between the Cuban leadership and the leadership of the Soviet Union were not ideological, Waters replied—they represented different classes. “The strength



Militant photos by Patrick O’Neill

**Mary-Alice Waters (inset) listens as member of audience asks question**

of Cuba and its leadership is the strength of Cuba’s workers and farmers who made—and continue to make—the revolution,” she noted. “Cuba is not a tropical variant of Stalinism,” Waters added. “The Cuban Revolution is not something similar to what existed for decades in the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe. It’s the antithesis. There is no mass privileged bureaucratic caste dominating party and state that defends its own interests against those of workers and farmers in Cuba and around the world,” she explained. That is why the Cuban Revolution survived when the Stalinist regimes and parties of Eastern Europe and the USSR collapsed. Those who predicted Cuba would follow in their wake simply didn’t understand the Cuban Revolution.

One participant asked whether there could ever be a socialist revolution in the United States given the divisions among working people. “A revolution here is not only possible, it is necessary,” Waters replied. As long as the U.S. capitalist rulers remain in power, working people around the world will face a catastrophic future.

Workers and farmers can overcome the

divisions fostered by capitalism as they fight shoulder to shoulder, she said, pointing to the current fight by Utah coal miners—most of whom are Mexican-born—to organize a union. “Their example is bringing miners across the country together, not dividing them,” she noted, bringing workers and their allies in the West together in solidarity.

Is the U.S.-Cuba conflict rooted in the conflict between capitalism and socialism? asked another. Yes, Waters replied. The confrontation between Washington and Havana is a concretization of the two roads facing the toilers of the world—the barbarism offered by the capitalist system in its death agony, or the future of progress, development, and human solidarity that is only possible if working people take power as they did in Cuba and make a socialist revolution.

A number of people stayed after the program for more than an hour to continue the discussion informally. They pored over a display of Pathfinder literature, purchasing more than a dozen books and pamphlets on the Cuban Revolution as well as on broader U.S. and world politics.

## Calero defense committee wraps up victorious fight

**Continued from front page**  
against him.

The immigration cops cited, as grounds for deportation, the fact that Calero had been arrested in 1988—while a high school student in Los Angeles—on charges of selling an ounce of marijuana to an undercover cop posing as a fellow student. Threatened with a jail term, Calero copped a plea and received a suspended 60-day sentence, three years probation, and a \$50 fine.

Backed by his publications and his party, the Socialist Workers Party, Calero and others who came to his defense immediately launched a public campaign to support his right to live and work in the United States. These included supporters of the rights of immigrants and trade unions, and freedom of the press and political rights. They turned to the Political Rights Defense Fund for financial help to get started and appealed for messages and petitions to the INS urging deportation proceedings be halted.

After six months of expanding public attention and protest, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)—which took over direction of the government’s immigration police and prosecutors—decided to cut their losses and moved to drop the fight. On May 22, Immigration Judge William Strasser ordered the case ended, writing: “Reason for termination: Respondent is not deportable.”

Files containing the political, legal, and financial records of the defense fight have been prepared for shipment to the Historical Society in Wisconsin, where they will be accessible to anyone who wants to study them.

The files present a vivid picture of the defense fight and the political events that surrounded it: defense committee literature and mailings, letters from around the world urging the government to drop its deportation effort, videos of television programs and public rallies in support of Calero’s fight, key legal documents, and photographs, including of Calero in detention.

The files are introduced by an overview



**Above, Calero with Julieta Bolivar (left) and Elvira Arrellano (right), two workers also fighting deportation, at March 1 2003, meeting in Chicago. Inset, Calero at Houston immigration jail December 2002 with other workers locked up there.**



of the Calero defense fight, an index to the files, and a financial summary of the defense campaign.

### Campaign reflects workers’ struggles

“The successful fight to stop the deportation of *Perspectiva Mundial* associate editor Róger Calero,” the defense committee’s introduction begins, “flowed from opposition to the deepening attacks in the U.S. over the last decade against immigrant workers, the union movement and political rights, including the freedom of the press.” These attacks have led to resistance.

“Calero himself participated in a ground-breaking union organizing drive at Dakota Premium Foods in South St. Paul, Minnesota,” the report says. “Packinghouse workers at Dakota—immigrant

and native-born—came together to fight to bring United Food and Commercial Workers Union [UFCW] Local 789 into the plant. They won, and won a contract which put them in a better position to defend their wages and working conditions.”

These experiences led UFCW Local 789—its members and leaders—to take on a central role in organizing support for Calero. Bill Pearson, then president of the local, signed on as a national co-chair of the defense committee. The local organized one of the first public rallies for Calero on January 11 at the union hall. More than 100 packinghouse workers, other members of Local 789, and area unionists, students, and political activists gathered to hear Pearson and Calero explain the fight and its significance.

**Continued on Page 10**



# ‘Militant’ finds ready response in Utah mining towns

BY PATRICK O’NEILL

“Yesterday we knocked on doors in Or-angeville, Utah, showing people the *Mili-tant*,” said Anthony Dutrow on October 19. “In one house, every single person there wanted their own copy of the paper. They hadn’t seen it for more than 10 years.”

Dutrow had just finished a stint as part of a team of a half-dozen volunteers who are taking the *Militant*, *Perspectiva Mundial*, and Pathfinder books to mining towns and coal mine portals in western Colorado and Utah.

“In our first six days, starting Tuesday, October 14, the team sold eight *Militant* subscriptions and 74 single copies, along with six copies of *Perspectiva Mundial*,” Dutrow said. “On the weekend we split up and canvassed door-to-door at areas in or near Price, Utah, selling seven of those subscriptions in South Price, East

Carbon, Huntington, and Orangeville. We also sold at five mine portals, and set up sales tables at grocery stores and a local campus.”

Dutrow said socialists found keen inter-est in the firsthand reports and photos of the current United Mine Workers of America fight to organize the Co-op mine in Huntington. People in the area are also following the strikes by the transit and grocery workers in Los Angeles, he said. Volunteers on the team include Young Socialists who recently took part in the Socialist Workers Party gubernatorial campaign in California.

Another group of volunteers just com-pleted a weekend trip to northwestern Iowa, northeastern Nebraska, and southwestern Minnesota. A report of their accomplish-ments will appear in next week’s column. In getting to areas where the socialist press

is not often sold, such teams play an essential part in the eight-week inter-national campaign to sign up 1,350 subscribers—950 to the *Militant* and 400 to *Perspectiva Mundial*—and to sell 500 Pathfinder books to those who subscribe.

This week’s chart shows that overall the campaign has fallen a little further behind, putting a premium not just on special efforts like these teams, but



Militant/Dag Tirsén

Pathfinder booth at September 25– 28 book fair in Gothenburg, Sweden.

also on a steady, weekly rhythm of sales. Keeping the local and international goals in their sights, campaigners are organizing sales teams to factory gates and setting up literature tables in working-class districts and on university campuses. They are also responding to strikes and picket lines, as well as to protests like the planned October 25 march in Washington, D.C., against the U.S. occupation of Iraq.

### Wilberg mine disaster

“Orangeville is close to the Wilberg mine, where a fire in 1984 killed 27 min-ers,” Dutrow said. *Militant* reporters on the scene at the time won respect for accurately reporting the disaster and the UMWA’s ef-forts to uncover the truth about company liability. Union spokespeople criticized not only the mine owners for their disregard for safety, but also the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration, which turned a blind eye to the company’s violations.

The *Militant* has also covered the strike by workers at the Sterling industrial laun-dry in Washington, D.C., to organize a union. Lea Sherman reported October 19 that a leader of the UNITE union fight bought a *Perspectiva Mundial* subscription at a Militant Labor Forum at which she had

spoken about the organizing battle.

“We also sold a *Militant* subscription at a rally in solidarity with the Sterling work-ers outside a hotel that uses the laundry’s services,” Sherman said.

Sarah Katz, who is helping to organize the sales drive in Newark, New Jersey, said that campaigners have begun calling those who subscribed in the first week of the drive to make sure that each is receiving his or her weekly *Militant* copy. The work is yielding results. “One guy who had bought a subscription at a political meeting said he really likes it, and had decided to extend it,” Katz said.

From Houston, Jacquie Henderson wrote on October 18: “We met a lot of interest in Pathfinder books, the *Militant*, and *Perspectiva Mundial* at the October 11–12 Latino Book and Family Festival in Houston. The nine people who bought subscriptions—five to the *Militant* and four to *PM*—each bought at least one Pathfinder title. We sold 59 books and pamphlets!”

Henderson added: “There was also a lot of interest in the Socialist Workers Party campaign for mayor of Houston.” The can-didate is Anthony Dutrow, who later that week packed his bags and headed off to join the team in the Western coal fields.

## Success! SWP Party-Building Fund at 114%

BY ANGEL LARISCY

NEWARK, New Jersey—Supporters of the Socialist Workers Party-Building Fund scored a tremendous suc-cess in their three-month campaign. By the October 15 deadline they had sent in more than \$91,000—exceed-ing the national goal by \$11,000. In every area backers of the fund made or surpassed their local quotas—with more than a dozen raising their goal during the drive.

Over the past three months, hundreds of working people and youth responded generously to the effort to raise money to help finance the work of the SWP.

Key to the success of the fund drive were political events organized by fund supporters around the country for SWP leaders to speak on world politics: from the rising struggles of working people in Latin America, to the 50th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution and its lessons on the 30th anniversary of the military coup in Chile, to the fight for women’s rights.

In addition, socialist workers reached out to co-workers and unionists, students, and others for contributions. In Washington, D.C., for example, fund supporters who are members of the United Food and Com-mercial Workers won four co-workers to contribute to the fund.

Contributions came in up to the last min-ute in Pittsburgh and Atlanta. Sarah Harris, the fund organizer in Atlanta, reports that a large contribution was made at an October 17 Militant Labor Forum on the capitalist “justice” system.

The forum featured a panel of speakers including Angela Brown, a leader of the Youth Task Force. The group is organiz-ing to repeal Georgia Senate Bill 440. The legislation, which went into effect in 1994, allows the prosecution of children as young as 13 in adult courts, places them in adult prisons, and mandates a minimum 10-year sentence without parole for specified felo-nies. Also speaking were Asheerah Walker Williams, whose 15-year-old son was un-justly convicted under the legislation and is serving a 15-year sentence for voluntary manslaughter, and Arlene Rubinstein of the Socialist Workers Party.

After the formal part of the program, an auto worker initiated organizing a meeting for the Youth Task Force through his union

and on the spot decided to add \$100 cash to his earlier contribution to the Party-Building Fund.

Harris says that a week earlier an appeal was made at the Militant Labor Forum for contributions to the fund and two new regular forum-goers, both workers, also decided to pitch in.

The success of the fund drive demonstrates the inter-est socialist workers are finding among working people and youth in the socialist perspective on political devel-opments and the need to build the revolutionary party.

Militant/Perspectiva Mundial Fall Subscription Drive September 27–November 23: Week 3 of 8							
Country	Militant Goal	Sold	%	PM Goal	Sold	Book Goal	Sold
UNITED KINGDOM							
Cent. Scotland	8	4	50%	0	0	4	3
London	25	7	28%	5	3	10	8
UK total	33	11	44%	5	2	10	11
NEW ZEALAND							
Auckland	15	8	53%	1	0	5	2
Christchurch	12	3	25%	1	0	6	0
N.Z. total	27	11	41%	2	0	11	2
UNITED STATES							
Omaha	18	11	61%	38	11	15	3
NE Pennsylvania	20	10	50%	8	0	10	1
Boston	35	17	49%	30	21	25	10
Houston	25	12	48%	10	5	20	10
New York	75	35	47%	35	26	40	22
Newark	55	23	42%	20	10	25	19
Pittsburgh	25	10	40%	2	6	12	0
San Francisco	50	19	38%	20	4	40	9
Chicago	40	15	38%	25	12	25	1
Los Angeles	60	22	37%	30	10	35	7
Seattle	25	9	36%	6	0	10	3
Atlanta	40	12	30%	17	10	25	8
Utah	10	3	30%	10	6	8	1
Western Colorado	15	4	27%	10	3		0
Tampa	20	5	25%	8	1	10	1
Twin Cities	45	11	24%	35	9	15	0
Des Moines	25	6	24%	12	8	15	2
Washington, D.C.	25	6	24%	12	4	12	2
Philadelphia	30	7	23%	7	5	7	8
Detroit	25	5	20%	8	3	15	2
Tucson	7	1	14%	2	0		0
Cleveland	15	2	13%	5	2	10	1
Birmingham	18	2	11%	3	0	5	2
Miami	42	3	7%	12	3	21	0
U.S. total	745	250	34%	365	159	400	112
SWEDEN							
Stockholm	8	3	38%	5	3	5	3
Gothenburg	10	4	40%	2	2	5	3
SWEDEN Total	18	6	33%	5	5	10	6
CANADA							
Montreal	12	5	42%	6	1	15	3
Toronto	25	5	20%	5	1	15	1
Vancouver	30	6	20%	5	2	15	4
CANADA total	67	16	24%	16	4	45	8
AUSTRALIA	30	5	17%	5	1	15	3
ICELAND	15	2	13%	1	0	10	2
Int'l totals	935	302	32%	401	172	501	142
Goal/Should be	950	356	38%	400	150	500	187
IN THE UNIONS							
	Militant Goal			PM Goal		Book Goal	
AUSTRALIA							
AMIEU	4	0	0%			1	0
CANADA							
UFCW	10	0	0%	2	0	8	0
UNITE	3	1	33%	4	0	4	0
Total	13	1	8%	6	0	12	0
ICELAND							
Hlif	1	0	0%			1	
SWEDEN							
LIVS	3	0	0%	2	1	3	0
NEW ZEALAND							
MWU	2	0	0%	0		1	
NDU	2	1	50%	0		1	
Total	4	1	25%	0		2	
UNITED STATES							
UMWA	13	4	31%	3	1	6	0
UNITE	25	6	24%	22	5	12	1
UFCW	50	11	22%	75	32	30	7
Total	88	21	24%	100	38	48	8

AMIEU—Australasian Meat Industry Employees’ Union; Hlif—General Workers Union in Hafnarfjörður; LIVS—Food Workers Union; MUA—Maritime Union of Australia; MWU—Meat Workers Union; NDU—National Distribution Union; UFCW—United Food and Commercial Workers; UMWA—United Mine Workers of America.

\$80,000 Party-Building Fund July 12–October 15: Final Chart			
	Goal	Paid	%
Boston	2,800	3,320	119%
Seattle	6,000	6,730	112%
Miami	1,800	2,000	111%
Los Angeles	7,500	8,310	111%
Houston	3,500	3,855	110%
Cleveland	1,000	1,085	109%
Tampa	1,800	1,936	108%
Birmingham	1,400	1,499	107%
Pittsburgh	3,600	3,840	107%
Chicago	4,200	4,431	106%
Atlanta	6,800	7,055	104%
New York	10,000	10,434	104%
Newark	3,500	3,610	103%
Detroit	2,500	2,540	102%
N.E. Pennsylvania	2,000	2,035	102%
San Francisco	8,000	8,150	102%
Washington, D.C.	2,700	2,755	102%
Omaha	1,300	1,315	101%
Des Moines	2,000	2,000	100%
Philadelphia	3,200	3,201	100%
Twin Cities	5,100	5,100	100%
Utah	1,100	1,100	100%
Western Colorado	2,700	2,700	100%
Other		2,136	
Total	84,500	91,137	114%
Goal	80,000		



# Cuban doctors in Venezuela

**Continued from front page**  
spoke to *Militant* reporters there October 8. Her view was typical of opinions expressed by the overwhelming majority of working people interviewed by the *Militant* in some of the poorest neighborhoods of Venezuela’s capital, as well as in four other cities and several rural areas of the country.

About 250 Cuban doctors, nurses, and technicians had served in Venezuela in recent years, arriving soon after Hugo Chávez was elected president in 1998. But their presence has increased exponentially this year under the Barrio Adentro (Inside the Neighborhood) program. Cuban doctors now provide basic health care to millions of Venezuelans in areas where the toilers had little or no access to medical services. Barrio Adentro was launched in the Libertador municipality of Caracas this spring. By early June, more than 1,000 Cuban doctors were serving in working-class neighborhoods, primarily in and around Caracas. Four months later, their number has more than doubled and their services have reached as far as the industrial city of Puerto Cabello in the state of Carabobo, and peasant communities in the mountainous areas of the state of Lara in northwestern Venezuela.

The more its popularity has spread in workers districts and peasant communities, the more Barrio Adentro has come under fire from the Venezuelan bourgeoisie and layers of the middle classes. *El Universal*, in particular, and other big-business dailies and TV stations have waged a virulent campaign against the program. Opposition politicians—who have been leading a two-year-old effort to topple Chávez with Washington’s support—charge that the Venezuelan government is “Cubanizing” the country. They also claim that the Cuban physicians are not here to save lives but are “Castro agents”—in reference to Cuban president Fidel Castro—brought to “indoctrinate the poor.”

The Venezuelan Medical Federation has denounced the program. On June 1 it asked the courts to bar the Cuban doctors from practicing. On August 21 the First Administrative Court obliged, ruling in favor of the Medical Federation’s request, a decision that the Venezuelan government is planning to appeal. Over the last month, anonymous threats of physical attacks against Cuban doctors have increased.

### Visit to January 23 neighborhood

More than 1.5 million people live in the January 23 neighborhood, a good number in makeshift dwellings. These were built by residents largely on land they took over, and for which they don’t have titles. Narrow streets wind up the hills to the neighborhood. Many people live in housing projects built in the 1960s and ’70s as prospective residences for the middle classes. According to local residents, however, these buildings were occupied at that time by working people, who ended the developers’ “gentrification” dreams. Since then, most projects have fallen into disrepair.

We started our journey there by visiting the Sergio Rodríguez *ambulatorio*, a neighborhood walk-in clinic taken over by residents a decade ago. It’s been run since the year 2000 by 20 local volunteers. Eleven doctors serve there, all Venezuelan, who

are paid by the Libertador municipality of Caracas, the mayor of which, Freddy Bernal, is pro-Chávez. Visits and medicine are free, and the in-house pharmacy seemed well stocked.

“We are now trying to get more funding to extend operations to 24 hours per day, including weekends,” said Juvenal González Bolívar of the January 23 Community Network, who is in charge of organizing the volunteer non-medical staff. The clinic is now open Monday–Friday 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. “The constant presence of the Cuban doctors inside the projects is part of the inspiration.”

“This clinic is an exception in Caracas, and most of the country,” said Omar González, who works for the Red Cross in the evenings and volunteers at the clinic’s pharmacy during the day. Virtually all *ambulatorios* are run by the Caracas city government, which has remained in the hands of the pro-imperialist opposition since Chávez’s election, and medical services are inadequate at best.

We arrived at the Sergio Rodríguez clinic at the beginning of the afternoon shift October 8. There is a lunch break from noon to 1:00 p.m. in all medical facilities, clinic personnel reported. The clinic was full, with about 50 people waiting in line. Sign-in records showed that doctors see about 230 patients on average per day. A number of patients come here with referrals from the Cuban doctors or for dental work and other procedures that Cuban physicians don’t have the facilities to provide inside the projects.

Support for Barrio Adentro was overwhelming among those we interviewed. “In their great majority, Venezuelan doctors work for lucrative benefits and pay,” said José Gregorio Frías. “That’s not true of the Cuban doctors. They treat us like human beings.”

A number pointed to problems they face from Venezuelan physicians and hospital administrators when they are sent by Cuban doctors.

“When someone goes to a hospital with a referral from a Cuban doctor, they are turned away or have to wait all day,” said Carmen Reyes. “One time, I went to the Elías Toro pediatric hospital, referred by a Cuban doctor, and they told me to go see Chávez if I had a problem. It’s a lie that the Cuban doctors are here to ‘indoctrinate’ people. Barrio Adentro is here to solve many problems and we are very appreciative of them, since the Venezuelan doctors don’t want to go up the hill.”

Aurora Bastida, the pediatrician at the Sergio Rodríguez clinic, said the problem is more serious. “The Venezuelan Medical Federation [FMV],” she stated, “has accused the Cubans of medical malpractice. A couple of months ago a child died. The FMV accused a Cuban doctor of prescribing the wrong medicine. The kid’s mother finally appeared on TV to refute the charges, denying that the child had received medicine from the Cuban doctor. She explained, instead, that she was turned away from one hospital after another until her child died. She named a number of hospitals and doctors who refused to accept the kid because she showed up with a referral from a Cuban.”

Other clinics in the area have hardly any work, even though they are bigger, have

more modern equipment, and are in better condition, Bastida said. “Here we struggle to attend the patients. The city government gives us nothing. They claim they haven’t received funds from the national government. But then, how is it possible that we get some funding from the Libertador municipality, which has a lot less resources?”

### Other clinics are empty

A visit to two other clinics in nearby areas confirmed Bastida’s observation. The Caño Amarillo *ambulatorio* was in a much better condition than the Sergio Rodríguez clinic. But it was empty at 3:00 p.m. All the doctors had left. The nurse in charge, who did not give her name, showed us the facilities and said, “Medicine is free, but there is none.” She also said some of the equipment is malfunctioning.

At a second walk-in clinic shortly thereafter, we interviewed Rosa Martinson, the internist in charge. This clinic is much larger than the Sergio Rodríguez, with about the same number of doctors. In the afternoon, though, only two to three doctors are on site. They serve about 70 patients a day, on average, compared to 230 at Sergio Rodríguez. When asked why, Martinson said the problem is the attitude of most doctors, including a number who work there. “For them, it’s offensive to work in the *barrio*,” she said. “They’d rather work in the Caracas central hospital. They say this neighborhood is ugly. They look at the people here as dirty, smelly, and dangerous.” Martinson said she works there because she feels people need medical care.

When asked about Barrio Adentro, Martinson said the Cuban doctors are doing something virtually no Venezuelan doctor would do, and “I admire them for that.” But, she stated, “they don’t have the same level of training that Venezuelan doctors do.” She enumerated all her years of schooling, describing how she had gone to the United States for some of her training, and emphasized that Venezuelan doctors are using the latest technology, including the Internet. “In Cuba they don’t have the resources for this kind of training,” she said. When Cuban doctors serving in nearby housing projects don’t have medicine to give out, they send patients to Martinson’s clinic to get her signature on the prescription so they can get a 50 percent discount at the drugstore next door. Even though she has not found any fault so far with the prescriptions Cuban doctors write, Martinson said she still doubted their training.

The internist said she supports Chávez “because he is trying to make a change for the poor by democratic means.” Many Venezuelan families have divided over the Chávez administration, she said. Only her husband and two children have stayed in the country, Martinson stated. All her other relatives have left for the United States and now live in Georgia. “But don’t misunderstand me,” she added. “I like Chávez but I don’t support Fidel Castro at all.” In Cuba, she said, there are many scarcities and they



Militant/Argiris Malapanis

**Carmen Rosa González (left), worker at Industrial de Perfumes, and Omaira Márquez, a Venezuelan who helps Cuban doctors at this small clinic inside El Recreo community center in Barrio Nuevo, Chapellín neighborhood of Caracas, October 3.**

have tried to have too much equality, “with disastrous results.” Martinson said she has a nice two-story house in Alta Mira, one of the well-off, middle-class neighborhoods, and she wouldn’t give that up.

### On to Bloque Adentro

A few blocks away, inside the housing projects of the Montepiedad section of the neighborhood, the Cuban physicians have a small doctor’s office in the Integrated Community Center. Four doctors serve there, two in the morning and two in the afternoon. When we arrived, both of the Cuban doctors had left—but not for a villa in a wealthy neighborhood.

Luis Casadiego, president of the Ali Primera committee and one of the organizers of the community center, said the Cuban doctors were out on house-to-house visits that afternoon as part of Bloque Adentro (Inside the Block). This is a new phase of Barrio Adentro. The Cuban doctors are now assigned a few specific areas. They visit every house and get to know everyone’s living conditions and health problems. And they spend more time doing house calls, sometimes after midnight.

“Their services and medicine are free,” Casadiego said. “Pretty much everyone knows where they live, since they stay at people’s homes and give their addresses to patients. They are called on for emergencies quite often in the evenings and on weekends. But the most important thing they are doing now with the Bloque Adentro is preventive medicine. We never even dreamed of that before.”

This was confirmed in many interviews on the street and in house visits by these reporters.

What was most striking in these interviews was the amazement by most people at the completely different social relations between the Cuban doctors and patients—compared to Venezuelan doctors.

“When you go to a social security doctor in Venezuela, you are just a number in their eyes,” said Joel Mierez, a resident of Montepiedad. “Sometimes they won’t even look up from their desk. They’ll check off your name, prescribe some pill, and send you off



Militant/Argiris Malapanis

**Waiting room at Sergio Rodríguez walk-in clinic in January 23 neighborhood of Caracas, October 8. Speaking is José Gregorio Frías. Seated in front, second from left, is María Elena León (see opening of article on front page).**



Militant/Argiris Malapanis

**Aurora Bastida, pediatrician at Sergio Rodríguez clinic. She is among small minority of Venezuelan doctors who support Barrio Adentro program and Chávez government efforts to reorganize health-care system.**



Militant/Argiris Malapanis

**Clinic at Caño Amarillo was empty at 3:00 p.m. on October 8. All the doctors were gone. Nurse in charge said, “Medicine is free, but there is none.” It’s typical of clinics in working-class areas of Caracas.**



in minutes. But the Cuban doctors care for other human beings. They come visit us at home. They don't mind the neighborhood. They talk to us and get to know us. They have improved the mood here."

The January 23 neighborhood was infamous for its high level of crime. Even in July 2002, the last time *Militant* reporters visited here, we were told to be extremely careful. Some taxi drivers refused to take us there. But there's been a noticeable change. There is a different atmosphere now, with more people on the street in the evening, more spruced up small parks with new playgrounds, better lighting, and above all many more people with smiles on their faces. Government funding for housing repairs and other projects—along with the presence of dozens of Cuban doctors—has a lot to do with the change.

Public works and other social programs by the Chávez government that have begun making a change for the better in the living conditions of working people across Venezuela include extensive construction of inexpensive housing, new subway systems in seven cities, a railway line linking Caracas with northwestern cities, and the building of a modern medical center for treatment of congenital heart diseases—one of the leading causes of high infant mortality—aimed at quadrupling capacity for complex operations.

#### Class divisions over Cuban doctors

Because of the attacks by the opposition on Barrio Adentro, and their pleasant surprise at the human solidarity that permeates the conduct of Cuban doctors toward patients, many workers have become curious about the Cuban Revolution,

an October 3 visit to El Recreo community center near her house. Four Cuban doctors have an office there. El Recreo is on a street right on the border between Barrio Nuevo and an adjacent middle-class neighborhood that's fenced in.

"There are a number of private clinics in the area, but there is no hospital or maternity ward anywhere near here," said Flor Gómez, who volunteers at El Recreo. A single visit with a doctor at a private clinic costs up to 50,000 bolivars (\$31), which is beyond the means of virtually everyone in Barrio Nuevo, Gómez said. Most of those who have jobs there earn close to the minimum wage of 200,000 bolivars (\$125) per month, Gómez and others added. "But even for many in the middle class across the street, going to the private clinics has become too much," she pointed out. "Given that El Recreo is right on the border, and not inside Barrio Nuevo, a number of residents from this middle-class area have begun to see the Cuban doctors too," she said.

In response, Carmen Rosa González added, two Venezuelan doctors who are with the opposition opened their own walk-in clinic in the middle-class neighborhood offering free visits and free medicine, like the Cubans, twice a week for a couple of hours. González, Gómez, and others said most people in the area don't know where this office is. "Let them do that!" González said. "Why didn't they ever do that before?" Still these Venezuelan doctors won't set foot inside Barrio Nuevo, she stated. Many Venezuelan doctors used to pay off the appropriate authorities so they would not have to serve in any rural areas, which they are supposed to do the first year after graduating from medical school, we were told.

Since the Cuban doctors had finished their shift in El Recreo when we got there in the late afternoon, González insisted on taking us to visit a nurse in Barrio Nuevo who organizes housing for the Cuban physicians. The nurse, who asked that her name not be used, said that a lot of political work still needs to be done inside Barrio Nuevo to get rid of prejudices promoted by the big-business media against the Cuban Revolution and the Cuban doctors. She was disturbed by the number of people in the Barrio, she said, who won't accept a Cuban volunteer to visit them at home. They say things

like, "Would they give me an injection and then take me to Cuba?" These are views born out of ignorance and are not rare in working-class neighborhoods. Most in the middle class don't tend to believe such things. Knowing better, however, doesn't lessen their hatred for the Cubans and their communist example.

Support for Barrio Adentro and admiration for the Cuban doctors among a number of workers we spoke with does not translate into identification with the Cuban Revolution and its political course, but a discussion has opened.

Carlos Enrique Rangel, a truck driver for Industrial de Perfumes who accompanied us



Militant/Argiris Malapanis

**Left to right: José Landines, Celina Azuaje—a garment worker, and Carlos Enrique Rangel during visit to Landines's home in January 23 neighborhood, October 8. Landines and Rangel are truck drivers.**

about which there has been widespread ignorance within the working class. At the same time, the class hatred of the wealthy towards the Cuban Revolution has become more pronounced, and prejudices about the Cuban doctors, cultivated by the capitalist class, are evident among layers of working people.

Carmen Rosa González, a warehouse worker at Industrial de Perfumes, lives in Barrio Nuevo in the Chapellín neighborhood of Caracas. (See "Workers in Venezuela occupy plants" in the October 20 *Militant* for details on the occupation of the cosmetics plant that González is part of.) She accompanied *Militant* reporters in



Granma/Ricardo López Hevia

**Working-class district of Petare in Caracas, July 2003, where many Cuban doctors serve. Only one Venezuelan doctor has volunteered there for Barrio Adentro plan.**

during the visit to the January 23 neighborhood, said he thought a change in leadership to younger generations is needed in Cuba. Venezuela shows social change can be carried out in a "democratic way," he said.

Later, during a coffee break at the home of José Landines, a co-worker from Industrial de Perfumes, Rangel listened carefully and at the end nodded approvingly at the comments of a neighbor, Celina Azuaje, who is a garment worker. She explained how she was fired from her job at the Confecciones Paramount plant along with 23 fellow sewers in February because she was "an outspoken Chávezista" during the bosses' "strike" that attempted, unsuccessfully, to bring down Chávez last December-January. When the discussion turned to Cuba, Azuaje said she didn't know much about the Cuban Revolution. "I never learned how to read before, but I am taking literacy classes now," she stated. "I have the gut feeling, though, that what we need in Venezuela is the kind of revolution they had in Cuba. That's what I see from the Cuban doctors and the help Cuba has given with the literacy program."

#### Virulent opposition campaign

It's the open expression of views like these that have struck fear in the hearts of the Venezuelan bourgeoisie, which has gone out of its way to wage war on Barrio Adentro.

"They gave them jobs without even seeing if they were doctors," said Douglas León Natera, president of the Venezuelan Medical Federation, referring to the Cuban physicians in Venezuela, according to the August 22 *Miami Herald*. "This is causing big public health problems."

León's group has 45,000 members; all Venezuelan doctors are obligated by law to join the federation in order to practice. The federation filed an injunction in June seeking to bar the Cubans from practicing. The group's leadership argued that Venezuelan law spells out what foreign doctors—and Venezuelans who have studied abroad—must do to practice medicine legally in the country. The Cuban doctors failed to undergo the yearlong process to have their foreign degrees validated by one of the nation's nine medical schools, León claimed.

The FMV leadership also argued that the Cubans are "proselytizing" Venezuelan workers and peasants with communist propaganda. What's more, León and other wealthy Venezuelan doctors contend, the country has far more physicians than international health organizations recommend for adequate public health coverage, about one for every 500 inhabitants. They also claimed that the Cubans are taking the jobs of about 8,000 Venezuelan doctors who are jobless or underemployed. The Chávez government should be improving Venezuela's dilapidated public-health system and boosting doctors' pay, which starts at about \$600 a month, León said, according to the *Wall Street Journal*.

The views of León and others from the FMV

leadership were widely disseminated and sensationalized with front-page headlines in a vicious campaign against Barrio Adentro led by the daily *El Universal*, which peaked in July.

On August 21 the First Administrative Court ruled in favor of the FMV's request to bar the Cubans from practicing, saying they should be replaced by local doctors.

Venezuela's health minister, María Urbaneja, called the decision "grotesque," saying the government would appeal. She told an August 22 news conference that the Cuban doctors would stay in Venezuela and their numbers would increase. "There is not a court decision that can be above our commitment to provide health and well-being for the people," she said, according to Reuters.

Urbaneja said the Cuban doctors were brought in because the government could not find enough Venezuelan doctors willing to work in working-class neighborhoods.

Miguel Requena, dean of the medical school at Caracas's Central University of Venezuela, made a similar point, arguing that there is a genuine need for the Cuban doctors in his country. Few Venezuelan doctors care to work where they are needed most, he told the *Wall Street Journal*, as general practitioners in rural or urban primary-care clinics. Almost all the new doctors want to live in Caracas and other big cities and engage in lucrative specialties, such as plastic surgery, he said.

Earlier this year the Venezuelan government published a call for Venezuelan doctors to fill the positions now held by Cuban physicians, Aurora Bastida, the pediatrician at the Sergio Rodríguez clinic, told the *Militant*. "No more than 50 Venezuelan doctors volunteered in Caracas," she said. "That was before Barrio Adentro was launched with the Cuban doctors. In Petare, one of the largest working-class neighborhoods of Caracas, only one came forward. It's a lie that the Cubans are taking the jobs of Venezuelan doctors."

Bastida also blamed the Venezuelan Medical Federation and the opposition for the sorry state of public hospitals and clinics. "In many states, opposition governors and mayors have shut down public hospitals or privatized them," she said. "There are well-known cases of doctors telling patients they can't perform an operation at a public hospital, and then giving them a business card for their private clinic where they do the same procedure for a

**Continued on Page 8**

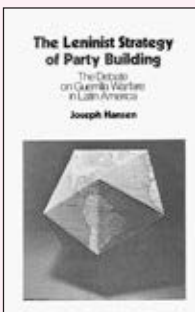
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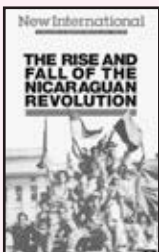
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Militant/Argiris Malapanis

**Venezuelan doctor Joel Pantoja shows abandoned building in working-class district of southern Valencia where he and four other young Venezuelan doctors plan to start Barrio Adentro program inspired by efforts of Cuban volunteers.**



# Cuban doctors

Continued from Page 7  
hefty price.”

The Chávez government has said it intends to reorganize Venezuela’s health-care system by providing virtually free medical care to all through local clinics that emphasize preventive medicine. Down the road, Venezuelan doctors will replace the Cubans, Urbaneja and other government officials have said. But in the meantime the Cubans are “helping a population that’s excluded and very needy,” Urbaneja stated.

Under these conditions, the Cuban doctors in Venezuela have been very cautious, avoiding interviews and focusing on their work. “We are here to elevate the level of health care—that’s it,” said Cuban physician Laura González in August, according to the *Miami Herald*.

For its part, the Cuban government has publicly repudiated the barrage against Barrio Adentro. One such effort was a round-table TV program aired in Cuba in July, titled “The crude lies of the Caracas daily *El Universal*.” A transcript and a videotape of that program is widely circulating in working-class areas of Venezuela.

## A few native doctors emulate Cubans

The revolutionary example of the Cuban doctors has begun to spread among a small, but significant, number of Venezuelan doctors.

Aurora Bastida in Caracas told us she belongs to the Bolivarian Federation of Doctors, a group of physicians who support Barrio Adentro and the efforts of the Chávez government to reorganize the country’s health-care system.

We found the most enthusiastic support for the Cuban doctors among a group of young Venezuelan physicians and medical students organized in El Cimarrón, a

community-political group in Valencia, capital of Carabobo state, one of the most industrialized areas of the country. Two days before we visited there on October 7, Chávez had announced on TV that Barrio Adentro would soon be launched in Puerto Cabello, a coastal city near Valencia in the northern part of Carabobo. The city’s pro-Chávez governor had made arrangements to bring Cuban doctors there.

“We got agreement from the Ministry of Health to start Barrio Adentro in Valencia with a group of five of us,” said Joel Pantoja, 26, who graduated from medical school at the University of Carabobo this year. Since both the Carabobo governor and the mayor of Valencia are with the opposition, Pantoja said they will run this directly through the Ministry of Health, without bringing Cuban doctors there. Pantoja showed us an abandoned building in one of the working-class neighborhoods in south Valencia where the group of five young doctors plan to set up a small clinic and offer their services and medicine for free. The Ministry of Health has promised them funding for setting up the clinic.

## How the program began, spread

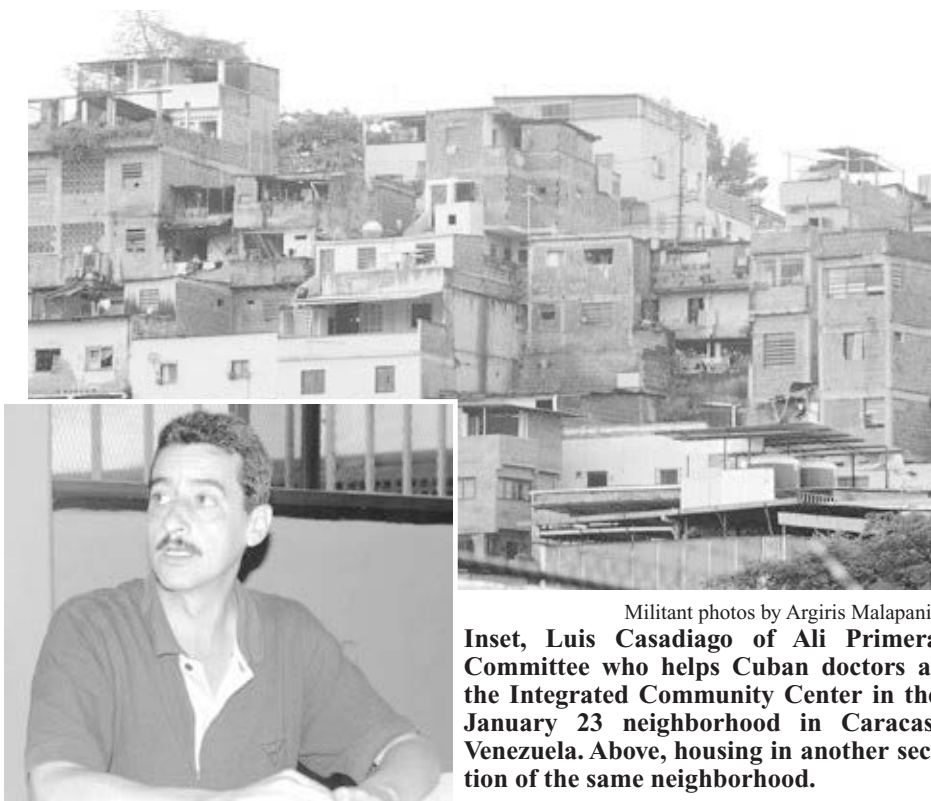
In a July 7 interview conducted by Cuban journalists Félix López and Ricardo López Hevia for the Cuban daily *Juventud Rebelde*, Víctor Felipe Tamayo, chief of the Cuban medical mission in the Libertador municipality of Caracas, explained how Barrio Adentro began.

“We started by meeting with people in the neighborhoods to select where the Cuban doctors would stay and where they would establish their offices,” Tamayo said. “In a spontaneous manner, the people began offering their houses and community centers. That allowed us to provide care to 724,000 inhabitants in 20 of the 22 districts in the municipality.

“On April 21, the first 54 doctors from Cuba arrived in Libertador. Now—with 627 doctors—we have served 564,898 patients, 25 percent of them in their own houses, and we have saved the lives of 699 Venezuelans.”

Tamayo pointed out that virtually all the Cuban doctors volunteering in Venezuela have served on at least one other internationalist mission before—in the Caribbean, Latin America, or Africa.

In another interview with the Cuban



Militant photos by Argiris Malapanis  
**Inset, Luis Casadiago of Ali Primera Committee who helps Cuban doctors at the Integrated Community Center in the January 23 neighborhood in Caracas, Venezuela. Above, housing in another section of the same neighborhood.**

daily *Granma*, also published in July, Odalys Leyva González, chief of the Cuban medical mission in the Sucre municipality, a working-class neighborhood in a hilly area of northeast Caracas, said Cuban doctors first arrived there June 19.

“Sucre has a population of approximately one million, of whom 600,000 live in abject poverty,” González pointed out. Less than 20 percent of inhabitants there have full-time jobs, while 38 percent of children younger than 15 have never gone to school. More than half of pregnancies occur among women 18 or younger and about 6 percent of children up to six years old had never seen any doctor, the Cuban physician noted.

By late July, 500 Cuban doctors were serving in Sucre. “In October, another 642 specialists will arrive,” she stated, “allowing 100 percent coverage for the population, with one doctor for every 250 families.”

As respect for the Cuban doctors has spread among the toilers, some governors and other institutions have taken initiatives to bring Barrio Adentro to other parts of the country. This is the case in the largely mountainous state of Lara in northwestern Venezuela, whose governor, Luis Reyes, is pro-Chávez.

Nilda Collazo, from Las Tunas, Cuba, is one among 14 Cuban doctors, includ-

ing two dentists, who have served in the peasant communities in the mountains there since July. “Up here,” Collazo told *Granma* reporters, “you find diseases long eradicated in our country. It’s rare to find a child who doesn’t suffer from parasites or a pregnant woman who has even once seen a doctor.... It’s a picture that brings out your human sensibilities.” Collazo became widely known and respected in the region when a child almost died from a snake bite at Los Portones, a rural community 23 miles from Barquisimeto, Lara’s capital. It was raining that day, and the only vehicle on site was not working. Collazo covered the kid in a blanket and walked with her for three hours to the nearest hospital. The child survived and Los Portones celebrated.

In recent weeks, as the opposition campaign against Barrio Adentro has faltered, anonymous death threats against the Cuban doctors have risen. Some Cuban doctors say they think the possibility will increase that they or their colleagues may be hurt or killed—as occurred in Nicaragua in the 1980s when Cuban doctors and teachers volunteered there when a workers and farmers government was in power. But, they add, that is the price they are willing to pay.

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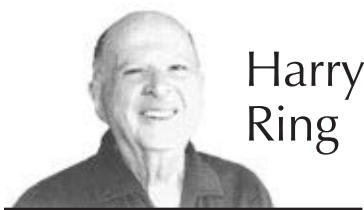
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Harry Ring

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**That is where the money is**—J.L. Hunter Rountree was convicted of lifting \$2,000 in a Texas bank heist. He's 91 and depends on a hearing device and a cane. He was convicted of hitting a Mississippi bank five years ago and ordered out of the state. He then got three years for holding up a Florida bank. With

his current conviction he faces a 20-year max term.

**Nothing's too good for GIs**—"Military troops hospitalized as a result of combat-related injuries would no longer be charged \$8.10 a day for food under a bill that passed the House unanimously."—News item.

**Simple, let opponents leave**—David Hope, archbishop of York, mourns that infighting over the rights of homosexuals "is eating the heart" out of the Church of England.

**'Eating heart out'?**—At Abington Memorial in suburban

Philadelphia, hospital supervisors complied with the demand of a man that no Black staff worker touch his wife, who was awaiting delivery. Hospital tops apologized to the staff and arranged for cultural sensitivity training.

**Where do they park their kids?**—In Tennessee, the state ended subsidies for transporting 15,000 low-income children to day care centers. Top center operators asserted that families used the bus service even though they didn't need it. A wire service observed that there were parents like Vannetria Bailey, "who now faces a 30-minute walk with her five children to their day care center."

**Ultimate Rollover**—Check it out—Terra Wind Amphibious Motor Coaches. Drive it on land or lake bottoms. \$850,000 and up.

**Making do**—Actor Will Smith and spouse, actress Jada Pinkett, are living out of suitcases in a \$3.6 million L.A.-area house until their larger home is available. The temporary digs are spacious and include a pizza oven, apparently so you don't have to rely on those dratted delivery pizzas.

**Thought for the week**—Berthold Brecht's classic Three Penny Opera posed the question: Who's the bigger thief, the bank robber or the bank president?

# 'Magdalene Laundries' were prisons for women

BY PAUL DAVIES

LONDON—The recent release of Peter Mullan's film *The Magdalene Sisters* has stirred discussion and helped lift the lid on the part played by the infamous Magdalene Laundries in maintaining the oppression of women in Ireland. The film follows and was in part inspired by the Channel 4 documentary *Sex in a Cold Climate*, which depicted the imprisonment and brutal treatment of those incarcerated in these workhouses run by the Sisters of Mercy, an order of Catholic nuns, from the 1880s. The last of these "laundries" was closed in 1996.

It is estimated that up to 30,000 women passed through these institutions, named after the biblical figure Mary Magdalene. In the name of "saving" them, these



detained there would rarely speak out about what they had experienced.

## Advances for women's rights

The release of the film comes in the context of a crisis facing the Catholic Church hierarchy, one expression of which has been the widespread exposure of cases of sexual abuse committed by priests. The roots of this crisis lie not in a "sex scandal," as it is often presented in the big-business media, but in the gains that have been made in the fight for women's liberation. These advances have occurred, in varying degrees, in countries across the globe. The material basis for this progress, won in struggle, has been the historic influx of women into the workforce, which has led to their greater economic independence and to changes in social attitudes among women and men.

The official doctrine of the church on many social questions is more and more in conflict with the views of many working people. Catholic Church teachings on marriage and its opposition to divorce are at odds with the experience and views of growing numbers of people. One registration of this was the majority vote in favor of making civil divorce legal in Ireland in 1995.

The institutions that administered and profited from the system of the "laundries" are also declining. In 2000 there were fewer than 11,000 Irish nuns at home and abroad, down from more than 18,000 in 1970.

Maintaining the Magdalene Laundries no longer became a feasible way to reinforce the oppression of women. In 1996 Mary Robinson, then president of Ireland, unveiled a plaque in honor of the women held in these institutions.

In 1999 Irish prime minister Bartholemew Ahearn publicly apologized to the thousands of former inmates of the orphanages and industrial schools that the Catholic Church also ran with equal terror and violence for many decades. He established a compensation fund for the victims, but women who had been incarcerated in the Magdalene Laundries were excluded from it, as they were deemed "private" institutions, not subject to the state's control.

After the film sparked a wider debate on this issue, the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas issued a public apology for the treatment of women in the laundries.

Mullan's film has had a big impact in Ireland, with an estimated one quarter of the population of that country having seen it. It has also been met by condemnation by some forces. The Vatican's daily

newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, denounced the film as "an angry and rancorous provocation." It was also denounced by the U.S. Catholic League as "anti-Catholic."

One fact that should not be lost is that these institutions were neither uniquely Catholic nor Irish. Writing in *The Guardian*, Fiachra Gibbons points out that there were plenty of similar Magdalene Laundries in Britain, mostly run by Protestant churches. Their function was not religious but social. The church was simply the particular form that was used to maintain this institution of women's oppression.

The first laundries were established at a time when all of Ireland was under direct British rule, before the anticolonial struggle that led to the creation of an independent state in 26 of Ireland's 32 counties. In the wake of this uncompleted anti-imperialist struggle, maintaining the laundries became a part of what Ireland's new capitalist rulers viewed as necessary for assisting in the oppression of women and consequently in the consolidation of capitalist rule in the new state in the

decades after the war of independence.

By 1937 Ireland had adopted a new constitution that upheld the Catholic Church's positions on marriage and divorce. It even had a provision stating that the state should restrict women's access to paid work: "the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved. The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home."

Successive Irish governments played their part in maintaining the laundries. In some cases the transfers of orphaned children from industrial schools to the laundries was authorized by the state. In one scene *The Magdalene Sisters* replicates a photograph of a church parade in which women held in the laundries participated. They are closely guarded by cops, ensuring they can make no attempt at escape.

The film depicts the successful escape of some of its leading characters from their incarceration. However, for the great majority of those who remained trapped inside, it took far-reaching changes in women's position across society before the laundries finally became a thing of the past.

*The Magdalene Sisters* is a powerful film about a story that had to be told.

## — 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —



November 3, 1978

For the time being at least, the Carter deportation plan is dead.

Carter had first presented his racist immigration scheme to Congress fourteen months ago. He shelved it October 5 by quietly signing a bill establishing a commission to "study" the question.

The reactionary measure evoked such broad opposition from Chicanos and others that Carter was on the defensive from the outset. Finally he had to beat a retreat.

The most decisive display of opposition to the Carter plan was the Chicano/Latino conference held in San Antonio, Texas, one year ago.

That gathering of 1,500 represented the broadest array of Chicano and Latino forces united around a single issue since the Vietnam War. It included such forces as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), GI Forum, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), Socialist Workers Party, Raza Unida Party, and CASA.

Despite this diversity of political views, the gathering was unanimous in its opposition to the Carter plan.

A cover story on Chicanos in the September 11 issue of *New West* magazine commented: "Above all the Chicano leadership has united behind the issue of the undocumented Mexican immigrant."

The article noted that even the appointment of a Chicano as head of INS had failed to insulate Carter "from the fury of Hispanics who condemn his immigration proposals."



November 2, 1953

Farrell Dobbs, National Secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, today sent a letter to J. Edward Conway, President of the N.Y. State Civil Service Commission, protesting inclusion of the SWP on its "subversive" blacklist. The text of the letter is as follows:

The Socialist Workers Party, along with the other groups included, was placed upon that list without prior notification, specification of charges, or hearing. Our Party's repeated requests since 1948 for such a hearing have all been turned down.

On April 30, 1951 the U.S. Supreme Court by a five to three vote ruled that the Attorney General flagrantly exceeded his authority in establishing his "subversive list." According to the court, no organization should be so designated before it has been (1) informed of the charges on which the designation rests, (2) granted an administrative hearing, (3) allowed to present evidence in its own behalf. First the Department of Justice, and now your own Commission, have disregarded these procedures demanded by the Supreme Court.

No less alarming is the requirement in your Commission order that Civil Service applicants must state whether they have ever signed nominating petitions for candidates of any of the blacklisted organizations. This is an unprecedented "guilt by association." Can there be a grosser abridgement of elementary democratic rights than to penalize people who seek to exercise them?



# Lifetime, free health care for all!

In one labor struggle after another in the United States today, health care is a central issue. Supermarket workers in Southern California, bus mechanics in Los Angeles, and meat packers at Tyson Foods in Wisconsin are among those waging strikes to oppose the bosses’ attempts to shift more of the costs of health insurance onto working people. Coal miners in Utah and laundry workers in Washington, D.C., are fighting for a union, in part, to get health coverage. Their actions highlight a serious problem facing the entire working class.

Nearly 44 million people in the United States have no health insurance. The number of uninsured jumped by 2.4 million last year, the biggest rise in a decade, largely as a result of layoffs and bosses eliminating coverage or making it prohibitively expensive. Today only 4 percent of large employers still guarantee full medical coverage without charge, compared to 21 percent in 1988. Bosses are increasingly shifting the burden onto workers. The amount workers pay in premiums for family coverage skyrocketed by 50 percent in the last three years, and their out-of-pocket costs for prescription drugs rose even more. A routine doctor’s visit in New York can cost \$100. As health-care costs shoot up and working people are callously chopped off the rolls of “health maintenance” businesses, increasing numbers are crowding emergency rooms and waiting for hours because they can’t afford

another way to get medical treatment.

In response to this catastrophe, the bosses shrug and say it’s “not realistic” to offer full coverage. With health care a lucrative commodity, owners of hospitals, drug monopolies, and insurance giants are raking in huge profits. All health-care “reforms” by Democrats and Republicans are designed to reinforce this profit-driven medical system, undermine Medicare as a universal entitlement, and make working people increasingly fend for ourselves.

The working-class view of this question is the opposite of the bosses’ approach. Free access to health care must be a guaranteed part of workers’ social wage. Instead of leaving health care as an individual’s problem, and as a “fringe benefit” to be negotiated—and eroded—plant by plant and industry by industry, the union movement needs to take this fight to the political arena on behalf of all working people. Labor must demand that social security be expanded to guarantee cradle-to-grave health care for all, along with workers’ compensation, disability pay, unemployment insurance, and retirement pensions. Along this road, more and more working people will recognize the inability of capitalism to meet these most basic necessities. They will also see the need to organize a working-class movement to overturn the rule of finance capital and take political power, in order to begin reorganizing society to meet the needs of the vast majority.

# Calero defense wraps up fight

**Continued from Page 4**

cance for the labor movement.

Spearheaded by Local 789, unions in the Twin Cities became a bulwark of the defense, including fund-raising for the defense committee. Thousands of dollars were contributed from union locals, area labor federations, and individual union officers and militants.

Packinghouse unionists in other areas, especially in the Midwest—from Omaha, Nebraska, to Des Moines, Iowa, to Chicago—organized meetings for Calero and spread the word about his fight.

Workers who found themselves in combat with the employers and the government all across the country were attracted to Calero’s defense campaign. From garment workers fighting for a union at the Point Blank plant in southern Florida, to meat packers on strike at Tyson in Wisconsin to farm workers in National City, Florida, and Yakima Valley, in Washington State, Calero found an audience eager to discuss experiences in struggle.

The defense committee files reflect the wide support for Calero among fighters for the rights of immigrants and others facing attack from *la migrá*. Calero spoke out on behalf of and won backing from a number of these, including Farouk Abdel-Muhti, Omar Jamal, Sami Al-Arian, and Ciarán Ferry. He also received support from five Cuban revolutionaries framed up and imprisoned in U.S. federal penitentiaries.

Many workers facing the threat of deportation came to Calero’s meetings and spoke out during the discussion periods. At a February public meeting for Calero in New York, Omar Arango came from Elizabeth, New Jersey. He explained to the unionists and supporters at the meeting that he had read about Calero’s fight in the New York daily paper *Hoy*. He told the crowd he was inspired by Calero’s fight and intended to use its lessons in his own effort to win the right to stay in the United States.

In June, Arango organized dozens of family members, friends and supporters to attend his immigration hearing. He mounted a carefully prepared challenge to the government’s move to throw him out of the country. At the end of the hearing, the government dropped its effort to deport Arango. He returned to a meeting for Calero the next month in Newark, New Jersey, to report his victory.

As Calero’s fight grew, broad support was won from defenders of freedom of the press. Juan Gonzalez, president of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, lent his group’s backing. The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press reported the major turns in Calero’s fight on its press service.

Supporters of political rights raised their voices on Calero’s behalf. Bruce Nestor, president of the National Lawyers Guild, and Lennox Hinds, vice-president of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, were among the hundreds who sent letters and made statements backing Calero’s fight that are in the files donated by the defense committee.

## Government throws in the towel

In the face of this growing support, the government decided to move to minimize its losses. Contained in the defense committee’s files is the April 29 motion filed by DHS lawyers to drop the case.

“Circumstances of the case have changed after the notice was issued,” read an Immigration Regulation cited by the government lawyers, “to such an extent that continuation is no longer in the best interest of the government.”

On May 22, Immigration Judge William Strasser issued his final order halting the government’s effort to deport Calero.

Following the victory, Calero’s defense committee launched an international tour to publicize the lessons of his fight and share experiences with others organizing to

meet employer and government attacks.

“If we learn from each other how to fight more effectively, we can increase the number of skirmishes we win today,” Calero said in a statement released when the tour was launched. “I hope the lessons of my campaign will make a contribution to advancing our fighting ability.”

Calero traveled across the country, and internationally to Canada, New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Iceland. He spoke at public meetings, union gatherings, to the media, and in informal sessions with unionists, immigrant workers, and others looking to share experiences and learn to fight as effectively as possible.

One highlight of the tour was the meeting in Utah. “Calero spoke before two dozen miners from the Co-op mine—overwhelmingly immigrant workers from Mexico—who came to congratulate him on his victory,” the introduction to the files reports, “but mainly to learn from his experiences in the Dakota organizing drive to help in their efforts to bring the United Mine Workers union into their mine.”

On September 15 Calero landed at Kennedy International Airport at the conclusion of the international tour. He reported to immigration. “The agent swiped his permanent residence card,” the committee report in the files states, “and carefully read what came up on his computer. Then he turned to Calero and said, ‘welcome back to the country.’”

## Financial summary

Included in the archive prepared for the Wisconsin library is a financial summary of Calero’s fight.

As the report explains, the way the fight intersected with efforts of others to defend themselves from attacks by the bosses and the government fueled growing support. This was true financially as well.

The Róger Calero Defense Committee raised \$50,610 and spent \$47,487 in the course of its fight to stop Calero’s deportation. Contributions came from workers, unionists, and supporters of political rights. The overwhelming majority were modest, either sent in the mail or given at public meetings.

The committee’s largest expenses were for travel and outreach, legal fees, for printing literature, and to organize a public office staffed by volunteers.

In closing down the defense committee, Calero decided to donate the remaining funds to the Political Rights Defense Fund, which had responded to his arrest by placing its funds and resources at the disposal of his fight.

The State Historical Society in Wisconsin contains the archives of many previous defense campaigns, including the files of the Civil Rights Defense Committee, which was formed in 1941 to defend leaders of the Socialist Workers Party and the Teamsters union in Minneapolis, who were framed up under the thought-control Smith Act for the class-struggle example they were setting in the labor movement.

The entire record of the successful lawsuit of the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance against the FBI, CIA, and other government agencies for spying and harassment is also in the Madison archives, donated by the Political Rights Defense Fund.

All of these archives contain the records and lessons of fights that were interwoven with central threads of the class struggle at the time.

“My fight was successful because it grew out of these conflicts and drew support from others in struggle,” Calero said at the conclusion of his international tour. “Everywhere I toured, others took strength from my fight and looked to incorporate its experiences into their struggles.”

“This fight is the property of all those who lent a hand and of all those in whose interest it was waged,” the defense committee’s introduction to its files concludes.

# Bolivia revolt

**Continued from Page 3**

‘We will not stop until he’s gone!’” reported Associated Press writer Kevin Gray.

Bolivia is rich in minerals and other natural resources. It is a leading producer of tin and, as a result of intense exploration in the mid-1990s, has the second-largest known reserves of natural gas in South America, after Venezuela.

It is also one of the most exploited nations in Latin America. While imperialist investors and a handful of domestic capitalists have profited from the plunder of the country’s natural wealth and superexploitation of its labor, more than 60 percent of the population gets by on less than \$2 a day. Per capita income is the lowest in Latin America, at \$950 a year. In rural areas, according to official statistics, less than one out of four Bolivians have access to running water, 15 percent have electricity, and less than 1 percent have a sewage system. Bolivia is being squeezed by never-ending payments on a foreign debt of \$4.6 billion, more than half its gross domestic product.

Over the past decade, successive Bolivian regimes have complied with imperialist demands to accelerate “free market” reforms. They have cut social welfare programs, opened the door to greater private and foreign investment in state-owned companies, and removed price subsidies on essential goods. Sánchez de Lozada’s attempts to further this course met with increasing resistance. In February the regime set off mass protests when it tried to impose a new direct tax on wages.

## ‘Wealth has enriched foreigners’

The proposed plan to allow three foreign companies—British Gas, Repsol-YPF of Spain, and Pan American Energy, which is jointly owned by British Petroleum and Bidas Corp. of Argentina—to export natural gas to the United States became a lightning rod for the anger at the regime. Popular opposition was magnified by a \$5 billion plan to build a pipeline in order to ship the gas through a region in Chile that historically has been claimed by Bolivia as an outlet to the sea.

While the owners of these companies are raking in huge profits, the overwhelming majority of working people have seen no improvement in their living standards. To the contrary, Bolivia’s economic growth has been stalled for the past half-decade and unemployment has soared.

The Indian organizations launched the latest protests against the regime with demands opposing the gas pipeline deal.

“Why should we sell the gas? We Bolivians could use it to heat our homes,” one protester told a reporter.

“The wealth has always left the country and enriched foreigners, rather than staying here to improve our lives,” said Pascuala Velázquez, an egg seller in La Paz. “We cannot allow that to happen this time with the gas.”

## ‘War on drugs’ ruins farmers

Sánchez de Lozada also earned the hatred of many peasants through his cooperation with Washington in its so-called “war on drugs,” under which agents of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) using specially trained units of Bolivian police have destroyed thousands of hectares of coca plants—the raw material for cocaine. The program, which serves as a Trojan horse for deeper U.S. military intervention throughout the Andean region, threatens many peasants with ruin.

These U.S.-trained police units have earned a reputation for brutally assaulting working people in the coca-producing regions. A 1995 Human Rights Watch report titled “Bolivia, Human Rights Violations and the War on Drugs” states: “The antinarcotics police run roughshod over the population, barging into homes in the middle of the night, searching people and possessions at will, manhandling and even beating residents, stealing their goods and money. Arbitrary arrests and detentions are routine.”

Washington already has a military presence in Bolivia, stationed partly under cover of the “war on drugs.” DEA agents operate near the country’s mountainous borders with Brazil and Argentina. The DEA has offices in La Paz, Cochabamba, Santa Cruz, and Trinidad—more cities than in any other Latin American country. U.S. forces also function in Bolivia under the Andean Initiative, the Pentagon’s program of military funding, training, and intervention in the region that also includes Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, and Panama.

Small coca farmers have spearheaded protests against the regime’s policies. Evo Morales, their most prominent leader, came a close second to Sánchez de Lozada in last year’s presidential elections, running as the candidate of the Movement toward Socialism. “As indigenous people, we see ourselves as absolute owners of this noble land and the territory,” Morales said during the election campaign. “And when we talk of territory, we talk about gas, petroleum, mineral resources. All those should be in Bolivian hands.”

Just days before the elections, the U.S. ambassador in La Paz at the time, Manuel Rocha, warned Bolivians that U.S. aid would be jeopardized if they dared to elect “those who want Bolivia to become a major cocaine exporter again,” referring to Morales.

Morales, who said the U.S. ambassador’s attacks on him gained him more popularity, won 21 percent of the popular vote to Sánchez de Lozada’s 22 percent. The election was decided by Congress.



# ‘Militant’ to mark its 75th anniversary

November 15 marks the 75th anniversary of the first issue of the *Militant*, which has been published uninterruptedly since then. To celebrate this occasion, the *Militant* urges its distributors everywhere to organize public events around that date. These forums can be built around a broad panel of speakers that includes workers, farmers, and youth who have joined *Militant* distributors in various social struggles over the years and who have read and appreciate the *Militant*. They can also feature a speaker who can explain the history of the *Militant* and its place in building an international communist movement, yesterday and today.

In preparation for these events, we are launching this column. As the first installment, we are reprinting below an excerpt from the article “A Short History of the *Militant*,” by Joseph Hansen. It was first published in 1968 on the occasion of the paper’s 40th anniversary. Hansen was a longtime leader of the Socialist Workers Party and the *Militant*’s editor at different times.

## BY JOSEPH HANSEN

Since its first issue of November 15, 1928, *The Militant* has expressed the political position of the Trotskyist movement in the United States. It was launched in opposition to the Stalinist faction that had been placed in command of the Communist Party under a Kremlin ukase. From the beginning, *The Militant* stood to the left of *The Daily Worker*. It still remains there.

The aim of *The Militant* for the first five years was limited in the main to bringing the views of the International Left Opposition, and particularly its leader, Leon Trotsky, to the attention of members of the Communist Party in hope of breaking the grip of the Stalinist faction and returning the party to observance of the revolutionary-socialist program on which it had been founded. This meant defending the Soviet Union as a workers’ state, but opposing Stalinist decay. In the United States it meant faithful adherence to the program of class struggle.

The first editorial board of *The Militant* consisted of James P. Cannon, Martin Abern and Max Shachtman. Maurice Spector was added to this board a little later, his name appearing on the masthead of the December 15, 1928, issue. Arne Swabeck became the fifth member of the board on January 1, 1931. This board remained unaltered until *The Militant* changed its name to *New Militant* on December 15, 1934, as one of the results of the fusion of the original Trotskyist group, the Communist League of America, with the American Workers Party led by A. J. Muste.

The five members of the original editorial board of *The Militant* were all well-known Communist Party leaders who had participated in founding the party. When they learned the truth about differences in the Russian Communist Party through documents that came into Cannon’s possession at the Sixth Congress of the Communist

International, they decided to break the censorship set up by Stalin. The editors decided to make the suppressed documents written by Trotsky and other leaders of the Left Opposition in the Soviet Union available to the entire international Communist movement. And they decided to do battle inside the Communist Party for the program that the Left Opposition stood for—the program of Leninism to which they had been won upon the victory of the Russian Revolution in October, 1917.

The members of the editorial board knew that the struggle would be difficult, although they did not appreciate how difficult it was to be in the face of the concerted attacks that descended on them from all sides, ranging from the liberals to the Fascists. The attacks were not confined to ideology. Our world movement suffered assassinations at the hands of Stalin’s agents, long prison terms, and death in concentration camps and before the firing squads of the Nazis.

The editors of *The Militant* were not without influence when they came out in defense of the cause Trotsky stood for. In the American Communist Party, James P. Cannon was a member of the Political Committee and the Central Executive Committee; Martin Abern and Arne Swabeck were members of the Central Executive Committee; Max Shachtman was an alternate. Maurice Spector was a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, chairman of the Canadian Communist Party, and editor of *The Canadian Worker* and *The Canadian Labour Monthly*. All of them were public figures—Martin Abern and Max Shachtman as leaders of the Communist youth movement, James P. Cannon and Arne Swabeck as organizers and leaders in workers’ struggles going back before World War I. Maurice Spector was an outstanding figure in the Canadian radical movement.

## Trotsky: ‘It is necessary to prepare’

Their efforts met with a warm response from co-thinkers abroad. Trotsky, for instance, sent a message which was published in the June 1, 1929 issue. It may be worth quoting here, since the staff of *The Militant* shared his views on the points he made then, and the current staff, although completely renewed, has not changed in this respect.

“The work to be achieved by the American Opposition has international-historic significance, for in the last historic analysis all the problems of our planet will be decided upon American soil. There is much in favor of the idea that from the standpoint of revolutionary order, Europe and the East stand ahead of the United States. But a course of events is possible in which this order might be broken in favor of the proletariat of the United States. Moreover, even if you assume that America, which now shakes the whole world will be shaken last of all, the danger remains that a revolutionary situation in the United States may catch the vanguard of the American proletariat unprepared, as was the case in Germany in 1923, in England in 1926, and in China in 1925 to 1927. We

the wisdom of a Halliburton/Big Money government.

In an area where a median home is now topping \$400,000, it is hardly selfish for grocery workers to demand 17 bucks an hour plus benies. And, I think most Californians realize that.

Raul S.  
San Diego, California

## Guyana 1953, Iraq 2003

While the occupation of Iraq currently dominates the headlines, another conquest was in the headlines 50 years ago as British troops stormed into the small South American nation of Guyana in October 1953, deposing its democratically elected government, suspending its constitution, and imposing direct rule from Westminster.

Guyana, sandwiched between

the mighty Amazon and Orinoco rivers, was the only British colonial possession on mainland South America—because of its vast metal and mineral reserves, it had spawned the “El Dorado” legend as spread by Sir Walter Raleigh.

In 1953, British Guiana, as it then was, held its first ever election under universal adult suffrage and a government committed to social reform was swept into power—gaining 18 out of the 24 seats in Parliament, much to the consternation of the British election officials who supervised the election, and the entrenched vested interests of British companies such as Bookers—(of Booker Prize fame)—which alone controlled about 80 percent of the Guyanese economy at the time!

Like the Allende government in Chile some 20 years later,

Semi-Monthly Organ of the Opposition Group in the Workers (Communist) Party of America.

“It is necessary that every member of the Party should study calmly and with the greatest objectivity, first the substance of the differences of opinion, and then the development of the struggle within the Party. Neither the one nor the other can be done unless the documents of both sides are published. He who takes somebody’s word for it is a hapless idiot, who can be disposed of with a single gesture of the hand.”—Leon

# The MILITANT

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## For the Russian Opposition!

Against Opportunism and Bureaucracy in the Workers Communist Party of America!

A STATEMENT TO AMERICAN COMMUNISTS BY JAMES P. CANNON, MARTIN ABERN AND MAX SHACHTMAN.

1. In the view of the necessity of concentrating the full attention of the Party on the election campaign, we have refrained up till now from any statement or step calculated to open a Party discussion on disputed questions until the election campaign will have been ended and the pre-convention discussion opened.

2. We have definite views on a series of fundamental questions vitally affecting the whole future of the Party and the Comintern which it was our intention to bring before the Party in the pre-convention discussion period.

3. The “discussion” of these questions, conducted up till now has not been a real discussion since many of the documents—in our opinion some of the most important political documents of our time—have been suppressed and concealed from the parties of the Comintern or presented to them in garbled form. The opportunity which has come to us in the recent period to read a number of these documents, dealing with some of the most disputed problems of the Comintern in the past five years, together with the rapid confirmation of their correctness by the whole course of events, have shaped our views and convictions. We consider it our revolutionary duty to defend these views before the Party.

4. We had intended to undertake this task at the opening of the Party discussion after the election campaign. However, the arbitrary actions already taken against us (our removal from all positions on October 16) and the plain indications shown in the present hearing of the intention to take further organizational measures

On October 27 the undersigned members of the Central Executive Committee were expelled from the Party for the views expressed in our statement to the Political Committee on the same date, which is printed below. This action, taken by the Political Committee in violation of the Party constitution, without even the formality of a meeting of the Central Executive Committee to which we were elected by the Party convention, was designed to deprive the Party members of the opportunity to have our views and to insure themselves against any opposition in the forthcoming Party discussion and elections to the Party committee. Our views relate to principle questions upon which it is not possible for revolutionaries to remain silent. We proposed to defend these views in the Party according to the rules for Party discussion laid down in the Party constitution. The deprivation of the Party constitution and the denial of our rights as Party members compel us to take this method of direct appeal to the Party members in order to bring our position before them. We will continue to express our views in the columns of *The Militant* until our Party rights are restored.—Editor.

and to begin a public campaign against us in the Party press make it necessary to state our position without further delay. It must be made clear to the Party that the measures are being taken against us solely because of our political views. These views must be presented to the Party as they really are.

5. We present them here in outline form and will elaborate on them more fully in our appeal to the Central Executive Committee against the actions taken by the Politburo.

6. So stand on the main line of the document entitled “The Right Danger in the American Party” (excepting certain erroneous formulations dealing with the world position and role of America, imperialism), presented to the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern by the delegation of the Opposition, in the drafting of which we actively participated. As set forth in this document, we believe that the present leadership of the Party, mechanically imposed upon the Party by the E. C. C. I. against the will of the membership, is a consciously developing right wing, whose course and actions are all in the direction of undermining the position of the Party in the class struggle. Its activities since the presentation of our document on “The Right Danger in the American Party” in the World Congress, have confirmed and not refuted this estimate. The irresponsible advertisement, the factual degradation and bureaucratic corruption of the Comintern group leadership are an organic part of its fundamental imperialist character.

7. The latest decision of the secretariat of the E. C. C. I. which undertakes to dismiss a whole series of principle questions raised in our indictment of the Party leadership with a formal motion giving no answer whatsoever to the burning question of the Party in all fields of the class struggle, serves only to strengthen the mechanical

mental correctness of the document. It merely demonstrates the political instability of these leaders which hampers the process of developing an opposition to the present right wing leadership and line of the Party on a principle basis. We have no doubts that the supporters of the Opposition who have regarded the struggle against the right wing leadership as a principle question will continue to adhere to this position despite the vacillations and maneuvers of a section of the leadership.

8. The problems of the American Party are organically bound up with the fundamental questions confronting the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Comintern, and cannot be solved separately from them. The left wing of the American Party, taking shape in the principle struggle against the right wing leadership of the Party (Lomovets-Pepper group) will go forward fully informed as to the necessity of a struggle against the right wing danger on an international scale and link up its fight in the class struggle with the Bolshevik fight for the fundamental tenets of Leninism in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and in the Comintern.

9. The Opposition in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union led by L. D. Trotsky has been fighting for the unity of the Comintern and all its sections on the basis of the victory of Leninism. The correctness of the position taken by the Russian Opposition under a period of five years of struggle has been fully confirmed by events.

10. The struggle led by Trotsky since 1923 for Party democracy and against bureaucracy in the

## M. Spector Expelled In Canada

Maurice Spector, member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International has just been expelled from the Communist Party of Canada for his refusal to endorse the expulsion of Cannon, Abern and Shachtman from the Communist Party of America and for his attitude of defiance to the present and opposing our demand for the publication of the suppressed documents of the Russian Opposition. His statement, a cutting assignment of the bureaucratic regime, will be printed in the next number of *The Militant*.

The great seriousness for the entire Communist movement of North America of the action taken against Maurice Spector will be realized when it is pointed out that he was unanimously elected to the Executive Committee of the Comintern International at the Sixth World Congress on the nomination of the Canadian delegation. He has been the Chairman of the Canadian Party for many years and the editor of the Party organ, the *Canadian Worker* and the *Canadian Labour Monthly*. The expulsion of Maurice Spector, the political leader of the Canadian Party, now its international, is left to face with the course of desperate bureaucracy on an international scale who are unable to defend themselves in open discussion and whose “bureaucratic” depends on an abrogation of the democratic rights of the party members.

We send our warmest greetings to our fellow-republicans in the Canadian Communist Party and express the confident belief that his fight against our expulsion will be met with impartial support from the proletarian Communists in the ranks of our party. Our fight is one against the Communist leadership of all countries most likely to gain for it.

As we go to press word comes also of expulsion from



Above, front page of first issue of *Militant*, dated Nov. 15, 1928. Inset, James P. Cannon (center), delegate of U.S. Communist Party at 1922 Fourth Congress of Communist International, with Max Eastman (left) and William “Big Bill” Haywood in Moscow.

must not for a minute lose sight of the fact that the might of American capitalism rests more and more upon a foundation of world economy with its contradictions and crises, military and revolutionary. This means that a social crisis in the United States may arrive a good deal sooner than many think, and have a feverish development from the beginning. Hence the conclusion: it is necessary to prepare.”

## Building party in tradition of Leninism

If those words of 1929 sound highly contemporary, the same can be said of much that appeared in *The Militant* in the early years. The concern of the editors was to do what they could to advance the task of solving the truly great problems facing humanity in our era. Those central problems still remain to be solved—in fact they have become exacerbated, now presenting the world with the alternative either of a planned economy on a global scale or civilization reduced to

radioactive ruins. Consequently, a surprising amount of material in *The Militant* remains timely and well worth considering despite the obvious corrections and adjustments that have to be made owing to the fact that the course of the class struggle on an international scale proved to be more complex, tortuous and drawn out than any of the original board expected.

The editors of *The Militant*—and a long succession of able revolutionary journalists have participated in getting it out—have sought to report these developments honestly and accurately and to influence their outcomes insofar as it was possible to influence them.

The policy from the beginning was to maintain *The Militant* as a fighting newspaper, not a mere muckraking or sensationalistic journal, but a fighting paper integrated with the supreme task of our times—to build a combat party of the working class in the tradition of Leninism.

Unfortunately, with the assistance of the CIA over the next decade, this plan succeeded only too well—leaving Guyana today one of the poorest countries in the region, still divided along ethnic lines, and only recently having emerged from decades of a CIA-imposed brutal corrupt dictatorship.

Perhaps Guyana’s 50-year past may portend Iraq’s immediate future?

Lalu Hanuman  
London, England

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people.

Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

## LETTERS

### California grocery strike

I’m sure you have some of your diligent staff covering the grocery workers strike in California (not to mention the strikes in the Midwest). But, just from first-hand experience, this strike is becoming quite vocal. And, many of the morning-drive radio shows (those that usually are dedicated to inane comedy) are taking callers both for and against...and surprisingly even many DJs are backing the callers in favor of the strike.

Since 9-11, it has been extremely difficult to talk about anything that might jeopardize that warm, fuzzy “American” unity.

Yet, we are now starting to see people start to think for themselves and for their class roots again. There are several issues (besides the recall) that are pushing working families in Southern California (and all of California) to re-think



# Grocery workers strike in California

BY JAMES VINCENT  
AND JOEL BRITTON

LOS ANGELES—Dozens of union pickets prevented a truck from making a delivery at Pavillions supermarket in Hollywood October 16. “Since the strike began five days ago, not one Vons or Pavillions truck has been able to unload at this store,” said Fernando González, a striking retail clerk on the picket line.

The United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) members struck the Vons and Pavillions supermarket chain in Southern California on October 11. Two other chains, Albertson’s and Ralphs, immediately locked out workers at their stores to back up the Vons bosses. Altogether, some 70,000 workers are on strike or locked out at 850 stores, which are being kept open by thousands of newly hired strikebreakers.

Large picket lines greet potential shoppers and delivery truck drivers at many of the stores. Pickets pass out leaflets explaining the issues and why their picket lines should be honored. In response, many shoppers leave and shop elsewhere.

The picket lines have been spirited, marked by the number of grocery workers who are in their late teens or early 20s. As soon as picketing began here, city bus drivers and many other passersby honked in solidarity. Young strikers at one of the picket sites in Los Angeles would jump on the buses, distribute fliers about the strike to the riders, and then jump off.

Two days later, on October 13, more than 2,000 bus mechanics represented by the Amalgamated Transit Union went on strike against the Metropolitan Transit

Authority (MTA) in the Los Angeles area. The bus drivers have honored mechanics’ picket lines, shutting down the vast majority of bus lines as well as all subway and light rail lines in the area.

The mechanics have been working without a contract for more than a year. This is the second major transit strike in Los Angeles in three years. In 2000 the bus drivers union struck for more than a month, shutting down the third-largest transit system in the country. As with the grocery strikers, the main issue is maintaining health benefits.

Support is coming from all directions, say striking and locked-out grocery workers. “People are very supportive,” said Elvira Belma, at an Albertson’s in Southgate while on picket duty October 15. “People are dropping off pizza, chips, soda, water. One thing is for sure, we won’t go hungry.” Sheet metal workers, longshoremen, teachers, oil workers, meat packers, and others have joined and brought food donations to UFCW picket lines.

The strike is having a measurable effect. There are far fewer cars in supermarket parking lots. There are daily reports in the media that shelves are not being restocked. In many stores deli and bakery departments remain closed. Most stores have cut back their hours.

International Brotherhood of Teamsters drivers are refusing to drive through picket lines at stores.

The grocery workers are fighting against cuts to their health and pension benefits and



Militant/James Vincent

Striking grocery workers organized by the UFCW rally in California October 16

a company-proposed two-tier wage structure with much lower pay for new hires. The UFCW is asking for wage increases, but the companies have offered a freeze.

Many workers are in no mood to give up the health-care benefits the union has won. Full- and part-time workers do not pay premiums for full family health insurance, which includes dental and vision care.

## Bosses’ propaganda campaign

The employers and big-business media are campaigning to portray the union’s health-care demands as unreasonable. An October 11 *Los Angeles Times* editorial, “Health Care on the Line,” said the “union stance echoes the old hard line of the United Auto Workers. But those days are gone.” Another article, in the same paper, referred to the UFCW agreement as a “Cadillac contract.”

In their offensive against the UFCW, the grocery bosses are running full-page ads that claim, “Our employees, hands down, enjoy some of the best, most comprehensive health care benefits in American industry—and will continue to receive a very generous benefit. They currently pay no premium for individual or full family coverage—almost unheard in today’s world. With health care costs skyrocketing we think it is reasonable to ask our employees to share in a very small portion of that cost going forward—\$5 for individuals and \$15 [per week] for families.”

A UFCW fact sheet, “Setting the Record Straight: Why We Are on Strike,” responds that “This is a lie.” The union points out that the supermarket giants want to “increase copayments, institute deductibles and place caps on payments for prescriptions and surgeries. The union estimates that this will amount to a 50% cut in medical benefits that would shift almost a billion dollars in health care costs onto the workers over the term of the contract.”

The bosses also peddle the myth that grocery workers are highly paid, pointing to the top wage of \$17.90 for high-seniority cashiers. Unionists point out that many workers earn less than \$10 an hour. Gina Guglielmotti, a clerk at Ralphs, said, “I get paid 80 cents above minimum wage. We want to stop the constant depression of wages.”

In addition, 75 percent of supermarket workers are part-time and rarely work a full week. “The majority of part-timers never work a 40-hour week; the exception is around Thanksgiving and Christmas,” said grocery worker Elvira Belma. Vons, Ralphs, and Albertson’s “want to slash wages for new employees,” says a union flyer. “This would create a new ‘second class’ of workers who would be paid much less than their coworkers.”

Wall Street investment firms are cheering on the supermarket giants. “It’s a question of survival,” said one analyst from Merrill Lynch, “They’ve got to narrow the cost gap with their nonunion competition. They can’t fight with one hand and one leg tied behind their back.” Safeway, owner of Vons,

isn’t hurting for money, with a cash flow of about \$800 million a year after capital expenditures, according to the *San Diego Union-Tribune*.

“This strike could go on for a while,” said Ted Luebky, who works in a Vons meat department. “It’s clear that the market is taking a hard stance against us. They want to break the union. We need to stand up to them.”

## Meat packers join grocery workers on picket line

BY WENDY LYONS

SOUTHGATE, California—In a show of solidarity with the grocery store strikers, a delegation of workers from the Farmer John slaughterhouse joined the picket line at an Albertson’s grocery store here after work on October 15. Some wore union T-shirts reading, “Farmer John Workers Fighting for Dignity and Respect.”

Workers at the large Farmer John plant in nearby Vernon are on a campaign to revitalize their union and are fighting to win a new contract. Their union, the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 770, is the same one that organizes the grocery workers in the Los Angeles area.

Many workers at Farmer John have been following the grocery strike and lockout with intense interest. At the picket line, the discussion became a back-and-forth on the conditions facing both groups of workers.

“They are trying to make us pay a big copayment for our health insurance, too,” said a worker from Farmer John, “and they want to pay the people who’ve worked there over five years just 25 cents more an hour in the new contract.”

The grocery workers expressed amazement at the pace of work at the packinghouse when they heard that 6,500 hogs were slaughtered in an eight-hour shift. “I heard they pay well, though,” one Albertson’s worker said. A Farmer John veteran with 32 years explained that they used to make \$11 an hour but now workers are paid as little as \$7.00 to \$7.50 an hour for butcher jobs. In the mid-1980s a strike was defeated and the company took away the closed-shop contract provision, which had forced the company to use only UFCW members.

The unionists from Farmer John went away commenting on the unity of the strike and the way the grocery workers succeeded in convincing a good number of potential shoppers to leave by patiently explaining what the strike is about. The next morning at work, many others asked about what had happened at the picket line and expressed interest in being part of the next delegation. Other workers reported that they have joined picket lines at their neighborhood grocery.

Wendy Lyons is a kill floor worker at Farmer John and a member of UFCW Local 770.

## Russia may use euro for oil sales

BY SAM MANUEL

The Russian government is considering a move to start pricing its oil and gas exports in euros instead of dollars, as part of Moscow’s efforts to strengthen ties to the imperialist powers in the European Union as a counterweight to Washington. Russia has the world’s largest natural gas reserves and is second to Saudi Arabia as an exporter of oil.

Russian president Vladimir Putin told reporters at a news conference during a visit by German chancellor Gerhard Schröder, “We do not rule out that it is possible. That would be interesting for our European partners.”

The Russian central bank has been amassing euros since early last year, increasing the share of its foreign reserves held in the currency from 10 percent to 25 percent. Moscow’s total reserves have reached \$65 billion on the strength of the country’s oil exports. The amount of deposits held in private bank accounts in Russia has quadrupled.

Worldwide, two-thirds of central banks’ foreign reserves are held in dollars, com-

pared with 13 percent in euros; two-thirds of world trade is denominated in dollars.

Backed by Washington’s economic and military power, the dollar dominates trade in oil to an even greater extent. Buyers pay in dollars, and oil exporting countries hold their reserves in the same currency.

The Iranian government, the fifth-largest oil exporter, has speculated that it may also use the euro in trading with Europe. Javad Yarjani, a senior official in the Iranian oil ministry, said last year, “It is quite possible that as bilateral trade increases between the Middle East and the Europe Union, it could be feasible to price oil in euros.”

U.S. and European oil companies are competing for a piece of Russian energy resources. London’s *Telegraph* reported that ExxonMobil has offered \$25 billion for a 40 percent share in the Russian oil company YukosSibneft, and that Chevron-Texaco is seeking a smaller share.

British Petroleum has offered \$2.7 billion in a merger with the Russian company TNK, while the rival Royal Dutch/Shell is expected to invest \$10 billion in the Sakhalin 2 oil field.

### Further reading from Pathfinder

#### Europe and America: Two Speeches on Imperialism

By Leon Trotsky

In two speeches from the mid-1920s, Trotsky points to the emergence of the United States as the primary economic power in the world—alongside the decline of Britain, France, and Germany—as the decisive factor in world politics. He describes the sharp contradictions this new situation entails, and highlights the revolutionary prospects for the working class of the world. \$6



#### U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War

By Jack Barnes

“The exploiters have not been able to resolve the increasing stagnation and vulnerability of the world capitalist system; to impose crushing defeats on the working people and labor movements of a single imperialist country; or to overcome the political obstacles to their capacity to carry out sustained war, or to prevent rebellions and fights for liberation by workers and peasants of the colonial and semicolonial world.” \$14



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