

# THE MILITANT

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Book fair helps extend gains of literacy campaigns in Venezuela

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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## 146 workers die in China mine blast

Fatalities proliferate in drive to up coal production



China Photos/Getty Images

Rescuers carry miner Feng Yin out of Dongfeng coal mine November 28, after he was trapped by explosion the previous day near the city of Qitaihe in northeast China. Some 221 miners were working underground when the blast went off.

BY DOUG NELSON

At least 146 miners died in China's second-worst mine disaster this year after coal dust caught fire, setting off a massive explosion November 27 at the Dongfeng coal mine in Qitaihe, a northeastern city. A total of 72 miners have been rescued, China's state news agency Xinhua reported. The blast knocked out the ventilation system and poisonous gas filled the mine, making survival for those trapped inside unlikely. Two days after the explosion, rescuers recovered the bodies of 12 dead miners. None have been found alive. Three miners are still missing.

Meanwhile, 18 miners remain trapped since November 24 by underground flooding at the Gaocun mine in Hebei province in northern China. Bosses along with some technicians fled the scene and abandoned these miners to their fate, leaving rescue teams without a guide to the mine, Xinhua said. Rescuers say the miners

may still be alive.

According to Chinese government statistics, 2,337 accidents occurred in the country's coal mines in the first nine months of this year, resulting in 4,228 deaths. This is slightly higher than the 4,135 deaths reported in the same period last year. During 2004 a total of 6,027 people died in 3,639 coal-mining accidents—about 400 less than the previous year.

China is the world's top producer of coal, from which it generates three-quarters of its energy. The country's total power generation is second only to the United States. Energy demand has soared to fuel China's power-starved and rapidly growing industries. At the same time, authorities in Beijing have continued to open the country's centralized economy to foreign investment and capitalist market methods. These factors fuel the drive for profit and personal gain by mine owners and

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## Poultry workers in California wage third walkout for union recognition

BY LEA SHERMAN

LIVINGSTON, California—Despite company threats to permanently replace strikers, hundreds of poultry workers fighting for a decent contract and union recognition at the Foster Farms plant here returned to the picket line November 17. This was their third walkout in less than a month.

Two days later, a front-page article in the *Modesto Bee* reported claims by the company that it had fired scores of unionists who had participated in the walkouts. Workers told the *Militant*, however, that when they returned to work November 21 they still had their

jobs, though some were demoted.

"They called me into the office and said, 'You participated in the demonstrations, so you are no longer a lead person,'" said Raj Brinder Dhaliwal, who has worked at the plant for 26 years and is a longtime supporter of the union. "I said OK. Nobody was fired and those who were demoted filed charges against the company with the union. People are not worried or afraid."

Federico Avila is a 32-year veteran in the plant and third vice president of the League of Independent Workers of the San Joaquin Valley, the union organiz-

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## As Zionist dream of 'Greater Israel' fails, ruling Likud party breaks up

*Dwindling Jewish immigration into Israel underlies split*

BY PAUL PEDERSON

Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon resigned from Likud November 21, forcing a split in the ruling party.

Fourteen Likud members of parliament and two from the main opposition Labor Party joined him in launching a new political formation called Kadima, or "Forward." Shimon Peres, head of the Labor Party until recently, quit Labor and pledged to support the prime minister saying, "Only Sharon can bring peace, dismantle settlements."

Already the Kadima Party came out in front in opinion polls commissioned by two of the main Israeli dailies, with Likud in third place behind Labor. New elections are set for March 28.

The aim of the realignment, Sharon said, is "to lay the foundation for a peace agreement in which we will determine the permanent borders of the state" of Israel. Likud is a rightist party founded by Sharon in 1973 under

the banner of conceding "not one inch" of territory taken by the state of Israel from Palestinians forced off their land or the surrounding Arab states. It has sought to put into practice the Zionist movement's goal of expanding the state of Israel through Jewish settlement all the way from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

The Zionist dream of "Greater Israel" has collapsed, however, leading to the Likud split. A historic decline in Jewish immigration to Israel—the logic of which has been accepted for a while by top Israeli politicians—is the main underlying factor.

Israeli deputy prime minister Ehud Olmert "had long been convinced that the failure of western Jews to immigrate in large numbers meant that the notion of Greater Israel must yield to the demographic necessity of a two-state solution," wrote Robert Zelnick in the

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## Working people begin to return to New Orleans, demand housing

BY SAM MANUEL

NEW ORLEANS, November 30—In interviews across this city and at public hearings, working people are expressing their determination not to be driven out of the city, and to fight for decent wages, housing, medical care, and education for their children. They are also opposing plans by capitalist politicians, Democrats and Republicans, to put their homes and property

on the auction block—a windfall for banks and real estate companies.

Three months after the city was flooded when levees broke in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, much of New Orleans remains uninhabitable, without electricity, gas for cooking, or drinkable water. Devastated areas include the Ninth Ward and New Orleans East, both overwhelmingly working-class neighborhoods.

"We don't need your permission to return to the city," said Charles Broussard, a resident of New Orleans East, speaking at a November 28 public hearing on redevelopment plans for the city. Attended by more than 200 people, it was one of many such events organized by city officials here and in other states, aimed at people evacuated after the massive flooding. Local authorities call these hearings to let evacuees vent their frustrations, hoping to diffuse any action against ongoing government indifference at

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## GM workers speak out against layoffs, plant shutdowns

BY TONY LANE

PITTSBURGH—The General Motors stamping plant in West Mifflin near here is one of the dozen plants the company announced recently it would close within three years. Among the some 30,000 workers who will be laid off are the 560 members of the United Auto Workers (UAW) who work at the West Mifflin plant.

Gordon Everett, who has worked at West Mifflin 25 years, told the *Militant* his predicament is shared by many in the plant of a similar age and seniority who don't qualify yet for retirement. "We have yet to hear anything from the company on what is to happen to us," he said.

"People were surprised when the closing was announced," said Everett. "We thought we'd always get another contract."

The West Mifflin stamping plant largely makes replacement parts for

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# Why Washington fears selfless internationalism of Cuban volunteer doctors

BY ARRIN HAWKINS

The impact of the Cuban government's international solidarity and its increased political weight in the world today is touching a nerve in the big-business media. Cuba's medical internationalist missions gained some public attention in the United States after the Cuban government offered to send 1,500 doctors to the Gulf Coast region in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina—which Washington callously rejected. As the ranks of those with no access to health care swell within the United States, the capitalist press is trying to cast a shadow on the conquest of free, universal health care by Cuba's working class and its effort to extend medical assistance abroad.

One such example is an article in the November 14 *Forbes*, a business magazine. In it Susan Kitchens tries to discredit Cuba's international medical program. She describes Cuba's volunteer doctors in 18 African countries and other nations as "Castro's medical mercenaries." That's the article's headline.

At the center of Kitchens's concern are the 20,000 Cuban doctors and other medical personnel volunteering in Venezuela today, largely in working-class districts and rural areas with little or no access to health care in the past. The *Forbes* writer claims that the increasing numbers of Cuban doctors force Venezuelan physicians to lose jobs to unqualified Cubans. "Imported doctors are resented in anti-Chávez quarters for being central to a growing Cubanization of the country under its radical leader," Kitchens adds, referring to Venezuela's president, Hugo Chávez.

What Kitchens doesn't say is that few Venezuelan doctors volunteered to work in the government-sponsored clinics operated by Cuban physicians. Their presence may be resented in "anti-Chávez quarters," including among Venezuelan doctors used to a bourgeois lifestyle through for-profit medicine. But the vast majority of working people, and many in the middle classes, have welcomed and defended the Cuban doctors, and hold in high esteem what Kitchens terms as the "clinics for the dirt poor." This is what *Militant* reporters have found in recent trips throughout Venezuela.

"Why don't they come up here into the hills?" Marta Díaz, a Cuban doctor in Venezuela for two years, told Associated Press in July, responding to telltales such as those promoted by Kitchens.

Among numerous false claims, Kitchens says health care in Cuba has deteriorated due to "poorly equipped hospitals," lack of resources, and a "shortage of doctors," as more doctors are being "exiled" abroad.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, when Cuba lost most of its trade in favorable terms, access to medicines was drastically limited. Washington's four-decade-long economic war against the Cuban Revolution has also limited imports of needed drugs and medical equipment from other countries.

The Cuban government, however, has continued to improve the country's medical system. More than 50 hospitals have been renovated and expanded throughout Cuba as of July of this year. Improvements include repairing and reequipping the country's polyclinics

## Pathfinder books popular at Middle East Studies Association conference



Militant/Richard Hazboun

WASHINGTON—Pathfinder Press had a booth at Middle East Studies Association conference held here November 19–22. Hundreds of professors, students, researchers, librarians, and others there, and participants in the African Studies Association conference at the same site, visited the book exhibit. Visitors expressed interest in ordering Pathfinder books for their classrooms or libraries. Volunteers sold 48 books and pamphlets at the event totaling \$425, along with 24 copies and 9 subscriptions to the *Militant*.

—JANICE LYNN

and rehabilitation wards with more advanced medical technology.

There is roughly one doctor for every 170 Cubans today. In comparison, the United States has one doctor per 188 residents, according to the World Health Organization. The most recent figures show that infant mortality in Cuba is 5.8 deaths per 1,000 live births. It is 7 in the United States. With nearly one out of six people in the United States without health insurance, millions don't seek medical attention when they are sick because they can't afford it.

Cuba doesn't just send doctors to assist other countries. It is helping semicolonial nations, like Equatorial Guinea in central Africa, develop their own health-care system—a fact the *Forbes* article omits.

In his speech to the first graduating class of 1,600 students from the Latin American School of Medicine, Cuban president Fidel Castro said the aim of the school is to train students from semicolonial countries in order to end the need one day for Cuban medical

workers to serve worldwide. Cuba is now training some 12,000 medical students from 83 countries, including from the United States, to return prepared to serve as doctors in working-class neighborhoods and remote rural areas in their countries.

The idea that doctors would volunteer to go to countries lacking medical personnel, facilities, or often a health-care system, is beyond Kitchens's comprehension. It's a "negation of professional status," she retorts, concluding that these missions must be a profit-making maneuver by Havana.

If sending doctors by the thousands to work where there is a dire need for them is so profitable and has such propaganda value, why hasn't any capitalist government discovered this scheme yet?

It's because such missions defy for-profit medicine. The reality is the U.S. rulers fear the example—dangerous for the ruling capitalists—of selfless internationalism that Cuba sets for working people the world over and use scribblers like Kitchens to discredit that example.

## THE MILITANT

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Oct. 5, 2003, rally in Caracas to back Barrio Adentro (Inside the Neighborhood) program that has brought Cuban volunteer doctors to Venezuela.

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# New German gov't plans to extend austerity drive

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

Upon being chosen chancellor of Germany November 22, Angela Merkel praised her predecessor's attacks on unemployment insurance and other gains of the working class as "milestones" she would build on. The "grand coalition" government Merkel's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) shares with the Social Democratic Party (SPD), which led the previous administration, has adopted measures on pensions and taxes that will shift more of the wealth workers and farmers produce into the pockets of the employers.

The bosses need to reverse the German economy's longtime stagnant growth rate, which stood at 0.8 percent this year, one of the lowest in the 25-member European Union. The September 18 elections had resulted in a virtual dead heat, with the CDU receiving only four more seats in parliament than the Social Democrats, reflecting divisions in the ruling class over how far and how fast to lead the antilabor offensive.

The outgoing SPD government of Gerhard Schröder had bumped up against the resistance of working people to cuts in unemployment benefits, in particular. The jobless rate is about 11 percent nationwide, and above 18 percent in the eastern part of Germany.

The SPD's Agenda 2010 plan reduced monthly benefits and forced the long-term unemployed to accept jobs paying one or two euros per hour (1 euro = US\$1.17) in order to hold onto their benefits. Tens of thousands of people protested the measures in the summer of 2004.

Although Merkel entered office praising Agenda 2010 and similar SPD measures as "milestones which we want to work from," she has dropped a number of her "labor reform" plans such as loosening region-wide wage bargaining.

However, the CDU-SPD coalition plans to increase the retirement age from 65 to 67. It also plans to strengthen the hand of the bosses on the job by lengthening the probationary period new workers face, from six months to two years. The government is also projecting a 3 percent increase in the sales tax that will hit workers especially hard.

German employers' association leader Dieter Hundt complained, however, that these measures fall short of the "real bold stroke" the bosses need, according to Deutsche Welle, an online German news service.

Many in the big-business press, like *Investor's Business Daily*, had "dared to dream" that a Merkel victory would produce a chancellor "like Iron Lady

## Sharon leaves Likud to launch new party

Continued from front page

*Boston Globe* November 23, referring to a mid-August interview with the Israeli politician. "When Sharon finally embraced unilateral separation, Olmert pledged his 100 percent support," the article stated. It added that Olmert told Sharon, "You have to get ready for a dramatic political change, because the Likud will not survive this."

"Ideologically, we are disappointed," Arye Mekel, Israel's consul general in New York, told the *New York Times* in August. "A pure Zionist must be disappointed because Zionism meant the Jews of the world would take their baggage and move to Israel. Most did not."

### Dwindling Jewish immigration

Last August, the Israeli daily *Haaretz* reported that the Jews for the first time comprise less than 50 percent of the population in the territories under Tel Aviv's control.

A minority of the Jewish people worldwide—5.26 million of the total 13 million—live in Israel. More Jews live in the United States today than Israel.

In 2004, Sharon told a *New York Times* reporter that he had a goal of increasing Israel's Jewish population through immigration over the next 15 years by 1 million—an average of 67,000 a year. That year, however, only 21,000 immigrated.

Recently, at least as many Israelis have been leaving the country as those moving in, and a trend of a net outflow may have begun. According to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, the number of Israelis leaving the country outpaced immigration in 2003, with a net emigration of 9,000 Israelis. That figure topped 11,000 in 2004 and was

over 50,000 in the first nine months of this year.

Of the 1 million Russian Jews that immigrated to Israel in the last three decades, especially in the 1990s after the breakup of the Soviet Union, an estimated 100,000 have returned to Russia in the past few years, the *Times* of London reported in April. Many came to Israel because of restrictions on immigration of Russian Jews to the United States and European countries. Some used it as a way station to eventually get into those countries.

At the same time, Israel has become more dependent on food imports, due in part to a labor shortage in the rural areas. Imports of agricultural goods remained nearly equal to exports through the 1980s, but over the past decade they have grown to nearly double the exports.

At the same time, the Palestinian population in the occupied territories has continued to grow at a rate of 5 percent a year. There are more than 3.7 million Palestinians living in the occupied territories and another 1.3 million inside Israel. At that rate, the Palestinian population in Israel and the occupied territories will soon outpace the Jewish population.

It is this demographic and political reality, combined with the inability of the Israeli rulers to quell the struggle of the Palestinian people for their land, that have forced Sharon and others to give up on the Zionist colonizers' dream of conquering "Greater Israel."

Instead, for a weighty section of the Israeli ruling class the key to ensuring the long-term viability of Israel as a stable junior imperialist power in the Middle East is retreating to borders they feel Tel Aviv can police

## Azerbaijan: oil workers strike at U.S. firm



Reuters/Grigory Dukor

Oil workers maintain pumps outside Baku, Azerbaijan, October 6 (above). More than 1,000 oil workers employed by the U.S. firm McDermott Caspian Contractors Inc. struck for 24 hours November 22, occupying the company's fabrication plant south of Baku. The workers install pipelines and build offshore oil rigs for British Petroleum. Workers are demanding a pay increase, health care, disability compensation, and the right to organize a union. An Azerbaijani worker is paid \$150 to \$200, while employees from other countries are paid \$2,500 to \$3,000 for the same work, one of the strikers told an Azerbaijani news outlet.

Margaret Thatcher in Britain." The U.S. business daily expressed its dissatisfaction with the outcome in a November 16 editorial titled, "Angela's Bad Beginning." The new German government, it said, "had barely come into existence before it made its first big mistake—raising taxes." In addition

to the increase in the sales tax, the CDU-SPD government plans to increase the top income tax rate from 42 percent to 45 percent. The *Investor's* editors warned that Japan was the last country to do so, in 1997, and "a nasty, deflationary recession followed."

So far, it doesn't appear that the new government is planning an anticipated shift away from Berlin's alliance with Paris and toward closer ties with Washington and London. Antagonism between the two imperialist blocs reached a high point in the lead-up to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, when Paris and Berlin refused to send troops to join the "coalition of the willing."

While visiting NATO headquarters in Brussels November 23, Merkel told reporters that German troops would train officers of the U.S.-backed Iraqi military, but not inside Iraq. "We will continue to conduct training in neighboring countries," she said. "So there will be continuity with the previous policy."

and legitimize. They are pressing for a settlement, on their terms, that will insulate Israel from the Palestinian national struggle.

For the first time in its history, the Israeli government last year shut down some small settlement outposts. This summer, some 7,500 Israeli settlers and tens of thousands of Israeli troops that guaranteed their existence were withdrawn from the Gaza Strip, home to 1.3 million Palestinians. On November 25, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) took full control for

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## Australia: Saharawi stowaways die fleeing Moroccan-ruled land

BY LINDA HARRIS

SYDNEY, Australia—The bodies of two stowaways from Western Sahara were found on board the *Furness Karumba* when the ship docked in Western Australia November 8. They had suffocated in the air-tight cargo hold. Two others were found alive and taken to a hospital, then to an immigration detention center in Perth.

The deaths come at a time when Moroccan authorities have intensified repression of Saharawis fighting for independence in the northwest African nation.

Media reports said the 12,000-tonne fertilizer carrier ship had come from Laayoune, Morocco. But, as Kamal Fadel, the representative of the Polisario Front to Australia, explained in a letter to the *Australian*, Laayoune is actually the capital of Western Sahara, a nation occupied by Morocco.

Polisario has led the 30-year struggle by the Saharawi people against the

Moroccan regime, which invaded their country after they had won independence from Spain, the former colonial power. Fadel also explained that the ship was bringing phosphates illegally mined by Morocco in Western Sahara to Australia.

Moroccan police were deployed in force in Laayoune in the lead-up to the November 6 anniversary of Morocco's invasion of Western Sahara. On October 29 Moroccan cops broke up an independence protest rally. Hamdi Lambarki, a 21-year-old Saharawi youth, was chased by the cops and beaten to death.

His death sparked a round of protests. Police responded by arresting a number of young Saharawis and also veteran human rights activist Brahim Dahane. There are currently 37 Saharawi political prisoners in Moroccan dungeons, arrested over the last year as part of the crackdown against an upsurge of pro-independence protests that began in May.

# GM workers react to layoffs

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repair shops. The closings were announced as workers at GM's former parts division Delphi, which the auto giant spun off as a separate corporation, face attacks on their wages and benefits as the parts supplier has filed for bankruptcy. "We will be competing with Delphi workers—GM wants to whipsaw workers against each other," Everett said.

Delphi, the largest U.S. auto parts supplier, announced October 8 it had filed for bankruptcy protection. The auto boss said it would seek to cut wages of production workers from an average of \$26 per hour to between \$10 and \$12. Cost-of-living allowances would be eliminated. Vacations would be cut from six weeks to four, and holidays reduced. Health-care payments by production workers would be increased. A jobs bank that currently pays the wages of workers on long-term layoff would be eliminated.

Everett noted that GM officials say the company has \$19 billion in cash and that it is not going to go into bankruptcy. "But US Airways did it, the steel giant LTV did it, a number of mine companies did it," Everett said. "What's to stop the auto industry from doing it?"



BY MICHEL DUGRÉ

TORONTO—On November 21, General Motors announced its intention to cut by the end of 2008 some 3,900 jobs in Ontario, representing about 20 percent of GM's workforce in Canada.

Canadian Auto Workers union (CAW) president Basil Hargrove said these cuts come on top of another 2,500 other job losses the CAW had agreed to during recent contract talks.

In a statement published the same day, CAW officials put the blame for the job cuts on "the one-way flood of imports," in particular from Europe, Japan, and Korea, "that is undercutting the Big Three" sales in North America. Arguing that the Oshawa no. 2 plant, where nearly 3,000 workers will be laid off, is one of the most productive auto plants in the world, and that GM "benefits from labour costs that are at least \$10 (U.S.) per hour lower than in the U.S., largely thanks to our Canadian health care," CAW officials are trying to

convince GM to maintain operations in Oshawa.

"I'm not too worried," said John Chipman, a maintenance worker at the Oshawa GM plant with 30 years' seniority, expressing a view held by many workers here. "By 2008 they will have another car. We have been in this situation many times."

Others point out that younger workers will bear the brunt of the company attacks. "They have a long-term plan to consolidate [the Oshawa] assembly plants 1 and 2," said Dan Golber, who has worked more than 28 years on the assembly line. "With robots they'll get the workforce down to less than 5,000. It won't hurt the guys with high seniority like me. But the young guys with mortgages will get it."

This is a point well taken by workers like Jason Butler, who has less than two years' seniority in the plant. He said, "2008 is a long way away. Anything can happen. I'll probably lose my job."

Many workers are blaming the company. "If we look at the big picture, they haven't changed their culture on big cars compared with the rest of the world," said José Salazar, a 28-year veteran of the Oshawa truck plant not

## Explosion kills 146 coal miners in China

**Continued from front page**  
government officials who cut the bosses slack at the cost of workers' safety. One indication of the scope of the problem was reported by Xinhua November 1. The news agency said there are over 580,000 "black lung" patients, of whom 140,000 have died. Black lung is caused by coal dust.

The Chinese government has taken steps recently to stem the mining fatalities by implementing new regulations—suspending production or closing mines that don't meet safety standards and cracking down on collusion between government officials and mine bosses. This includes a two-month campaign that ended October 20 to clear coal mines of shares held privately by officials in four government ministries.

One new recent measure stipulates that "at least one member of the management is on the spot on every shift



United Auto Workers officers and other UAW members at GM's Oklahoma City factory attend November 21 news conference at union hall on announced closing of plant.

slated to lose his job in the announced cuts. "They're going to do it whatever we do. I believe the union did good under the circumstances. Down south they had to take concessions."

"Arrogance," said Greg, a worker in the paint shop with 22 years' seniority, who asked to be identified by his first name only, referring to the announced layoffs and plant closings. "They are

antiunion. They seem to think that the blame falls on the workers' shoulders. They praise the high quality, but when they have problems it comes our way again. They are a very arrogant company that should have seen this coming. They overextended on acquisitions. It comes down to corporate greed."

John Steele contributed to this article.

and they should come and go with workers together."

China's work safety authority has suspended production at more than 12,000 mines for safety improvements. Some 9,000 of these have been closed since January, Xinhua reported November 22.

Several recent mine disasters, however, occurred at mines that had been ordered shut down for safety checks, indicating the risk mine bosses are willing to take in the drive for profit. The head of the State Administration of Coal Mine Safety, Zhao Tiechui, said November 7 that at least 4,000 mines have to be permanently closed by the end of the year. Nearly 1,900 such mines had been shut down as of November 8.

Although the suspended facilities are about half of China's total number of mines, Reuters said the shutdowns aren't expected to have much impact on

the county's coal production since the vast majority are small privately owned mines, which also tend to be the most dangerous.

*China Youth Daily* reported last month that Chinese police arrested the vice mayor of Fukang city, who was in charge of safety during an explosion at the Shenlong coal mine that killed 83 workers. The mayor had allegedly accepted about \$20,000 in bribes from the company.

By October 20, nearly 4,600 officials had come forward and reported they had privately invested a total of \$80 million in coal mines. According to *China Daily*, some \$56 million of this amount has been withdrawn. Those who withdrew their shares—including more than 3,000 civil servants and 1,500 heads of state-owned enterprises—will be exempt from punishment, said Vice Minister of Supervision Chen Changzhi.

## Poultry workers fight for union

**Continued from front page**  
ing the workers at Foster Farms. "The company wants a nonunion open shop, to be able to get rid of somebody when they get hurt," Avila told the *Militant*. "They don't care about the people. They just want to get the product out. We did the right thing coming together to win the union."

About 2,000 workers are employed here, one of the largest poultry plants in the United States, processing half a million chickens per day.

Unity among workers from Mexico; Punjab, India; and other nationalities has been key in preventing the bosses from carrying out large-scale victimization of union supporters as the struggle unfolds.

A number of workers who have been fighting for many years to forge a strong union at this plant organized an election in October 2003 decertifying the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW). They initiated this action when UFCW officials, after a 17-day

walkout in 1997, negotiated a contract that included only a 70-cent wage raise over five years and higher payments by workers for health-care coverage. The workers then organized the League as their new union, which got a majority vote in a November 2004 election.

Deteriorating health benefits and low wages are the main issues in the struggle. Since 1993, workers have gotten annual average hourly wage increases of 12 cents. Over this period, costs for medical coverage have jumped, including a \$25 charge for each doctor visit as well as large deductibles.

To strengthen their ability to negotiate a contract, the League affiliated with the International Association of Machinists earlier this year. Foster Farms has refused to recognize this affiliation, which the bosses call illegal.

"The company doesn't want to recognize us because we know what we are doing, following the right procedures," Avila said. "We feel confident we are going to win."

### 'We Start with the World and How to Transform It'

Report from First Equatorial Guinea Book Fair

**FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER**, in October 2005 a book fair was held in the Central African country of Equatorial Guinea. Five supporters of Pathfinder Press took part, making its titles available. Their experiences in that country—a former Spanish colony and staging post for the slave trade, in an oil-rich region where Washington is today increasing its military buildup—shed light on the openings for militants in the new political situation being produced by intensifying conflicts among contending classes worldwide.

**JOIN US** in a discussion of the history and struggles of the peoples of Central and West Africa; the internationalist course and political weight of Cuba's socialist revolution; the increased politicization of working people resisting the employers' economic, social, and political assaults; the road forward in the fight for Black emancipation and women's rights; and much more.

And after the Saturday evening meeting, come back for more informal discussion and a brunch on Sunday! Bring co-workers, friends, and family!

**Speakers: Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press, and Arrin Hawkins, Martín Koppel, and Brian Taylor, participants in First Equatorial Guinea Book Fair**

**NEW YORK CITY: meeting Dec. 10, 6:30 p.m. reception; 7:30 p.m. program**  
Hunter College, Lecture Hall 714-W, 68th St. & Lexington Ave., Manhattan  
**brunch Dec. 11 11:30 a.m.—2:30 p.m.**

**Sponsored by the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists**

For more information, contact 'Militant' distributors in your area. See directory on page 8.

## — ON THE PICKET LINE —

### **Australia: unionists demand benefits from bankrupt company**

SYDNEY, Australia—Construction workers, members of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) picketed three building sites here November 12 to draw attention to their fight to win their rightful entitlements. In mid-October, 20 workers employed by D3 General Contracting were sacked without their wages, holiday pay, or redundancy (severance pay) when the company went bankrupt. D3 had been a contractor for Northpac Constructions, a company with sites throughout the city. The CFMEU is calling on North-

pac to pay these workers, most of whom are Maoris from New Zealand.

—Linda Harris

### **Workers strike packing plant in Brooklyn for union recognition**

BROOKLYN, New York—Workers at Agriprocessors Inc. in the Brooklyn Meat Market are on strike to force the company to recognize and negotiate with the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW). After a 15-5 vote in October in favor of representation by UFCW Local 342, the bosses fired two union militants. In response, the workers walked out. “We want a contract,”

Erasmus Flores, one of the fired workers, who has worked at Agriprocessors for seven years, told the *Militant* in a November 29 interview on the picket line. “We don’t have a single benefit—no overtime pay, no health benefits. We work six days a week 12-15 hours a day.” While the bosses are employing a dozen scabs, strikers are getting support from other workers in the market.

—Brian Williams



Militant/Paul Pederson

Workers on the picket line November 29 outside the Agriprocessors plant in Brooklyn, New York.

## Iowa laws restrict housing for many convicted of sex offenses

BY HELEN MEYERS

DES MOINES, Iowa—Iowa is one of 14 states that have passed laws barring those convicted of sex offenses against minors from living within 2,000 feet of a school or day-care center. The Iowa law applies to those who did not live in their current residence prior to July 1, 2002.

Nearly two dozen towns and counties in Iowa, including the city of Des Moines, have passed additional restrictions that make off limit areas around parks, swimming pools, libraries, and recreational trails. Polk County, which includes Des Moines, is debating the same measure the city passed. According to the *Des Moines Register*, if the county supervisors approve the law, 97 percent of all homes in the county will be off limit.

In some cases families are forced to split up when one parent has to move out because of this legislation. “They might as well just exile all of them...banish them from the state,” Don Santee, 30, told the *Sioux City Journal*. He was forced to move out of his Shellsburg home he shares with his wife and three children because he had been convicted 13 years earlier, when he was 17, of assault with intent to commit sexual abuse. “I am being punished again,” he said.

When the state law here was passed in 2002, the Iowa Civil Liberties Union (ICLU) sued and a federal judge ruled it unconstitutional. A three-judge federal appeals court panel reversed that decision last summer and local police began enforcing the law. People convicted of proscribed sex offenses were told to either move out or be arrested. At least

two individuals have surrendered to police and are in jail without bond because they cannot find a place to live allowed by the new law.

In Des Moines, 73-year-old John Chapman was supposed to be exempt because he lived in his apartment building prior to 2002. He recently moved across the hall, however, to accommodate the electric scooter he now needs to get around. He is now being evicted because authorities say his move puts him in violation of the law. He had been convicted 10 years ago, served five years in jail, and was placed on the Iowa Sex Offenders Registry. “I’m at the end of this road,” he told the *Des Moines Register*. “I’ve never been so scared... Please just find me a place to die.”

Ely, a town of 1,200 located near Cedar Rapids, did not have a school or day care in town and did not come under the state law. The town council, however, voted that Ely is a “predator-free zone,” so no convicted sex offenders can live there.

Edwin Fruit, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Des Moines city council at-large, spoke against the ordinance November 8 at the Polk County Supervisors’ hearing to enact the same housing restrictions for the county. Interviewed by *City View*, Fruit explained

that Democratic and Republican politicians target sex offenders, adding new crimes to the list of punishable offenses the federal, state, and city authorities have already instituted to press for broader attacks on working people. “It’s part of the continuing attack on democratic rights,” he said.

Several groups and individuals in Iowa have protested the new law. Most call for treatment programs that demand the person admit to being a sexual offender and often require consent to psychiatric care. In the Iowa state prisons if a convicted sex offender “volunteers” to enter such a treatment program they are given special consideration at their parole hearing for early release. Fruit said the SWP opposes these programs as they demean people and attempt to break individuals, not reintegrate them into society.

The ICLU asked the U.S. Supreme Court to review the state law. “Our jails and prisons likely are going to be filled with law-abiding citizens who served their sentence years ago, but who will be incarcerated again simply because they cannot find a place to live under this law,” said ICLU executive director Ben Stone. On November 28 the Supreme Court announced its refusal to review the law.

## Ontario chemical workers end strike

BY ANNETTE KOURI

TORONTO—Workers at the Invista Canada chemical plant in Maitland, Ontario, voted October 28 by a 77 percent margin to end their almost five-month strike. After the company threatened to hire replacement workers and impose a long-term shutdown of a section of the plant where 160 are employed, workers accepted an offer similar to one they had rejected September 19. The 350 workers are members of Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Local 28-O.

Local president Steve Armstrong told the *Militant*, “The company went on a full attack of intimidation. We either had to vote it in or have a problem. The company’s actions hurt the solidarity of the members.” Andrew Row, a production controller with 16 years in the plant, commented, “I’m happy to be back to work but the circumstances weren’t that great. It was more important to accept a contract that we didn’t really believe in but go in with the union intact.”

Under the new pact workers are being called back based on departmental instead of plant-wide seniority. Fourteen

days after the return to work, those who have not been recalled will be considered laid off. There is no wage increase in the contract, although benefits and pensions are codified for the first time. Contracting out will be allowed if the bosses deem that unionized workers can’t do the work at comparable “efficiency” and cost.

## — 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO —



December 12, 1980

MANAGUA—The U.S.-backed rulers of El Salvador have committed another vicious crime against the people of their country.

On November 27, six members of the executive committee of the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR) of El Salvador were kidnapped and assassinated.

Their bodies, riddled with bullets and showing signs of torture, dismemberment, and strangulation, were found at the lake near Ilopango International Airport, east of the capital San Salvador.

The six were captured shortly before noon on November 27 as they were about to hold a news conference at the San José High School in San Salvador.

According to eyewitness reports, the school was surrounded by about 200 men in Army and National Police uniforms. About twenty men in plain clothes burst into the school and forced everyone to the floor. The FDR leaders were beaten, blindfolded, and carried off in pickup trucks.



December 12, 1955

The merged AFL-CIO represents 15 million union men and women. Adherence of some of the independent unions may further strengthen this mighty force. What do the ranks hope to get from this powerful united movement?

The first hope is for genuine solidarity—an end to the raiding, strikebreaking and cannibalism.

The second hope is for a successful drive to organize the two-thirds of America’s wage earners who are still denied the benefits of unionism.

Number one target is the South—bastion of the open shop and labor’s most brazen enemies in Congress.

Success in organizing the South requires militancy and absolute opposition to Jim Crow.

Militancy is needed to fight the companies, their sheriffs, thugs and vigilantes. Let it be noted well that the racist organizations now being formed are aimed not only at terrorizing the Negro people but at smashing the expected organizing drive of the AFL-CIO.



December 1, 1930

We have just received the welcome news that on December 20, the gates of Comstock, N.Y., Prison will be opened to release comrade Maurice L. Malkin. Comrade Malkin was one of the victims of the Mineola frame-up a few years ago in connection with the New York fur workers’ strike. One of the most active militants in the Left wing and its union, and a foundation member of the Communist Party, he was railroaded to the penitentiary by the prosecution, and began to serve his term almost two years ago.

The news of his release has been received with enthusiasm by the New York comrades, and preparations are being made to meet him as befits a revolutionary fighter. As he comes to Grand Central Station on December 20, he will be met by a large group of his comrades and fellow-fighters in the needle trades workers’ Left wing who remember him on dozens of picket lines and everywhere else that the struggle was hottest.



September 19 picket line at Invista plant

# Book fair helps extend literacy in Venezuela

## Event is part of government efforts to make books accessible to all

BY NATALIE DOUCET

CARACAS, Venezuela—More than 600,000 people visited the Venezuela International Book Fair here November 11–20. After being held in Caracas only for the past 11 years, the fair is now hitting the road in nine states across the country between November 22 and December 11.

The National Book Center, the Ministry of Culture, and the Venezuelan government organized the fair, which was part of extending the accomplishments of recent literacy campaigns (see article below) by making a wide range of books accessible to millions.

Fair organizer Ramón Medero said some 130,000 titles were exhibited, and 650,000 books were sold during the 10-day event in Caracas.

Exhibitors included 30 from other countries, compared to 11 last year, and more than 100 from Venezuela.

Numerous fair participants wore the red T-shirts sported by volunteers in social programs known as “missions,” initiated by the government. These include the literacy campaigns and the Barrio Adentro (Inside the Neighborhood) program that has brought volunteer doctors from Cuba operating neighborhood clinics free of charge. Present throughout the fair were dozens of members of Mission Culture, launched recently to promote literature and art in working-class neighborhoods.

On November 19, the last Saturday of the fair, a large march in defense of Venezuela’s sovereignty took place in Caracas. The marchers assembled outside Eastern Park, where the fair was held. Some demonstrators browsed through book exhibits before the march took off (see article in last week’s issue).

The fair included forums, talks by authors, book signings, poetry readings,



Militant photos: Maura DeLuca (above); Arnold Weissberg (inset)

**Stands at Venezuela International Book Fair held November 11–20 in Caracas (above). Tom Baumann (right, inset) staffs Pathfinder booth, where volunteers sold nearly 800 books.**



puppet shows, and other events, most of which took place in tents and at the park amphitheater. The fair’s theme, “The Caribbean: a bridge of books, a sea of humanity,” was reflected in the many writers and other literary figures from the Caribbean who took part.

### 1 million copies of ‘Don Quixote’

A highlight of the fair was the distribution, free of charge, of 1 million copies of *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes, a classic in Spanish-language literature. People waited in line every day to get their copy.

A panel on “Socialism in the 21st Century” featured Cuban writers Armando Hart and Eliades Acosta, Venezuelan journalist Luis Britto, and Róger Calero, the presidential candidate of the Socialist Workers Party in the 2004 U.S. elections.

Calero was part of a team that staffed the Pathfinder Press booth at the fair. Other panels included “The social commitment of the writer” and “The book as an instrument of social integration.”

Those featured in poetry readings included Norberto Codina, editor of *La Gaceta de Cuba*, a literary magazine published in Havana; well-known Cuban writer Nancy Morejón; William Ospina from Colombia; and Roldán Mármol of the Dominican Republic.

Film showings, and musical and other cultural events were included.

The National Book Center repeated the book voucher program that was initiated last year, which the center describes as “an instrument to promote greater access to books and book reading by the general population.” Through this government-funded

program, workers in various government institutions were issued one or more vouchers worth \$5 each for use at the fair. Vouchers were also raffled at workshops during the fair organized by the School of Reading.

### Brisk sales at Pathfinder booth

Pathfinder Press had a stand for the second year in a row. By the end, volunteers at the booth had sold nearly 800 books. These included 32 purchased by the National Library and 162 bought by Kwai Mare, the government’s book distributor. Kwai Mare has 35 outlets throughout the country, and plans to expand the number to 200 by 2007.

Pathfinder’s best seller was issue 6 of *Nueva Internacional*, the Spanish-language edition of the Marxist magazine *New International*, featuring the article “Capitalism’s Long Hot Winter Has Begun.” Other top sellers included *Nueva Internacional* no. 7, and the Spanish-language editions of *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning*, *The Communist Manifesto*, *Che Guevara Talks to Young People*, *Malcolm X Talks to Young People*, *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution*, and *Abortion Is a Woman’s Right*.

Not all participants had a positive reaction to the Pathfinder stand, reflecting the class polarization in Venezuela. When a middle-aged woman, for example, figured out that these books were about working-class politics and critical of U.S. imperialism, she made a vulgar hand gesture and walked away.

Books on the fight for women’s equality and Black freedom drew much attention. Many young women leafed through the pamphlet *Abortion Is a Woman’s Right*, which sold 21 copies.

Some people came to the fair from other Venezuelan states or from other countries in the region. Alexis Carabalí Angola, a professor of anthropology from Cauca, Colombia, drove 12 hours by car to visit the fair. He said many workers, teachers, and trade unionists in Colombia support the Venezuelan government and oppose Colombian president Alvaro Uribe’s policy of backing Washington’s confrontationist course toward Caracas. “Latin America has always had dreams that have been pushed down by the local elite and the U.S. government,” he said.

Several youth stopped by to purchase books for their study group. After six months in Cuba studying social work, these young Venezuelans have joined the Francisco de Miranda Front, a study and action group that favors a socialist future for Venezuela. Isis Ochoa, who belongs to the Front, bought several copies of the *Communist Manifesto* and *The Structure and Organizational Principles of the Socialist Workers Party*, as well as a copy of *Lenin’s Final Fight* for her group’s use.

Pathfinder booth volunteers also sold 24 subscriptions to the *Militant*. Some people had seen the socialist news-weekly and Pathfinder books at the World Festival of Youth and Students held here in August. José Aponte, who had attended the youth festival, bought six titles at the Pathfinder stand. These books are important because Venezuela needs socialism, Aponte said.

## Venezuela: ‘Territory free of illiteracy’

BY RÓGER CALERO

CARACAS, Venezuela—At the completion on October 28 of a 27-month-long literacy campaign that taught 1.5 million people to read and write, Venezuela was declared “Territory Free of Illiteracy.”

It is the second country in Latin America, after Cuba in 1961, to achieve such an accomplishment.

“Without Cuba, Mission Robinson would have been practically impossible,” said Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez, thanking the people and the government of Cuba for their contribution in the literacy campaign.

Launched in July 2003, Mission Robinson aimed to teach basic reading, writing, and arithmetic to the 12 percent of adults who were illiterate in this country of more than 25 million people.

“The figures were daunting,” Javier Labrada, coordinator of the Cuban volunteers who work alongside their Venezuelan colleagues in education programs underway here, told the Cuban daily *Granma*.

“In 1998, only 59 percent of school-age children were enrolled in school, 1.5 million people were illiterate, more than 2 million people had not finished

the sixth grade, and nearly 2 million did not have the possibility to finish high school,” Labrada said. “In addition, there was no space in the universities for the 500,000 high school graduates.”

The Cuban government donated tens of thousands of television sets, VCRs, videotapes, and printed material used in the classes. Several hundred Cubans taught Venezuelan volunteers the world-renowned teaching method “*Yo sí puedo*” (I can do it). First developed by Cuban literacy teachers volunteering in other countries, it was adapted to Venezuela’s conditions and to the needs of students with various disabilities, including the blind and the deaf. According to Venezuela’s government, all prisoners are now literate too.

“If we can’t live as equals, how can we call this living,” said José Moreno, a 26-year-old construction worker at the Latin American Children’s Cardiologic Hospital, being built in the Libertador municipality of Caracas. Moreno is enrolled in Mission Sucre, an accelerated university-level mass education program.

Moreno’s in-laws are 70 and 64 years old and live in Maracay, west of Caracas. They both recently graduated from Mission Robinson. Moreno said they

both attended night classes at a local school, like the many that were established in every corner of the country to make learning courses accessible to adults with families and full-time jobs. “Before, they did not talk much about what was going on in the country,” said Moreno. “Now, they read the newspapers and talk more about politics.”

Over 125,000 people volunteered for Mission Robinson as facilitators for classes, transported students and materials, and offered their houses and porches as classrooms in working-class neighborhoods and rural areas around the country. Classes were held in the remote indigenous communities of Amazon state near the border with Brazil and the Orinoco River delta, the plains of Apure and Barinas, and many mountainous areas. Some 70,000 indigenous people, speaking 26 dialects, learned basic reading and writing. Teaching materials were produced in Spanish and in 14 indigenous languages.

A second phase of Mission Robinson was kicked off in October 2003 to reach the fourth-grade school level within one year, which was reached too. The government’s current goal is to bring everyone in the country to sixth-grade level education.

# Working people in New Orleans

## Continued from front page

the plight of those affected by the storm. Working people, however, use them to air their views and pressure the government to take some action—with limited success.

“I came here hoping to get some information. But I am going to leave empty-handed,” said Carlos Wilson, a taxi driver and former resident of New Orleans East, who now lives in Houston. “We can’t wait for a two-year study. We need to make decisions now!”

Wilson was referring to a proposal from the Urban Land Institute. This is a think tank that has advised city officials to conduct a two-year study in areas that sustained the most severe flooding before residents are allowed to return and rebuild.

“All you are doing in here is studying. All of you should be pretty smart by now from studying,” Wilson remarked to applause and laughter from those in the audience.

## Association of Katrina Evacuees

Rhonda Maberry is a leader of the National Association of Katrina Evacuees, and a nurse. She traveled from Jackson, Mississippi, where she now lives, to attend the meeting. “We formed the group to give us a true voice,” Maberry told the *Militant*. “We saw the need to organize ourselves to deal with many issues: from housing, to finding lost relatives, and just communicating.”

When the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced it would end voucher subsidies for hotels rooms for evacuees in several states by December 1, Maberry said the group

organized to distribute an open letter opposing the move. Under pressure, FEMA announced it would extend the voucher payments until January 7.

The National Association of Katrina Evacuees is also among several groups planning a conference of Gulf Coast evacuees on December 9 in Jackson and a march and rally in New Orleans on December 10.

Several dozen residents from a largely Vietnamese section of New Orleans East also attended the November 28 hearing. Among them were Phat Nguyen, a maintenance worker, and his neighbor Lisa Nguyen, a seafood store owner. Standing outside his neighbor’s house earlier that day, Phat Nguyen told the *Militant* that electricity, water, and gas have not been restored to the Vietnamese section of the neighborhood, even though there was little flooding in the area. Nguyen said they have not received even one of the 199 trailers they have requested from FEMA to house residents who have returned.

“Is this because of discrimination? I don’t know,” Phat Nguyen said. “But don’t try to make us scapegoats.” Vietnamese residents would attend the November 28 meeting to demand that their needs be met, Nguyen said.

There are 20,000 Vietnamese in the New Orleans area, according to Uyen Le, an organizer of the National Alliance of Vietnamese American Service Agencies.

“You can either lay down and take it or stand up and fight,” said Robert Singleton, a maintenance supervisor, as he, his brother Ronnie, a warehouse manager, and nephew Ronnie Singleton Jr., worked November 27 to



Militant photos by Sam Manuel

Above, Ronnie Singleton (at right) and son Ronnie Singleton Jr. (center) speak with *Militant* correspondent Karl Butts in New Orleans’ Lower Ninth Ward November 26. Three months after the area was flooded in the wake of Hurricane Katrina there is still no electricity, water, or gas there.

At right, Danny Davis (left) and Rhonda Maberry, leaders of the National Association of Katrina Evacuees, told *Militant* reporter José Aravena (right) that their group was formed to fight for the rights of the evacuees.



clean the remains of their family home in the Lower Ninth Ward. The area was among the hardest hit by the flooding. Much of it remained under water for several weeks.

One city requirement that has angered residents requires houses that sustained more than 50 percent damage to have their foundations raised to meet the city’s 100-year flood elevation plan. “How do you elevate a slab house?” asked Singleton.

Ronnie Singleton Jr., a truck driver, said he made a request for a FEMA trailer two months ago, and is still waiting. FEMA officials told him renters are on the back burner and the agency is taking care of homeowners first, he said. “Bottom line there is no housing. They are worried about getting the parade going. Getting my house going would be my parade,” he said, referring to efforts by city authorities to hold the annual Mardi Gras carnival that in the past took place over two weeks in February.

## Resisting evictions, rent gouging

“We don’t have any electricity, water, or gas,” said Jennifer Pitman, a housekeeper who returned to the city from Arkansas with her family three weeks ago. “We heard they would be evicting people if they don’t come back.” Pitman wants to find a new house to rent before returning to work. “The cost of houses has doubled,” she said. “I called one place that wanted \$900 a month plus a deposit.” She said you could rent a similar place before the flooding for \$400 a month. The daily papers feature sales ads for “reno” homes. These are houses damaged from the flooding.

Tomilyn Wilson, a grocery store cashier, now unemployed, was among 400 people who attended a November 29 Town Hall meeting hosted by Mayor Ray Nagin. She told those present she was being evicted because the landlord refused to accept her payment in order to seek a higher rent. “This is just naked rent gouging,” said Wilson, who lost a legal challenge

to the landlord’s action. “That judge did everything she could to take the landlord’s side.”

Nagin said the city has been receiving a larger number of complaints about price gouging, but offered no relief.

Working people across the city also expressed skepticism or opposition to a proposal by U.S. congressman Richard Baker, a Republican from Baton Rouge. Baker’s bill establishes a Louisiana Recovery Corporation funded by issuing state bonds. The corporation would purchase the flood-damaged homes of those unable or unwilling to repair them. A description of the bill on Baker’s website says homeowners will be compensated for any equity they have in the property. They would also be given first option at repurchasing the home after it has been repaired.

Mayor Nagin and Louisiana governor Kathleen Blanco, both Democrats, support the bill.

Many workers see it differently. “This is just a scheme to take people’s homes,” said Cosetta Williams, a resident of the Ninth Ward who attended the November 29 Town Hall meeting. “They say it’s voluntary but people who have just lost everything won’t really have a choice. And how are we going to be able to pay the notes on a new mortgage. You’re not going to get my place!” she said to applause.

José Avarena and Karl Butts contributed to this article.

## New Zealand: Thousands at indigenous peoples’ conference, including Cuban literacy teachers



Militant/Felicity Coggan

HAMILTON, New Zealand—Cuban volunteer education workers at the Seventh World Indigenous Peoples’ Conference on Education, held here November 27–December 1. From left: Jesús Vasco, Lucy Nuñez, Fernando Casales, and Nancy Ortíz. They are part of a team of volunteers from Cuba assisting in the Greenlight literacy program run by Te Wananga o Aotearoa, a Maori-based educational institution that is hosting the conference. They are standing at a stall promoting the program, which was launched two years ago.

Cuban minister of education Luis Ignacio Gómez Gutiérrez was a keynote speaker at the conference opening ceremony on November 27. “Only education and culture can give you freedom,” he said, describing the 1960–61 mass literacy campaign that followed the Cuban Revolution in 1959. Ongoing popular efforts to raise the cultural level of the population mean that “each factory, each hospital has become a school,” he said.

The 2,000 delegates hailed from 22 countries, and several thousand attended overall. Zachary Wone, 16, who came with 15 others from the Ngamahl Goori Youth Group in Australia, said this showed that “Aboriginal people are not alone—other indigenous people around the world face the same problems of colonization.”

—PATRICK BROWN

## Appeal to our readers

Since Hurricane Katrina the *Militant* has spent over \$7,500 to send reporters to the U.S. Gulf Coast to provide coverage like the article on this page. As we go to press, 13 readers have contributed a total of \$1,990 to cover travel and other reporting costs. Please continue to give generously. Send your contributions to the *Militant* at 306 W. 37th St., 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

# Capitalism is root cause of imperialist war

Below is an excerpt from Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism. The Spanish-language edition, El imperialismo, fase superior del capitalismo, is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for December and continues to keep this important work available to workers whose first language is Spanish. Written in 1916 by V.I. Lenin, a central leader of the Russian Revolution, Imperialism traces the roots of the outbreak of the First World War to the irrepressible competition of capitalist monopolies

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

for ever larger shares of world markets. Four years later, in the preface to the French and German editions excerpted below, Lenin provides further explanation regarding key ideas presented in the book, originally subject to Czarist censorship. Copyright © 2002 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BY V.I. LENIN

As was indicated in the preface to the Russian edition, this pamphlet was written in 1916, with an eye to the tsarist censorship. I am unable to revise the whole text at the present time, nor,



From right: British prime minister David Lloyd George, U.S. president Woodrow Wilson, and French premier Georges Clemenceau in Versailles, France, June 1919, after signing the Treaty of Versailles at the end of World War I. In redividing world resources among the imperialist powers, the pact placed harsh conditions on defeated Germany and its allies.

perhaps, would this be advisable, since the main purpose of the book was, and remains, to present, on the basis of the summarised returns of irrefutable bourgeois statistics, and the admissions of bourgeois scholars of all countries, a composite picture of the world capitalist system in its international relationships at the beginning of the twentieth century—on the eve of the first world imperialist war...

The most essential of what should be added to this censored pamphlet I shall try to present in this preface.

It is proved in the pamphlet that the war of 1914–18 was imperialist (that is, an annexationist, predatory, war of plunder) on the part of both sides; it was a war for the division of the world, for the partition and repartition of colonies and spheres of influence of finance capital, etc.

Proof of what was the true social, or rather, the true class character of the war is naturally to be found, not in the diplomatic history of the war, but in

an analysis of the objective position of the ruling classes in all the belligerent countries. In order to depict this objective position one must not take examples or isolated data (in view of the extreme complexity of the phenomena of social life it is always possible to select any number of examples or separate data to prove any proposition), but all the data on the basis of economic life in all the belligerent countries and the whole world.

It is precisely irrefutable summarised data of this kind that I quoted in describing the partition of the world in 1876 and 1914 (in Chapter VI) and the division of the world's railways in 1890 and 1913 (in Chapter VII). Railways are a summation of the basic capitalist industries, coal, iron and steel; a summation and the most striking index of the development of world trade and bourgeois-democratic civilisation. How the railways are linked up with large-scale industry, with monopolies, syndicates, cartels, trusts, banks and

the financial oligarchy is shown in the preceding chapters of the book. The uneven distribution of the railways, their uneven development—sums up, as it were, modern monopolist capitalism on a world-wide scale. And this summary proves that imperialist wars are absolutely inevitable under such an economic system, as long as private property in the means of production exists.

The building of railways seems to be a simple, natural, democratic, cultural and civilising enterprise; that is what it is in the opinion of the bourgeois professors who are paid to depict capitalist slavery in bright colours, and in the opinion of petty-bourgeois philistines. But as a matter of fact the capitalist threads, which in thousands of different intercrossings bind these enterprises with private property in the means of production in general, have converted this railway construction into an instrument for oppressing a thousand million people (in the colonies and semi-colonies), that is, more than half the population of the globe that inhabits the dependent countries, as well as the wage-slaves of capital in the "civilised" countries.

Private property based on the labour of the small proprietor, free competition, democracy, all the catchwords with which the capitalists and their press deceive the workers and the peasants—are things of the distant past. Capitalism has grown into a world system of colonial oppression and of the financial strangulation of the overwhelming majority of the population of the world by a handful of "advanced" countries. And this "booty" is shared between two or three powerful world plunderers armed to the teeth (America, Great Britain, Japan), who are drawing the whole world into their war over the division of their booty.

*December* BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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# Defend entire working class

The announcement by General Motors of 30,000 layoffs and shutdowns of up to a dozen plants comes on top of health-care concessions GM forced on its workers with agreement of the officialdom of the United Auto Workers (UAW). A little earlier, GM's parts supplier, Delphi, filed for bankruptcy protection, announcing the slashing of wages and medical benefits. Many GM workers now fear a future similar to that at Delphi is ahead of them—and for good reason.

As capitalism has entered the opening stages of a depression, the largest employers—from coal operators like Horizon, to steel firms, and airlines such as United, Northwest, and Delta—are using bankruptcy proceedings to declare null and void union contracts that supposedly guaranteed jobs, wages, and benefits.

As has been demonstrated at the major airlines, agreeing to company concession demands only whets the appetite of the boss for more attacks on wages, benefits, and job conditions. However, in a number of recent fights, by relying on picket line militancy, unity of the trade unions involved, and broader labor solidarity important victories have been won by working people: from Brooks, Alberta, where meat packers won union recognition and their first contract; to the southwestern United States, where copper workers

pushed back Asarco's concession demands; to Houston, where truckers struck and won better rates.

At the same time, it's important to recognize that working people and their unions can't once and for all stop layoffs, plant shutdowns, and related cuts of medical and other benefits, until they establish a workers and farmers government, topple capitalism, and join the struggle for a society based on human solidarity.

In the short-run, however, it's high time to push for dropping the approach the labor officialdom adopted in the post-World War II boom of seeking fringe benefits in individual contracts, which tie working people to the profitability and competitiveness of the boss.

It's time to push for our unions to campaign for public works programs to repair the deteriorating infrastructure and put millions to work. For unemployment compensation at union scale for the duration of joblessness. For socializing medicine to provide government-funded, lifetime health care for all. For government-guaranteed pensions that provide a living income.

As more workers are forced on the picket lines and into other struggles to defend their livelihoods from the bosses' attacks, millions can be won to fight for such demands to protect the entire working class from the ills of the profit system in decline.

## Miners plan 2006 Changing Woman Conference

BY ALYSON KENNEDY

KIRTLAND, New Mexico—Members of International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE) Local 953 and others attended a November 19 potluck dinner meeting here to plan the second Changing Woman Conference next year.

Rosie Kellywood, a member of Local 953, welcomed everyone to the meeting. There has been an increase in discrimination charges filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), she said. "In 2004 the EEOC received 13,136 charges of sexual harassment and 27,696 charges of race discrimination. Since the mid-1990s the number of race discrimination charges filed has increased 125 percent." She added that "the laws are not written for women but for the companies."

Kellywood, a surface miner at the BHP-owned San

Juan mine, was one of the unionists who initiated the idea for the first Changing Woman Conference. That event was held on April 18. About 50 people attended, including a good number of women who work in the region's coal mines.

People at the meeting discussed organizing a longer conference in 2006 to give more time for workshops and informal discussion.

A woman miner from the BHP-owned La Plata surface mine said she learned a lot from last year's conference and wanted to help work on the upcoming event.

"I have women co-workers," said Norm Benally, who works at the San Juan mine. "I support them and their fight against discrimination. I would like to see co-workers wives' get involved." Two wives of Local 953 members were among the 10 people present.

## LETTERS

### Northwest Airlines strike

With the bankruptcy courts behind it, having got AMFA off its property (and trying to hold onto its scabs), and with the lack of solidarity among the unions at the airline, NWA might think it's close to its ultimate goal of a nonunion cut-price airline. Yet, like USAir, it still hasn't had the strength to smash the unions on its property. The AMFA strike continues.

There is no doubt in my mind that the IAM, PFAA and ALPA (the Machinists, flight attendants and pilots' unions) in not supporting the mechanics, missed an opportunity to cut across divisions and inspire a united effort against the ravages of these representatives of the capitalist class. And just as the mechanics found out there really is no room to negotiate, NWA is out to whittle our strength tier by tier until they can overcome our union strength.

The fight is there to be had whether we like it or not.

I hope the editorial of victories at three workplaces (*Militant* #46) is as well received as the *Militant's* coverage of the AMFA strike. It should be an inspiration to all. Meanwhile a flickering of anger erupted at Boston November 11 when 18 out of 22 on

the first shift reported sick with the flu. A recent flight from Newark was one and a half hours late because NWA could not find a mechanic!!!

With gratitude for your continued support of our class,  
*Dave Lee (member IAM District 143)*  
*Chicago, Illinois*

### Reaction to Katrina coverage

A co-worker from Serbia nodded with a light of instant recognition in her eye when I told her of the *Militant's* message that the suffering in the aftermath of Katrina would have been a lot worse if it hadn't been for the actions of working people. She told me that conditions in her town worsened dramatically overnight when "Clinton bombed my country." But she said proudly that no one died of hunger because the villagers came into town and sold food; people learned to plant food of their own in suburban gardens; and the refugees from Bosnia taught others how to cultivate crops hitherto unknown locally—green peppers and tobacco for home-made cigarettes, for example. These are still grown there to this day.

The extent to which such experiences of self-reliance and survival are widespread gives a glimpse of

the resources hidden among us.

*Katy LeRougetel*  
*Toronto, Ontario*

### New Diethnes Vima website

Diethnes Vima, which publishes Pathfinder books in Greek (its most recent publication being the Greek-language translation of "Capitalism's Long Hot Winter Has Begun"), recently launched a new website. The site includes cover photos of its titles and a brief description of each book. It also has a link to the Pathfinder Press website for titles in languages other than Greek. The home page has a painting by Italian artist and Athens resident Renata Menis. The site was prepared through the volunteer help of Beirut resident Bashar Abu-Sayfan. Its address is [www.diethnesvima.com](http://www.diethnesvima.com)

*Georges Mehrabian*  
*Athens, Greece*

**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.**

## Split of Israeli Likud

Continued from page 3

the first time of a border crossing from Gaza into Egypt.

### There is no peace

The Israeli government is making these moves without establishing a formal peace with the leadership of the Palestinian struggle. Its recent steps, like the Gaza pullout, are unilateral "facts on the ground." The Israeli regime has taken them while showing its determination—through blood and iron—to hold on to Jerusalem and sections of the West Bank with the largest Jewish settlements. This will lead to further resistance by the dispossessed Palestinians in spite of the exhaustion of their second intifada (uprising).

Since his election in 2001, Sharon has overseen the systematic physical elimination, either through assassination or imprisonment, of much of the active cadre and leadership of Hamas and other groups that have carried out "martyrdom" bombings and other armed attacks on Israeli targets.

In 2002, Israel launched its largest military assault since the invasion of Lebanon, encircling the major cities in the West Bank.

Sharon's administration has built a substantial section of a 400-mile wall that redraws the border of Israel to include at least 11 percent of the West Bank and 75 percent of the Israeli settlements there. In an interview reported in the Aug. 15, 2004, *New York Times*, Brig. Gen. Eival Gilady, the architect of the wall, said it was intended to send two messages: "One, to Palestinians, that there is a price in land to continuing the conflict; two, to the settlers, that there is less of a future for them on the Palestinian side of the line."

Washington's offensive in the Middle East has also prodded the Israeli rulers along this course. Washington has used its war and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan to deepen its relations with the Israeli regime and its military and intelligence apparatus. Tel Aviv has benefited from the presence of 160,000 U.S. troops in Iraq.

"It's not surprising that monumental changes that are taking place all around them in the Middle East—in Iraq, in Lebanon, all around the Middle East—are also causing monumental changes in the psychology of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict...in the politics of both the Palestinian territories and in Israel," U.S. secretary of state Condoleezza Rice said November 22, commenting on Likud's split.

A number of governments of majority Arab or Muslim countries have already taken the first steps toward normalizing relations with Israel. The government of Pakistan, for example, opened diplomatic channels with Tel Aviv in September. On November 25, as a condition of entry into the World Trade Organization, the regime of Saudi Arabia ended its economic boycott of Israel.

## AFL-CIO sets December rallies for workers rights

BY ARRIN HAWKINS

The AFL-CIO union federation is organizing a series of rallies, marches, and other activities leading up to December 10, International Human Rights Day, to "demand workers are guaranteed a fundamental human right: The freedom to have a union voice on the job," as its website puts it. The website lists more than 100 actions planned in cities across the United States. These include candlelight vigils, teach-ins, and town hall meetings around organizing unions.

In New York City a march and rally is planned at Washington Square Park on December 7 to back organizing efforts by home aide workers at Lifespire, child care workers, and New York University graduate employees. New York Transport Workers Union Local 100 members, whose three-year contract expires December 15, have also been organizing informational pickets at subway yards and bus depots demanding better health care and pensions.

Rallies to support workers' rights will take place December 8 in Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia. That day a march to the White House in Washington is also scheduled.

For more information on these and other activities, contact the local AFL-CIO office or visit the labor federation's website at [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org).