

# THE MILITANT

**INSIDE**  
**Socialist conference prepares for new class battles**  
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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## Texas protest opposes building of border wall

BY SAMUEL WAGNER

EDINBURG, Texas—More than 500 people rallied here July 12 demanding an end to the building of a wall on the Mexican border. The rally in the student union ballroom at the University of Texas Pan-American (UTPA) and a march to the Hidalgo County Courthouse were part of a larger National Day of Protest against the border wall.

Scott Nicol, a spokesperson for the coalition, introduced the rally, describing the broad opposition to the proposed wall among residents of the Rio Grande Valley region. “This is a disaster wall that only serves to criminalize some of us,” said UTPA student Claudia Tamez.

At a rally at the county courthouse following the march, David Anshen, assistant professor of English at UTPA, said, “This wall is part of the brutal attacks on immigrant communities, nationally and locally.”

Steve Warshell spoke on behalf of Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate Róger Calero. Warshell is the SWP candidate in Texas for U.S. **Continued on page 5**

## Crane falls in Houston killing four workers

BY ANTHONY DUTROW

HOUSTON—The July 18 collapse of one of the world’s largest cranes at the LyondellBasell refinery here underscores the danger facing workers as the bosses drive through speedup and cut back on safety.

Four workers were killed. All worked for Deep South Crane and Rigging, a contractor that was preparing a maintenance overhaul at LyondellBasell, a massive 700-acre petrochemical facility and one of a continuous series of refineries and chemical plants that stretch from Houston to Texas City, some 50 miles to the southeast.

The four dead workers were Marion “Scooter” Odom III, John Henry, Daniel “DJ” Johnson, and Rocky Strength. Seven workers were injured. Four were taken to hospitals for treatment; three others received care at the refinery.

As the crane collapsed it knocked over a smaller crane. Television footage of the crane showed it appeared to break off at the base.

On July 20 the Occupational Safety **Continued on page 11**

## U.S. escalates war in Afghanistan, Pakistan

Obama, McCain call for more troops



Getty Images

U.S. troops fire artillery near the Pakistan border in Bermel, Afghanistan.

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—After meeting with Afghanistan’s president Hamid Karzai in Kabul July 20, Barack Obama, the presumptive Democratic nominee for U.S. president, reiterated his call to send at least two more U.S. combat brigades, about 7,000 troops, to fight the Taliban and its supporters in Afghanistan.

Five days earlier in a campaign stop in Albuquerque, John McCain, the presumptive Republican nominee, said he would send three combat brigades to Afghanistan.

The convergence of McCain’s and Obama’s views on one of the central fronts in Washington’s “global war on terror” is in line with the course the U.S. military has carried out for several months now, including stepped up combat operations by U.S. and NATO troops in Afghani-

stan and increasing use of air strikes from fighter jets and Predator drones in Pakistan.

Afghanistan was the second stop of a Middle East tour by Obama, after visiting U.S. troops in Kuwait. The tour also includes Iraq, Jordan, and Israel.

Before his departure Obama gave a speech July 15 at the Ronald Reagan Building here outlining his views. The Illinois senator said that Iraq is not the central front in the “war on terror” and that he would be “taking the fight to al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan.” He would also seek larger troop contributions from NATO and fewer restrictions on the use of their troops.

Calling the tribal regions in Pakistan the “greatest threat to security,” Obama said, “We need more troops, **Continued on page 11**

## New York Socialist Workers ballot drive picks up steam



Militant/Eddie Beck

Luis Martínez (center) collects signatures in Harlem to place socialists on ballot. Alyson Kennedy, SWP candidate for vice president, is at left.

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

NEW YORK, July 23—After just over a week of campaigning in working-class neighborhoods across the state, supporters of the Socialist Workers Party election campaign have collected more than 18,000 signatures to put Róger Calero, SWP candidate for U.S. president, and Alyson Kennedy, the party’s candidate for vice president, on the New York State ballot.

Campaigners have also collected

more than 4,700 signatures to place Martin Koppel, the SWP candidate for Congress in the 15th District, on the ballot.

Campaigners have found wide interest in a working-class alternative to the Democrats and Republicans. They have distributed thousands of copies of the new color campaign brochure, in both English and Spanish. The brochure outlines the SWP campaign’s **Continued on page 4**

## House votes to bail out mortgage firms

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C., July 23—The U.S. House of Representatives approved today a plan put forward by the Treasury Department and Federal Reserve to rescue the country’s two largest mortgage companies. The bill now goes to the Senate. Since early October, Freddie Mac shares lost 83 percent of their value on the New York Stock Exchange and Fannie Mae shares lost 77 percent.

As government-sponsored entities, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac were created to provide loans for home purchases. The two companies hold or back \$5.3 trillion of the \$12 trillion total in outstanding U.S. home mortgages.

Federal regulators took over IndyMac Bank July 11 in the second-largest bank failure in U.S. history.

These are the latest examples of the volatility gripping financial markets

spurred by a deepening debt-driven credit contraction resulting from default losses in housing mortgages.

Bush administration officials said there are no immediate plans to take **Continued on page 6**

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# UK municipal workers strike for higher wages

BY CELIA PUGH

LONDON—Municipal workers, members of the Unison and Unite unions in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, went on strike July 16–17 to protest a pay offer that is below the inflation rate.

Unison reported 500,000 workers on strike, with 11,000 schools affected, libraries closed, rubbish collection unattended, and two small airports in the north of Ireland and in Wales shut down. Local government employers disputed the figures, claiming only 300,000 workers struck and 600 schools were affected.

The Labour Party government had imposed a 2 percent limit on public-sector pay raises.

At a strike rally in London, Ishe Richards, a care giver, told the *Militant*, “I’m a single mother on mini-

mum wage and it’s getting harder to make ends meet. Actions like this should be more frequent, we have to make them take us seriously.” Passing traffic tooted horns in support and drivers gave thumbs up.

Adrian Nixon, Unison union steward and convener in Redbridge, East London, said “I clean public toilets and graffiti on a basic £210 [weekly] wage. It’s not enough for my family. The government knew that recession is on the cards and they’re going to shaft us with a pittance increase of 2.45 percent. This strike action is wicked and we’re well pleased.” With inflation currently at 3.8 percent, according to official figures, the union is demanding a 6 percent pay raise.

*Björn Tirsén contributed to this article.*

## ‘Militant’ announces staff changes

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

Cindy Jaquith, who has been the managing editor of the *Militant*, is now the editor. Jaquith, who served on the *Militant* staff from 1971 to 1991, was editor from 1979 to 1985. She was the chief of the paper’s Managua Bureau in Nicaragua from 1985 to 1987, providing firsthand reports on the revolution in that country. Before her current stint on the paper, she was active in building the socialist movement in Pittsburgh, where she worked as a sewing machine operator.

Joining the staff is Seth Galinsky, who has been a contributor to the pa-

per while working on the kill floor at Tyson Foods in Perry, Iowa. Galinsky, 51, was a correspondent in Managua from 1988 to 1990, and served on the *Militant* staff in New York from 1990 to 1992.

Ben Joyce, who had been attending college in New York and joined the staff in June as a summer volunteer, will not be returning to school in the fall. He is now a full-time volunteer on the staff. Joyce, 22, is a member of the Young Socialists National Steering Committee. He is the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress in New York’s 7th District.

## 250 protest racist vandalism at Louisiana home



Militant/Jacquie Henderson

METAIRIE, Louisiana—More than 250 people rallied here July 4 to protest the letters “KKK” and crosses burned into the lawn of Travis and Kiyanna Smith.

The Smiths, who are Black, moved into a largely white neighborhood in this New Orleans suburb in May and found the threatening burns in their front yard a few days later. When their approaches to neighbors didn’t stop the reappearance of the lawn burns—this time in their backyard—they spoke out publicly.

The July 4 action was larger than anticipated. After several speakers answered the racist attacks, dozens of participants picked up shovels and wheelbarrows and worked to plant fresh sod over the damaged lawn.

—JACQUIE HENDERSON

## North Korea to dismantle reactor by end of October

BY BEN JOYCE

The government of North Korea took further steps toward ending its nuclear energy program, agreeing July 12 that it would disable its main Yongbyon facility reactor by the end of October and allow international inspectors to verify the process.

Representatives of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), South Korea, Japan, China, Russia, and the United States came to the agreement after three days of talks in Beijing. In what the *Washington Post* calls an “intrusive inspection program,” the agreement provides for inspectors from the six nations to visit North Korean nuclear facilities and review documents, as well as call on the UN’s International Atomic Energy Agency to help in the verification process.

In previous negotiations that took place in February 2007, the governments of the United States, China, Russia, and South Korea agreed to provide the DPRK with 1 million tons of oil in exchange for the dismantling of its nuclear facilities. But they delivered only 40 percent of the oil, the DPRK says. The United States and Russia now say they will provide the remaining fuel before the October deadline.

The latest agreement comes after North Korea released information about its main nuclear reactor facility and demonstratively demolished the main cooling tower at the Yongbyon plutonium-producing facility in June.

Washington will remove some sanctions against North Korea as part of the agreement, but the DPRK will continue to face severe trade restrictions.

## THE MILITANT

Help get the SWP on the ballot!

Supporters of the Socialist Workers Party presidential ticket are petitioning to get the party on the ballot in states across the country. Find out in the pages of the ‘Militant’ how you can be part of this important effort.



Petitioning to place socialist candidates on ballot in New York.

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# Fidel Castro speaks out on Colombia hostages, lessons of the Cuban Revolution

BY SETH GALINSKY

Following a July 2 operation in which commandos of the Colombian military freed 15 hostages held by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), Cuban leader Fidel Castro wrote two articles commenting on the events. The articles, printed July 3 and July 5 in the Cuban media, have been widely publicized abroad.

"We are watching with concern how the imperialists try to capitalize on what happened in Colombia," Castro wrote July 3. At the same time, he said, "Out of basic humanitarianism, we rejoiced at the news that Ingrid Betancourt, three American citizens, and other captives had been released."

Ingrid Betancourt was kidnapped by the FARC while she was campaigning for president six years ago. Freed along with her were 11 Colombian soldiers and three U.S. citizens working for Northrop Grumman Corp., who were captured in 2003 when their surveillance plane went down on an "antinarcotics" mission for the Pentagon. "The civilians should have never been kidnapped, nor should the soldiers have been kept as prisoners in jungle conditions," wrote Castro. "These were objectively cruel actions. No revolutionary aim could justify them."

Imperialist governments around the world have made much of welcoming the hostages home. Castro pointed out that these governments "want to deflect international attention away from their interventionist plans in Venezuela and Bolivia, and away from the presence of the [U.S.] 4th Fleet in support of the political line that aims to totally eliminate the independence of the countries located south of the United States."

## Washington heavily involved

Washington was heavily involved in the planning of the hostage-freeing operation. U.S. surveillance aircraft intercepted rebel radio and satellite phone conversations and used imaging equipment that penetrated forest foliage, Castro noted in his second article on July 5.

He quoted William Brownfield, U.S. ambassador to Colombia, who told the press the day after the operation, "The truth of the matter is, we have actually come together in a way that we rarely have in the United States of America, except with longtime allies, principally NATO allies." Several times, Brownfield said, the U.S. government had to make decisions "at the highest levels" about proceeding with the rescue operation.

Colombia has been wracked by intense class conflict for decades. In his July 5 article, Castro noted that the armed resistance in Colombia was initiated by Manuel Marulanda, a peasant, 60 years ago.

Marulanda became a guerrilla "in response to the massacres of peasants carried out by the oligarchy," Castro said, and later joined the Communist Party of Colombia, which "was under the influence of the Communist Party of the USSR, not of Cuba."

"The Colombian Communist Party never planned to conquer power through the armed struggle," the Cuban leader explained. "The *guerilla* was a resistance front and not the essential instrument for conquering revolutionary power."

## Example of Cuban Revolution

This contrasted with Cuba, where a revolutionary movement that carried out a successful armed struggle was built by Castro and other leaders with the aim of conquering state power as rapidly as possible. From the time of the Cuban revolutionaries' first encounter with Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista's troops on Dec. 5, 1956, it took two years for the revolutionary struggle to triumph over the dictatorship.

The Cuban leadership insisted on proletarian morality in the way they conducted the armed struggle. "We won our revolutionary war in Cuba by immediately releasing every prisoner absolutely unconditionally," wrote



Council of State Office of Historical Affairs

Fidel Castro leads Rebel Army on march in the Sierra Maestra. Cuban revolutionaries' objective was to lead the workers and peasants to power as quickly as possible.

Castro. "The soldiers and officers captured in every battle were released to the International Red Cross; we kept only their weapons. No soldier will ever put down his arms if he thinks he will be killed or subjected to cruel treatment."

"Marulanda, a man with remarkable natural talent and a leader's gift, did not have the opportunity to study when he was young," Castro noted. "He conceived a lengthy and prolonged struggle. I disagreed with this point of view. But I never had a chance to talk this over with him." Marulanda died earlier this year.

In 1993 the FARC split from the Communist Party and Marulanda took over the leadership of the guerrilla group, which had "always excelled in a hermetic sectarianism when admitting combatants as well as in their harsh and compartmentalized command methods," Castro wrote.

The FARC grew to more than 10,000 combatants, often in rivalry with other guerrilla groups. "By then the Colombian territory had become the largest source of cocaine production in the world," Castro said. "Extreme violence, kidnappings, taxes, and demands on drug producers became widespread."

At the same time, the situation became more complicated due to "paramilitary forces, armed by the oligarchy, fortified by the great abundance of men serving in the country's armed forces who were discharged from duty every year without any guarantee of a job."

Because of this, for three decades the Cuban leadership has advocated peace in Colombia, Castro said. "But we are neither in favor of foreign military intervention nor of the policy of force the United States is attempting to impose at all costs.

"I have honestly and strongly criticized the objectively cruel methods of kidnapping and retaining prisoners under the conditions of the jungle. But I am not suggesting that anyone lay down their arms, since everyone who did so in the last 50 years did not survive to see the peace," he said. "If I dare to suggest anything to the FARC guerrillas it would be simply that they should state any way they can to the International Red Cross their willingness to free unconditionally all of the hostages and prisoners they hold," he wrote.

"I will never support the *pax romana* that the empire tries to impose on Latin America," Castro closed.

# Bipartisan vote expands U.S. gov't spying

BY DOUG NELSON

Following bipartisan approval in Congress, President George Bush signed a bill July 10 expanding the legal authority of the executive branch of government to spy on U.S. citizens and others inside the country.

The bill was described by the *New York Times* as "the biggest re-vamping of federal surveillance law in 30 years." The American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit challenging the bill as a violation of the First and Fourth amendments to the Constitution the day it was signed.

The bill amended the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) of 1978. FISA was enacted following the Watergate scandal and lawsuits filed by the Socialist Workers Party and others against the FBI for its domestic spying and disruption campaign against political activists—revelations that resulted in widespread growth of distrust in government snoops.

The 1978 FISA legislation was pro-

moted by liberals and civil libertarians as a way to put some restraints on "illegal" spying. The government set up secret courts to issue wiretap and search warrants requested from spy agencies. Since then, the FISA courts have provided a legal rubber stamp to government spy operations, having turned down only 5 of 19,000 requests in 26 years. It was the FISA courts, for example, that gave the green light for the searches and wiretaps of the Cuban Five that were used to frame them up on conspiracy charges in 2001.

This most recent amendment to the 1978 act legitimizes to a large extent a once-secret spy program set up by the Bush administration that circumvented the FISA courts. The program, established following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in New York and Washington, instructed the National Security Agency (NSA) to conduct warrantless wiretaps of U.S. residents it claimed might have links to al-Qaeda. It targeted hundreds of people inside the

United States and included taps of domestic communications. The program was officially closed in January 2007.

Communications companies including AT&T, Verizon, and Sprint Nextel provided the NSA with phone and e-mail taps without warrants. Following the disclosure of the program, more than 40 lawsuits were filed against these companies for violating their customers' constitutional rights. The recently passed amendment grants immunity from lawsuit to all these companies.

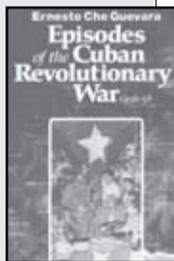
The amendment also loosens some of the restrictions in the FISA law. For example, it allows the attorney general and director of national intelligence to authorize taps of anyone in the United States for a period of seven days without filing for a warrant, instead of the previous 48 hours. Spying can continue while awaiting the secret court's decision. The only official requirement is that the domestic targets are in communication with foreign

Continued on page 6

## Episodes of the Cuban Revolutionary War 1956-58

By Ernesto Che Guevara

A firsthand account of the military campaigns and political events that culminated in the January 1959 popular insurrection that overthrew the U.S.-backed dictatorship in Cuba. Guevara describes the political and moral high ground the revolutionaries took and how the struggle transformed the men and women of the Rebel Army and July 26 Movement.



—\$30

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# New York petitioning

Continued from front page

course of action for workers and farmers to defend themselves from the devastating consequences of capitalism's deepening economic crises and wars.

Another big mobilization of campaign supporters takes place the weekend of July 26–27, when supporters are aiming to make their goal of 30,000 signatures for the presidential ticket and 7,000 for Koppel—doubling the state requirement, with petitioners hitting the street every day this week.

Over the July 19–20 weekend, one four-person team collected 637 signatures at a music festival at Coney Island. Another team signed up 606 people attending an All Colombia Day celebration in Queens. Thousands of signatures were collected in Harlem.

Alyson Kennedy joined a team of campaign supporters petitioning on 145th Street and Broadway in Harlem, the district where Koppel is running for Congress. Luis Martínez, who lives in the area, joined the effort. Martínez works in a garment shop with Maura DeLuca, the SWP candidate for Congress in the 16th District. He took Kennedy and DeLuca around the neighborhood to introduce them to workers he knew.

The socialist campaign created quite a debate among one group of workers playing dominos in a local park. Some said the petition is for “the communists” or “I’m for Obama” and would not sign. But others signed, including one worker who told everyone that “the working class has no homeland.”

On another block, they were introduced to Héctor Nina. He signed the petition and told them he had recently met Róger Calero at a meeting about Venezuela. After putting Calero/Kennedy campaign buttons on his shirt

he took blank petitions and campaign brochures and said he would collect some signatures.

Campaigners also petitioned in the Buffalo and Albany areas of upstate New York. A full-time team in New York City of 15 to 18 campaign volunteers is bringing in an average of 1,300 signatures each weekday for the presidential ticket, and 600 a day for Koppel.

Some 85 people attended a rally here July 19 to celebrate the success of the ballot effort in its first week. Speakers included the SWP ticket in New York State: Calero and Kennedy and the four SWP candidates for Congress: Koppel, Ben Joyce in the 7th District, Dan Fein in the 10th District, and DeLuca. Participants donated more than \$1,400 to the campaign.

## Certified for ballot

At the rally Fein reported that the socialists are already certified for the ballot in New Jersey, Delaware, Washington State, and Colorado. They will soon file for ballot status in Louisiana and Florida. Petitioning efforts in Iowa, Minnesota, and Vermont are slated to begin as soon as New York is completed.

Fein described some of the responses campaign supporters have received in New York City. “At 125th Street and Lexington Avenue, Gezel Rodríguez, a student, came over to the campaign table and said she wanted to get classmates to sign,” said Fein. “She took a petitioning board and returned with 31 signatures that day, and then took additional blank petitions, promising to return with more next week.”

In his remarks Calero pointed to the campaign's central message of extending and using union power to defend working people in their fight for safety and dignity on the job. The SWP candidates fight for unioniza-



Militant/Eddie Beck

Martín Koppel, Socialist Workers congressional candidate in New York's 15th District, collects signatures during the petitioning drive.

tion and legalization for all immigrant workers, he emphasized.

Calero will be traveling next to join a July 27 demonstration in Postville, Iowa, against immigration raids and to bring his campaign to workers in meatpacking plants in Waterloo, Iowa, and Windom, Austin, Long Prairie, and South St. Paul, Minnesota. He will speak at campaign rallies in Des Moines, Iowa, and Minneapolis during this campaign swing. He will be campaigning soon also in Delaware where the party has recently been certified for the ballot.

Kennedy spoke about her recent participation and campaigning in the National Organization for Women (NOW) convention in Bethesda, Maryland (see story this page). “The attack on women's rights has been a central part of the employer offensive,” she said. “We spoke to NOW members about extending and defending affirmative action programs and supporting a women's right to choose abortion, as well as the importance of opposing the anti-immigrant raids taking place.”

Kennedy announced she will be campaigning next in Vermont, Iowa, and Louisiana.

“From Buffalo to Coney Island, our campaign has been receiving a great response as we present our program to working people,” stated Koppel. “The capitalist rulers claim that higher wages lead to inflation, but the fact is that real wages have been dropping for seven years in a row. Our campaign explains that when prices go up, wages should automatically rise. This is something we've gotten a big response to during petitioning.”

## For shorter workweek

Koppel said that to counter unemployment, legislation should be put in effect to shorten the workweek with no cut in pay. Millions more can be put to work at union-scale wages, he said, through a federally funded public works program

to build and repair homes, schools, hospitals, roads, bridges, and public transportation.

Joyce pointed to Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama's visit to Afghanistan. Like McCain, Joyce said, Obama calls for sending thousands more U.S. troops to Afghanistan. The SWP campaign calls for withdrawing all U.S. and coalition troops from Afghanistan and Iraq, and the other countries where U.S. forces are stationed.

“Another construction worker died in Queens a few days ago, bringing to 20 the number killed on construction job sites in New York in 2008,” stated DeLuca. “Our campaign says no worker has to die and SWP candidates call for strengthening unions and using union power to effectively defend safety rights.”

## SWP vice presidential candidate participates in NOW convention

BY SETH DELLINGER

BETHESDA, Maryland—Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. vice president, campaigned at the annual convention of the National Organization for Women (NOW), held here July 18–20. Nearly 400 people attended the gathering.

Speaking in a workshop titled “Feminists Unite For Immigrant Women's Rights,” she urged participants to reject the portrayal of immigrant workers as a “suffering victim class.” Kennedy described a recent protest of an immigration raid in Postville, Iowa. Women facing deportation led the march there wearing electronic tracking ankle bracelets cops forced them to put on, proudly displaying the shackles as badges of honor. “That's what we have to look at, because that's what's going to begin to change the accelerating attacks on all working people,” she said.

Kennedy called for immediate legalization of all undocumented workers. Her remarks were later broadcast on C-SPAN television.

NOW had originally supported Sen. Hillary Clinton for the Democratic presidential nomination. In a workshop on the elections, prominent women's rights figures urged attendees to support Barack Obama. Elea-

nor Smeal, president of the Feminist Majority Foundation, said she was disappointed by many of Obama's positions, but he deserved support because what “happens at the top of the ticket affects all of the ticket.” NOW president Kim Gandy and Jatrice Martel Gaiter, president of Planned Parenthood, also spoke in favor of a vote for Obama. Some NOW members said they would vote for McCain rather than support Obama.

Speaking in another workshop, Kennedy said neither Obama nor Clinton will advance the struggle for women's rights. She pointed out that it was under the Clinton administration that the most devastating recent assault on women's rights—the end of “welfare as we know it”—was carried out.

“Obama has been steadily moving to the right,” Kennedy told participants, pointing to his recent vote in support of legislation that will expand government spying powers. “His Middle East trip is designed to prove to the U.S. ruling class that he can be a reliable commander in chief. My campaign calls for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. troops from both Afghanistan and Iraq.”

Janet Post contributed to this article.

Get the Socialist Workers Campaign on the Ballot!	
STATE	STATUS
NEW YORK	CURRENTLY PETITIONING
NEW JERSEY	✓ ON THE BALLOT!
WASHINGTON	✓ ON THE BALLOT!
VERMONT	COMING SOON
MINNESOTA	COMING SOON
LOUISIANA	COMING SOON
FLORIDA	COMING SOON
DELAWARE	✓ ON THE BALLOT!
COLORADO	✓ ON THE BALLOT!
IOWA	COMING SOON

# California students continue protests against deportations of Vietnamese

BY BETSEY STONE

SAN FRANCISCO—"We are going to continue this fight," says Rhummanee Hang, one of the organizers of a student protest at the University of California, Davis, this past spring against U.S. government plans to deport thousands of Vietnamese and Cambodian immigrants.

Under an agreement between the U.S. and Vietnamese governments signed in January, some 1,500 Vietnamese who entered the United States after 1995 face possible immediate deportation to Vietnam. Another 6,200 have received notices threatening deportation to a third country. Under a similar repatriation agreement signed with the Cambodian government in 2002, more than 160 Cambodians have been deported and many more have

the threat of deportation hanging over them.

They are all targeted under the Illegal Immigrant Reform and Personal Responsibility Act, a law passed in 1996 that mandates the deportation of immigrants the government labels as "criminal."

Speaking at the Militant Labor Forum in San Francisco June 28, Hang explained that many of those threatened with deportation came here as children after the Vietnam War. "They were too young to remember anything about the country their parents came from," she said.

Students who are members of Southeast Asians Making Immediate Change, which organized an April demonstration at the University of California at Davis, are discussing plans for continuing the fight against

the deportations in the coming school year. One of their aims is to expose the undemocratic and inhumane nature of the 1996 law.

The law mandates deportation of any immigrant who has committed an "aggravated felony," whether that person is a permanent resident or not. The number of crimes defined as "felonies" has been expanded by four times, Hang emphasized. It now includes shoplifting, writing a bad check, and possession of marijuana. In one case a Cambodian man was deported after he was convicted of indecent exposure for urinating at a construction site.

The law is retroactive. Even if the crime was committed long ago, and the person has already served their sentence, they can still be deported. And there is little provision for ap-



Militant/Eric Simpson

Rhummanee Hang speaking at San Francisco Militant Labor Forum.

peal.

"In 2004, there was an outcry against the deportations in Cambodian communities," Hang said, "There were demonstrations in Long Beach and other cities that put a halt to the deportations of Cambodians." She said she hopes that protests now can have a similar impact in pushing back the deportation of Vietnamese.

A documentary film, *Sentenced Home*, gives a picture of the devastating impact of the 1996 law on immigrant communities by telling the story of three young Cambodians in Seattle. One of them, Loeun Lun, was torn away from his wife and small children and deported to Cambodia, long after he served time in jail. Another, Many Uch, who has had the threat of deportation hanging over him for some 15 years, is an activist in the fight against deportations in Seattle.

## Meeting in New Zealand celebrates party-building work of Mervyl Morrison

BY FELICITY COGGAN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—"If you were going into battle, Mervyl was the sort of person you would want by your side," said Mike Tucker of the Communist League at a meeting here July 5 to celebrate Mervyl Morrison's three decades in the communist movement.

Tucker cochaired the event with Nick Fowler of the Young Socialists. Morrison died in early June at age 71.

The meeting of 26 people featured a panel of six speakers, including Manuele Lasalo from the Communist League in Australia and Joel Britton from the Socialist Workers Party in the United States.

Tucker described how Morrison was influenced by events of the 1960s and 1970s, including the movement in opposition to the U.S.-led, and New Zealand-backed, war in Vietnam; the struggle against apartheid in South Africa; and the fight for women's rights. Union struggles and the fight for Maori rights were also on the rise at the time.

It was in her thirties, while working as a nurse, that Morrison came across Pathfinder books. She wrote to her brother Dick, who also became a member of the communist movement, that the speeches of Malcolm X would "knock your socks off." She joined the Socialist Action League, the predecessor of the Communist League, in the mid-1970s.

A display at the meeting illustrated aspects of Morrison's life. Photos showed her marching for abortion rights in 1977, protesting the 1983 U.S. invasion of Grenada, joining a 2006 protest by locked-out supermarket workers, and attending a protest rally last November on Burma.

In the late 1970s the Socialist Action League made a turn toward the industrial unions. Morrison got a job at a large car assembly plant, Todd Motors, in Wellington.

Manuele Lasalo was one of a layer of young workers attracted to the party at the time and he worked with Morrison at Todd's. "Mervyl was a real party builder," Lasalo said. "She'd always have a paper with her going around the factory, talking with workmates."

In 1983 Morrison moved to Auck-



Militant/Mike Tucker

Mervyl Morrison at union rally in Auckland, New Zealand, November 2005.

land. Brigid Mulrennan, a supporter of the Communist League, recalled her effectiveness on the job in building solidarity for unions in struggle and her enthusiasm for selling the socialist press.

Diane Rainey, another supporter of the league, described how in her retirement Morrison remained a stalwart of

the communist movement and determinedly pursued her lifelong love of reading. "She was one among many to benefit from the political decision by Pathfinder to increase the font size in their publications," said Rainey.

Winding up the panel, Joel Britton, on behalf of the SWP leadership, saluted Morrison's political example and the party she dedicated her life to building. He pointed to sharpening class battles in the United States, particularly in the Upper Midwest among meat packers and immigrant workers, as signaling political openings for the communist movement today.

Members of Morrison's family, including Dick Morrison, attended the meeting. During the program Fowler read out messages from the Communist League in Canada and from Morrison's former comrades.

The evening concluded with a supper provided by supporters of the Communist League. Participants contributed US\$1,400 towards the long-term publishing projects of the communist movement.

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



July 29, 1983

The deep hostility of Blacks to the racist and antilabor policies of the U.S. government and the Reagan administration came through loud and clear at the 74th annual convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

The convention pledged the NAACP's all-out support for the August 27 march on Washington for jobs, peace, and freedom; outlined its view on the state of Black America; and discussed what attitude to take toward the proposal of a Black running in the Democratic Party presidential primaries. The NAACP is the oldest and largest civil rights organization in the country with nearly 400,000 dues-paying members.



July 28, 1958

After being caged for a year by the U.S. Immigration Service because they sought political asylum from Franco Spain, the Five Spanish Sailors have been ordered released by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

The U.S. authorities were prepared to return the political refugees to the Spanish ship, which would take them back to Franco Spain, where they faced imprisonment or death.

Court action by the American Civil Liberties Union, which went to the aid of the sailors, held up the threatened deportation. But the young refugees had to spend a year in jail while the case was being fought out. The five also received backing from many Los Angeles area union locals.



July 29, 1933

Four thousand upholsterers were called out last Thursday, July 27th on a general strike of the industry. The call was issued at the Manhattan Lyceum by the Executive Committee of Local 76 of the American Federation of Labor at a strike meeting of over 800 sitting under banners of 42 of the largest shops of greater New York.

Demonstrations of enthusiasm and spirit swept the hall at the proposal of the chairman, Brother Alpert, for a general strike in the morning for the basic demands of the 30 hour week and the minimum scale of \$1.40 per hour. All indications point towards a militant and determined fight to unionize the trade.

# U. of California workers strike over pay increase

BY BARBARA BOWMAN

OAKLAND, California—University of California (UC) workers represented by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Union (AFSCME) Local 3299, picketed and rallied here July 18. More than 1,000 workers and their supporters were part of the action called in conjunction with a five-day strike that began July 14. With high morale and confidence they chanted, “*Si Se Puede!*” (Yes we can).

The service workers have been bargaining with the university since September 2007 without reaching an agreement. The strikers are demanding that the UC system pay \$15 an hour to all campus workers by the end of a



Militant/Barbara Bowman

University of California workers rally July 18 in Oakland. They have been negotiating with the administration since September 2007 for a new contract.

## Spy law

Continued from page 3

nationals “reasonably believed” to be outside the country.

The final version of the amendment was approved by the Senate 69–28 and the House of Representatives by 293–129. Its backers include presumptive presidential nominees John McCain and Barack Obama. McCain, although not present for the vote, has consistently spoken in favor of the bill, particularly its immunity clause. Obama, who was critical of the bill while contending for the Democratic party nomination, took time out from campaigning to be present for his “aye” vote. Former Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton was among the minority that voted against it.

FISA was first amended in 2001 with the USA Patriot Act, which made it easier for the government to obtain customer records from libraries and Internet service providers. In August 2007, Congress enacted the Protect America Act, which had similar provisions to the most current amendment, but expired in February 2008. The new bill will be up for review in 2012.

five-year contract. The UC administration offered in May to raise pay to \$11.50 or \$12 an hour. Workers rejected that. The administration’s current offer is \$14.50 for most workers, but only \$13.50 for workers at the Irvine campus. The workers, students, and their supporters at the protest came from UC Berkeley and a number of other campuses in the system. Other trade unionists and some students joined the action.

The rally was chaired by Lakesha Harrison, a nurse at UCLA in Los Angeles, and president of AFSCME Local 3299.

Among those who spoke at the action was Gerardo Sánchez, Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Congress in the 8th District, just south of San Francisco. Sánchez said the workers’ fight is a part of the resistance to the growing economic crisis of the world capitalist system. When elected to office he said he will put forward immediate legislation for cost-of-living increases in all wages and benefits to protect workers’ standard of living. “If food prices go up, your wages must increase too,” he explained.

# House votes to bail out mortgage firms

Continued from front page

over Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae. However the proposal before Congress is to provide larger credit lines to both companies and to request authorization allowing the Treasury Department to purchase an equity stake in them if necessary. The Federal Reserve will open special lending options to the mortgage giants.

Those announcements sent shares in Freddie Mac from its opening of \$4.26 July 11 to opening at \$10.96 today. Fannie Mae shares rose from \$7.16 to \$15.50 in the same period.

Both were selling for more than \$60 a share this time last year.

Shaken confidence

Events at the mortgage companies and IndyMac Bank highlighted the growing skittishness of the billionaire families in the financial markets.

On July 10 a rapid sell-off of the mortgage companies’ shares began after a former central banker commented that the companies might not be solvent and a financial analyst at UBS, a major international financial firm, issued a report critical of Freddie Mac.

In the case of IndyMac Bank, the chairman of the Joint Economic Committee in Congress, Charles Schumer, wrote letters June 26 to several federal banking agencies saying the bank might have “serious problems” with its loan holdings. Federal regulators accused the senator of helping fuel a massive run on the bank’s deposits. A total of \$1.3 billion was withdrawn in two weeks.

Mortgage and credit crisis

Since June Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac have lost \$11 billion due to home loan foreclosures. One in every 501 households was in a stage of foreclosure in June according to RealtyTrac Inc., a company that sells data on defaults. Bank seizures of homes have

**New Zealand Maori protest marina**

Militant/Terry Coggan

WHANGAMATA, New Zealand—Some 30 representatives of Maori groups and others set up a tent camp on the banks of the estuary at Whangamata July 1. The encampment protests the imminent construction of a 205-berth marina.

Nathan Kennedy and Pauline Clarkin, spokespersons for Hauraki *iwi* or peoples, discussed the issues with *Militant* reporters July 13. “The channel for the marina will cut through our *kaimoana* (seafood) beds,” said Clarkin. There is also concern that paving for car parking will destroy the habitat of several rare coastal bird species and the endangered moko skink lizard.

Clarkin and Kennedy pointed to a prominent banner reading, “C'MON HELEN. 4SHORE 4ALL.” The banner refers to legislation passed in 2004 by the Labour Party-led government of Prime Minister Helen Clark. The new law took away the right of Maori to file claims registering customary ownership of areas of the country’s foreshore, the part of the shore between the water and cultivated or developed land. Maori organized widespread protests in opposition, including a march of 20,000 people in Wellington, the capital.

—TERRY COGGAN

risen 171 percent since January 2005, the company said. A JP Morgan analyst estimates Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac losses through next year will total \$48 billion.

In March IndyMac Bank reported that nearly 9 percent of its loans were delinquent, up from 1.5 percent the previous year. At the end of 2007 the bank’s shares sold for \$6. The day before it was taken over by the government its shares plunged to 28 cents.

Freddie Mac took steps July 18 to register with the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) in order to issue new stocks. The company said it plans to raise \$5.5 billion to strengthen its balance sheet.

The filing with the SEC does not guarantee that Freddie Mac will issue new stocks or be able to raise the necessary cash. In the filing, the company said, “Our ability to issue additional preferred or common stock will depend, in part, on market conditions, and we may not be able to raise additional capital when needed,” reported the *Washington Post*.

Freddie Mac also noted that issuing

new stock could dilute the value of existing stockholder’s shares and may carry other terms and conditions that could adversely affect them.

World market threat

U.S. government officials are concerned that Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae’s troubles could have serious consequences for the world capitalist economy. About one-fifth of securities issued by the two mortgage companies and a handful of smaller quasi-governmental agencies were held by overseas investors as of March. They held one out of ten U.S. mortgages.

Financial institutions in Asia hold some \$800 billion in Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac debts. The bulk are held in China and Japan. As of June 2007, the most recent Treasury figures available, investors in China held \$376 billion and in Japan \$228 billion.

In Europe, investors in Luxembourg hold roughly \$39 billion in the mortgage companies’ debt; in Belgium, \$33 billion; in the United Kingdom, \$28 billion; and in Russia, \$75 billion.

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# Why Washington fears Cuba's revolutionary example

Below is an excerpt from War and Crisis in the Americas, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month in July. It is part of a series of books published by Pathfinder entitled Fidel Castro Speeches. The excerpt is from a speech by Castro at the fourth congress of the Federation of Cuban Women held in Havana March 8, 1985. Copyright ©1985, Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

## BY FIDEL CASTRO

There's been a great deal of talk, the imperialists talk a lot about the Cuban cooperation workers in Nicaragua. Of course they have the habit of inflating the figures. We never gave out any figures. We don't have to account to the imperialists for the number of cooperation workers we have in any country. [Applause] Nor do we ask them how



Militant/Carlos Cornejo  
Mission Robinson literacy class in Caracas, Venezuela, October 2003. The program benefited from Cuba's literacy campaign experience, as did a similar effort in Nicaragua during the 1980s.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

many they have, how many soldiers, officers, military personnel, CIA agents, even the Peace Corps, as they call it. But we have noticed their custom of interfering in the affairs of other countries, and the habit, the method of conjuring up, of falsifying with political motives in order to justify you-know-what crimes.

On occasion, in talking with journal-

ists, even with U.S. visitors, I've spoken to them more than once about our teachers and their merits. It's unbelievable that our teachers should arouse fear, but the fear is not totally unfounded. Is it the number of teachers and civilian cooperation workers or even a number of military cooperation personnel that incites fear? No, it's not the number, nor could it be, but rather the strength they reflect, the strength of our ideas that these teachers and cooperation workers can generate.

Yes, and this is much more powerful than all the tanks, all the battleships, aircraft carriers, bombers, strategic missiles, and deadly weapons that the enemies of human progress can create. Much more powerful! First of all, because the men and women who uphold these ideas do not experience any fear at all in the face of sophisticated technology, military might, battleships, aircraft carriers, and the threats of extermination and death. [Applause] Who are more courageous? Those who manufacture these weapons with which they assume the privilege of threatening revolutionaries and all the world's progressive people, the peoples and the patriots, or those who feel absolutely no fear, but instead contempt for all that might, for all those weapons, and for all those threats? [Applause] . . .

I think that it is this spirit that really

frightens the reactionaries and the imperialists, because this spirit is simply invincible. [Applause] And it's not the spirit of a handful of men and women; it's the spirit of an entire people. [Applause] And that's why we have asked, why didn't others send teachers to live in those conditions in the most remote places, together with the families, eating what the families ate, sleeping where the families slept, under circumstances such that in many cases the family, the entire family, the domesticated animals, and the teacher all lived in one hut? There were even circumstances when the Ministry of Education, concerned for the health of these teachers, decided to send them some foodstuffs, powdered milk, chocolate, etc. But that didn't solve anything nor could it, because none of our teachers were capable of drinking a little milk in the morning when there were children with no milk at all. [Applause] Those items they were sent didn't last at all because they shared them immediately.

I've spoken about this to visitors and journalists as irrefutable proof of the strength of our ideas, of the triumphs of our revolution, not only material but also moral. I've mentioned in passing some of the countries that the imperialists hold up as models in this hemisphere, some, even, with many resources that have been recklessly squandered, and

I've asked: Could 2,000 teachers leave from these model countries to go to Nicaragua and work under those conditions? No. Could they send 1,000 under those conditions? No. Could they send 500 under those conditions? No. Could they send 100? No. But if they do not have enough teachers to send a few kilometers away from the capital of the republic, how are they going to send them thousands of kilometers away, far from their homeland, to work under those conditions? . . .

Nicaragua was criticized and Cuba was criticized for having teachers in Nicaragua, but those teachers didn't go there to teach Marxism-Leninism. We met with them more than once and told them to be completely respectful of the feelings of each family, to limit themselves strictly and give classes using Nicaraguan programs and texts, not to interfere in the least in the people's political convictions and religious beliefs, to have complete respect, and to preach by their example. That's what they did and that's how they won the affection and respect of everyone. Thus I've told people, we not only had 2,000 teachers in Nicaragua, but when we requested volunteers for that mission, 30,000 volunteered and when they killed two or three teachers, 100,000 more volunteered. [Applause]

So you can see the comparison and whether or not the values our revolution and our ideas represent are frightening. And when our party can speak about these values, and this strength, it is truly admirable to be able to state that half are women and in many cases, mothers who are capable of separating themselves from their children and families for a year or two years. [Applause] This is the work of the revolution. I cited one example, although I can cite many others in many other places, but I wanted to cite this one alone in the framework of our solidarity with a sister people and in the framework of our hemisphere. The imperialists are right to harbor fears about our teachers, our cooperation workers, our men and our women, because of their example and banners, because of the invincible ideas they symbolize. [Applause]

*July* **BOOKS OF THE MONTH**

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# Conference prepares for new class battles

## Socialist Educational and Active Workers Conference draws 380 participants

BY CINDY JAQUITH  
AND BEN JOYCE

OBERLIN, Ohio—Finding and joining in centers of resistance by fellow working-class militants was the central theme of the Socialist Educational and Active Workers Conference attended by some 380 people here July 10–13. The conference, organized by the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists, drew workers and youth from across North America and countries around the world.

The gathering took place as rising prices of food, gas, and other necessities continued eating into wages, unemployment mounted, “productivity” drives by the bosses maimed and killed more workers, and the U.S.-led war in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region intensified.

In the opening political report to the conference, Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, said that the course of the class struggle in recent years confirms that labor remains at center stage in U.S. and world politics. Industrial workers are the main target of the rulers’ attacks in the United States, and an emerging vanguard of workers is at the center of resistance to these assaults.

Barnes pointed in particular to recent struggles in the Upper Midwest, including those by union meat packers at Dakota Premium Foods in South St. Paul, Minnesota, and other packinghouses, as well as fights in defense of undocumented workers and for legalization by working people in that region and beyond. Everywhere socialist workers have joined in these battles, he said, they’ve found growing interest in the *Militant* and other revolutionary literature.

A panel of union fighters and youth involved in struggles in the Upper



Militant/(Above) Ben Joyce, (Right) Arthur Hughes

**Above: Conference participants listen to the main political report given by SWP national secretary Jack Barnes at the Socialist Educational and Active Workers Conference.**

**Right: Participants buy Pathfinder books at a literature table set up by Young Socialists.**



Midwest drew out lessons of recent fights there and the place of communist workers who have been part of the vanguard layers leading them (see article on facing page). Both in his opening report and closing conference summary, Barnes called special attention to that panel as a living example of what’s possible for class-conscious workers to accomplish in politics today. He pointed to the significance of the fact that two of the leaders of the Dakota fight participating in the panel, Rebecca Williamson and Julian Santana, are members of the Young Socialists still in their twenties.

The job of communist workers, Barnes said, is not to dwell on the horrors of capitalist exploitation. The task is the opposite. Workers are much more aware of the conditions our class faces than we are of our own capacity to transform these conditions. As communists join in working-class resistance, he said, we above all organize to help fellow workers recognize our own self-worth and revolutionary capacities.

There is a gap, Barnes said, between

the pace and acceleration of the capitalist crisis and the rise of a powerful workers movement. “The capitalists get the first shot,” he said, “but the presence of conscious revolutionaries in the resistance that develops will be decisive, as it always has been.”

Several workshops took place during the conference where experienced sewing machine operators and butchers helped those with less experience to improve their skills so they are able to work together to more easily get and keep jobs in garment shops and meatpacking plants.

The skills training is part of a renewed campaign by the socialists to carry out consistent political work in these two industries, where the bosses’ attacks have gone the furthest and workers have been engaged in the fight for legalization and union battles. Longtime veterans of the Socialist Workers Party joined with young people and workers new to the communist movement in taking advantage of these workshops.

Yvonne Lee, who has worked as a sewing machine operator for 22 years,

was one of those training others in the sewing workshop. This is the second time Lee has attended one of the annual socialist conferences. She said she found the panel on the union battles in the Upper Midwest especially interesting.

### Accelerating economic crisis

Pointing to the plunging stock prices and shrinking capital base of mortgage giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and the federal government takeover of IndyMac bank, Barnes said there is no “policy” the capitalist rulers can adopt to solve what is now their worst financial crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. That crisis is inherent in the workings of the capitalist system, he said, and will increasingly interact with convulsions in production and trade. The future will see growing protectionism and more wars, Barnes continued, with working people bearing the brunt of the blows by the employers, their government, and their political parties.

He noted that the U.S. government is trying to convince working people to lower our expectations of higher wages, with Federal Reserve officials and others raising fears of a “wage-price spiral,” which they argue would be the result of pay increases for workers. Barnes pointed out that, in fact, real wages have actually gone down for the last seven years and are no higher today than they were in the mid-1970s. Higher wages are not the cause of inflation, he said.

Having made substantial military progress through its “surge” in stabilizing a client bourgeois regime in Iraq, Washington is now escalating the war in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, Barnes said. “There is not a scintilla of difference on this” between Democratic contender Barack Obama and Republican John McCain, he noted. Both candidates also support the accelerating attack on workers’ rights, Barnes said, including the new legislation that significantly broadens the government’s powers to spy on phone and e-mail communications of

Continued on next page

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## Capital Fund gets a boost at conference

BY DAVE PRINCE

Contributions by members and supporters of the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists of the “Economic Stimulus” checks received from the federal government now stand at \$77,130 from 150 individuals. The contributions are for the Capital Fund.

Some \$30,000 in new donations were made at the Socialist Educational and Active Workers Conference held in Oberlin, Ohio, July 10–13, as contributors received the checks sent out by the U.S. Treasury in June and early July.

Contributors to this special appeal are carrying forward a proud tradition of members of the communist movement contributing “blood money” contract-signing bonuses—employer bribes given in lieu of paying higher wages—and so-called safety and production bonus-

es used to shut us up when life and limb are at stake. The “Economic Stimulus” checks are more of the same “blood money.”

The Capital Fund is an ongoing fund, dedicated solely to long-term publishing projects over the next decade and beyond. “Blood money” has been a foundation of the fund, which includes other important sources of contributions.

At the socialist conference the Capital Fund received another tremendous response from contributors who were able to make donations due to trust funds, bequests, and other special circumstances. These are contributions of \$1,000 or more. Twenty-four contributors augmented the Capital Fund by \$322,200 at the conference!

Dave Prince is the director of the Economic Stimulus Capital Appeal.

### Donate Economic Stimulus checks to the ‘Militant’!

As unemployment climbs, inflation on basic necessities skyrockets, and utility cutoffs increase, the U.S. government is trying to bribe working people with tiny sums of money as part of its Economic Stimulus Act of 2008.

Class-conscious workers should reject this pittance for what it is: a ploy by the rulers to convince us that the government is doing something to alleviate the grind on our standard of living. We encourage readers to put this blood money to good use by contributing it to the socialist press.

Send contributions to:  
**The Militant, 306 W. 37th St.  
10th Floor, New York, NY 10018.**

# Panel of workers, youth describes union struggles in the Upper Midwest

BY VED DOOKHUN

OBERLIN, Ohio—"The Upper Midwest is where the class struggle is the deepest today, where the labor movement is confronting life-and-death questions of safety, unionization, and immigrant rights," said Rebecca Williamson, a member of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 789 at Dakota Premium Foods, a slaughterhouse in South St. Paul, Minnesota.

Williamson, who works as a trimmer and is a shop steward, was speaking on a panel here the morning of July 11 as part of the Socialist Educational and Active Workers Conference. She and other union fighters and youth on the panel described the recent decades of struggle for workers' and immigrant rights in the region, including the intensification of a number of these fights the past few years.

Panelists discussed the place of socialist workers as part of the vanguard leading those battles, as well as the growing interest in the *Militant*, which registers broader shifts in the class struggle in the region.

## Earlier battle for union

In 1991 workers at the South St. Paul plant where Williamson works, then known as Long Prairie Packing, had voted to be represented by the UFCW. The union was decertified 14 months later, after it was unable to win a contract.

Following that vote, the bosses forced meat packers to work harder, faster, and for longer hours. On-the-job injuries mounted. These conditions led to a seven-hour sit-down strike in June 2000. The fight sparked by the *plantón*, as it was referred to in Spanish by many of the participants, was successful in winning a union. It took another two years to win a contract.

Determined to get rid of the union, the Dakota bosses organized a decertification campaign as that initial contract was about to expire in 2007. "Black, Latino, white, and Native American workers resisted the company's attempt to decertify the union," said Williamson.

The bosses had tried to increase divisions among workers in the plant, who had been majority Latino. By hiring many workers who were Black, Native American, and white, including some who were on parole, management hoped to put a brake on militancy.

The bosses at Dakota were overconfident, Williamson said. Blinded by their profit drive, they did not take account of changes that have taken place in the working class over the last two years.

On May Day in 2006, the first political general strike in the United States took place, as hundreds of thousands of working people, mostly immigrants, stayed home from work and joined demonstrations for legalization of undocumented workers. At the Dakota plant, some 50 workers did not come to work that day. Hundreds of thousands around the country marched again on May 1, 2007, and tens of thousands did so this year as well.

At Dakota Premium Foods, workers rose to the challenge to defend Local 789 from decertification in 2007. They relaunched the *Workers' Voice*, an in-plant newsletter that had first come out during the fight for a union that began in 2000.

Produced at the union hall by workers themselves, the newsletter became an important tool to forge unity and solidarity among workers in the plant. It answered the company's lies, took up issues discussed at union meetings, and defended workers who came under attack, including Black workers subjected to racist abuse by supervisors.

## Decertification defeated

Last January workers voted 152–82 against decertification of the union. It was only after the union-busting effort failed that the bosses began real negotiations for a contract. They offered a 15-cent-per-hour raise with no back pay and 10 cents per hour more for perfect weekly attendance, as well as very restricted access to the plant for union representatives. The employers rejected the union's demand to slow down the line speed. Workers sent a clear message back in May by rejecting the company's offer in a 116–5 vote.

An improved contract offer was approved a week later by a 94–51 vote. The agreement included a 40-cent pay raise going back to July 2007, another 40 cents in July 2008, and 35 cents in future years, as well as more union access to the plant. The vote showed that the majority of workers felt substantial gains had been won, said Williamson.

"Workers gained a tremendous amount of confidence, and above all re-



Militant/Ben Joyce

Rebecca Williamson speaks on the conference panel on "Union Victory at Dakota: The Battle for Workers and Immigrant Rights in the Upper Midwest." She is holding up a copy of *Workers' Voice*, the newsletter put out by Dakota Premium Foods workers.

alized that you can win, but only if you fight," she said.

## Response to socialist press

Tom Fiske, a textile worker and member of the SWP in Minneapolis, described the response that teams receive selling the *Militant* to packinghouse workers in the area. At Dakota Premium's sister plant in Long Prairie, Minnesota, where workers are also members of UFCW Local 789, he and another *Militant* supporter sold 40 copies of the paper at a recent shift change.

He described a similar experience at PM Beef in Windom, Minnesota, where he and others sold copies of the *Militant* in the rain to more than 30 workers coming out of the plant, some of whom bought an extra copy for coworkers. Workers there won a union last summer.

Also speaking on the panel was Robert Silver, a member of the Young Socialists in the Twin Cities who participated in solidarity activities for the Dakota unionists. "Nothing demonstrated politics to me the way the struggle at Dakota Premium did," he said. Silver also took part in several meetings around the country on the book *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution*.

"Young people I talked with saw the fight and victory of workers at Dakota and couldn't help but draw analogies with the fight and victory of workers in Cuba," he said.

Silver joined the SWP shortly after the decertification vote was defeated by Local 789 in January. Two others have recently joined the party in Minneapolis as well.

## 'Workers are not defeated'

The U.S. government responded to the May Day immigrant rights mobili-

zations by carrying out nationwide raids on six Swift packing plants in December 2006. They arrested about 1,300 workers. "The party responded with the *Militant*, selling 1,000 copies of the paper and 100 subscriptions in Iowa and across the Upper Midwest," said Frank Forrestal, the organizer of the Des Moines branch of the SWP.

"This May's raid at Agriprocessors, Inc. in Postville, Iowa, reflects the sharpening class conflict in the Midwest," Forrestal said. "We joined in the spontaneous pickets and protests against the raid that involved immigrants, high school students, and a significant number of U.S.-born workers, Black and white. Thirty subscriptions to the *Militant* were sold in Waterloo, [Iowa,] the town where the detainees were incarcerated.

"These workers are not defeated," Forrestal emphasized. "Many of those who were arrested and released with ankle bracelets proudly marched afterward in protests in Waterloo. The demonstrations were spirited and angry."

"The fights for legalization and for unionization go hand in hand," said Karen Carlson, a member of the Des Moines branch of the SWP. Carlson, who now works at a packing plant near Des Moines, was employed at the Swift plant in Marshalltown, Iowa, in 2006 when it was raided by immigration cops. She joined in organizing solidarity for her coworkers jailed in the raid.

Julian Santana, a kill floor worker at Dakota, said, "All of us at work depend on our coworkers doing the job well and safely. The goal of communists is to become competent in using a knife so we can engage in politics on the job and in the union movement." Santana was an organizer of the workshops held at the conference aimed at helping socialist workers spanning several generations improve their skills for that purpose.



Militant/Ben Joyce

Meat packer Michael Ortega trains others in knife skills at workshop.

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individuals it claims are connected to activity it deems to be "terrorism."

## Cuban, American revolutions

Mary-Alice Waters, a member of the SWP National Committee, gave a talk on "Cuba and the Coming American Revolution."

"We're on a proletarian course in which we find ourselves in the same trench as Cuban revolutionaries," she said. This is true, for example, of the work by the party and Young Socialists to free the Cuban Five—Gerardo

Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González, René González, and Antonio Guerrero.

It is not just a question of extending solidarity to fighters from another country; it's directly part of the class struggle in the United States. "Five of our comrades are serving time, framed up on conspiracy to commit espionage and murder, because they are communists engaged in activity in defense of Cuba's revolution and of workers here in this country as well," Waters said.

Recent meetings on college cam-

puses about the book *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution* show that "objective conditions have shifted, with young people more open to socialism and to action to resist capitalism's grinding exploitation," Waters said. Even compared to meetings about *Our History* in late 2006 and 2007, discussions this spring about the Cuban Revolution more rapidly turned into discussions about the class struggle in the United States and the possibility of a

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# Socialist conference sends greetings to Cuban Five

The following greetings were sent from the Socialist Educational and Active Workers Conference to the Cuban Five: Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González, and René González. They are revolutionaries serving harsh sentences in U.S. prisons—including three with life terms. They were arrested in 1998 in Miami where they were monitoring the activities of rightist Cuban American groups that, with Washington's blessing, have for decades carried out attacks on revolutionary Cuba. Framed up and convicted on conspiracy charges the five have been incarcerated ever since.

July 12, 2008

Dear Gerardo, Ramón, Antonio, Fernando, and René,

Warmest greetings and *un abrazo fuerte* from the nearly 400 workers,

farmers, students, and others from across the United States and around the world participating in the July 10–13 Socialist Educational and Active Workers Conference in Oberlin, Ohio, organized by the Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialists.

Although you are held in this country against both your will and ours, the example you are setting on the front lines of the class struggle in the United States strengthens us all. Growing numbers have come to recognize your political clarity, dignity, and unshakable confidence in the capacities—the humanity—of millions of ordinary men and women in Cuba and the world over fighting to win your freedom.

The worst capitalist financial crisis since the opening of the Great Depression in the 1930s increasingly marks



Above: The Cuban Five, Cuban revolutionaries held for nearly 10 years in U.S. prisons, framed up and convicted on conspiracy charges by the FBI.

every aspect of the sharpening class struggle in the U.S. and internationally. As the ruling families are driven to try to solve the crisis of the capitalist system on our backs, a working-class vanguard in this country is growing. Forged in the crucible of resistance to the assaults of the bosses, their government and political parties, and their cops, this fighting vanguard has already taken to the streets in actions large and small, in towns and cities across the United States. Since the spring of 2006 literally millions have been involved. The defiant

response of workers both immigrant and U.S.-born to the recent factory raid in Postville, Iowa—the largest such assault in U.S. history—which turned nearby Waterloo into a virtual concentration camp, is indicative of the fighting mood. The demonstrative gesture of recently arrested workers who are women, who joined the protest picket lines with their pants legs rolled up to reveal the electronic monitor leg bands they are forced to wear, captured the “*si se puede*” fighting determination more accurately than a thousand words.

As we battle to win and use union power to stop factory raids and deportations, to demand legalization of all immigrants, and to protect life and limb on the job, this vanguard, with increasing clarity, will recognize that the fight for your freedom is simultaneously a fight to defend our rights and the political space we must have here to organize and defend ourselves.

The laws and measures the U.S. government used to frame up and convict you are those they are using against working people every day—unconstitutional wiretapping, surveillance, and search and seizure operations in homes; “identity theft” laws; denial of the right to trial by an impartial jury of our peers; denial of access (for defense attorneys and the accused alike) to the “evidence” on which the prosecution bases its frame-up; resort to “conspiracy” charges when they cannot prove acts contrary to their laws; cruel and unusual punishment, including months of solitary confinement and prison lockdowns; denial of visitation rights for wives, children, parents, and other loved ones—and much more.

The signing into law this week of the bill, passed with broad bipartisan support in both houses of congress, to expand the wiretapping and electronic surveillance powers of the U.S. government's police agencies is but the latest illustration of what they intend to do. How far they will go on this course depends on us.

We have used this conference to better prepare ourselves to explain these facts to our coworkers and fellow farmers, students, and all those who refuse to accept the future that capitalism has in store for us. All those who, in larger and larger numbers, will fight against such a catastrophe and for a socialist future. We know that more and more of them will also be won to see the example of the Cuban Revolution as the road forward for our class, and along that course your example will prove to be a powerful weapon.

Like yourselves, we will not stop fighting until each and every one of you is free.

With our warmest fraternal greetings,

Róger Calero

On behalf of the conference participants

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on the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) to release all remaining hostages held in the areas it controls in Colombia (see article on page 3).

Waters also rebutted the misinformation in the big business media in the United States and elsewhere this spring that recent economic measures adopted by the Cuban government—measures that have been in the works for several years—had been taken because Fidel Castro stepped down from the presidency early this year.

### Classes series

Classes on a variety of topics were interspersed with the main sessions throughout the conference. Four were based on themes from the newly published issue number 14 of the Marxist magazine *New Internationalist*. These classes were titled: “Revolution, Internationalism, and Socialism: The Last Year of Malcolm X,” “The 1990s Bipartisan Convergence in an Accelerating Assault on the Working Class,” “Roots of the 2008 Financial Crisis,” and “The Stewardship of Nature Also Falls to the Working Class.”

Other classes included “China's 450-Million-Strong Working Class and Coming Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Alliance,” as well as classes presented in English and Spanish on the Pathfinder titles *Teamster Power* and *Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?* (Translation into Spanish and French was provided at all conference activities.)

Aaron Bleich, who had helped organize a meeting this spring on *Our History Is Still Being Written* at his campus, Iowa State University in Ames, was attending his first socialist conference. Twenty years old, Bleich told the *Militant* he grew up in a community of 30 people in northwest Iowa and had worked as a farm hand when not in school since he was 14. He was excited to learn in the class at the conference on *Teamster Power* about big battles by Teamsters in the 1930s “right where I grew up.” Bleich, who recently joined the Young Socialists, said he plans to help strengthen the communist movement this fall by joining in efforts to organize political meetings on *Our History* in Chicago and Minneapolis.

First-time participants in the con-

ference were able to discuss the politics of the weekend's events over meals with the conference's welcoming committee. Mealtimes were organized for questions and discussion by new participants on the capitalist financial crisis, the social weight of the industrial working class, and other topics presented in the political reports.

Those attending the conference included members and supporters of the SWP and Communist Leagues from around the world, Young Socialists, and workers and youth interested in learning more about the communist movement. Participants came from Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Greece, Iceland, New Zealand, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The presentations, panels, classes, workshops, and discussions all culminated in a windup rally opened by the SWP's 2008 presidential candidate Róger Calero, who spoke about the road ahead for the campaign. “My running mate Alyson Kennedy and I plan to go where we see opportunities to spread the campaign to workers engaged in fights,” he said.

Later in the meeting Kennedy reviewed the successes the campaign has had in reaching working people in struggle over recent months, including workers marching for immigrant rights on May 1, truckers demanding relief from rising diesel prices, opponents of hospital closures, and those taking to the streets to oppose workplace raids by *la migra*.

Ben O'Shaughnessy, a leader of the Young Socialists, described the educational programs the New York YS has participated in along with friends and members of the SWP since 2006. He also pointed to the participation of young socialists in many of the job skills workshops leading up to and during the conference.

Also on the panel was Freddy Huinil, a worker from Atlanta, who



Militant/Eric Simpson

Steve Clark gives a class titled “China's 450-Million-Strong Working Class and Coming Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Alliance.”

spoke about the successful building of public meetings to discuss *Our History Is Still Being Written*, including one he attended in Miami in April that drew more than 100 people, as well as a meeting in Atlanta that will take place September 25 at the Auburn Avenue Research Library.

Arthur Mitropoulos from the YS in the United Kingdom spoke about the successful presentations on *Our History* in the United Kingdom as well as the socialist summer school in London.

### Expansion of Pathfinder titles

Mary-Alice Waters reported at the rally on the expansion of Pathfinder titles over the past year. Forty-three new books, new editions, and newly upgraded editions have been published, as well as 80 new printings. She pointed to the expanding number of languages in which Pathfinder titles are now available, ranging from English, to Spanish, French, Greek, Arabic, and Farsi.

The rally ended with an appeal by Martín Koppel, the SWP candidate for U.S. Congress in New York's 15th District, for volunteers to participate in the New York State ballot drive for the Socialist Workers ticket.

Participants at the rally donated \$30,000 to a fund appeal to finance political activity by the SWP. A literature table featuring Pathfinder books sold about \$3,500 during the conference.

# Oppose new government spy law!

Working people should oppose the bill signed into law by President George Bush July 10 expanding Washington's legal authority to spy on individuals and organizations in the United States. The bill is part of a steady encroachment against workers rights by the wealthy rulers as they prepare to confront militant workers in coming class battles over our standard of living and conditions of work.

These measures are aimed above all at us, not primarily at "foreigners" or "terrorists." Under the guise of "fighting terrorism," the U.S. government will more and more use wiretapping and other domestic surveillance to spy on working-class fighters and use anything they can, including "secret evidence," to victimize us in the capitalist courts.

In a similar manner the rulers use immigration raids, like the one in Postville, Iowa, in May, where 297 workers were railroaded to jail, to further erode the rights we've won in struggle.

The bill just signed into effect legitimizes a previously secret spy program initiated under the Bush administration. However, government spy programs are more and more the product of a bipartisan convergence on the tactics of the ruling class's assault on our rights. The Patriot Act, which expanded government wiretapping, e-mail screening, and other communications surveillance was voted into law in 2001 with overwhelming support from both capitalist parties. Barack Obama and John McCain voted for its reauthorization in 2006.

Much of the groundwork for the course carried

out by Bush was laid out under the Clinton administration. The 1996 Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act allowed immigration police to jail immigrants by using secret evidence, and broadened government powers to use wiretaps and to hold an accused person in preventive detention without bail. Many of these measures were used to jail and convict the Cuban Five, five political prisoners in U.S. jails today under frame-up conspiracy charges based on numerous raids on their homes, tapping of phone conversations, and use of secret evidence.

"Fighting terrorism" and defending "our" national security are thinly veiled excuses for the antilabor course Washington is carrying out. We should reject these ploys by the rulers to try to get workers to accept these attacks on our rights.

As these probes deepen, they will be more and more recognized for what they are—and resisted—by working people forced to defend themselves in collective action against the employers and the state that represents and defends the bosses' class interests. This has been the case throughout the history of the U.S. class struggle, from the 1918–21 Palmer raids, to the Smith Act labor frame-ups of the 1940s, to the government's Cointelpro domestic spying and disruption campaign against socialists, Black rights fighters, and the antiwar movement of the 1950s and '60s.

Repeal the Patriot Act and other laws that provide for government spying! Shut down Guantanamo Bay and other U.S. "detention" centers! Free the Cuban Five and all others framed up for their political activity!

## Houston crane fall kills four workers

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and Health Administration (OSHA) sent in federal investigators and cordoned off the area, restricting access to the media. LyondellBasell and Deep South are also conducting their own investigations.

Greg Smith, vice president of the Houston-based American Society of Safety Engineers, told the *Houston Chronicle* that "Construction is an inherently dangerous business." Suggesting that workers are to blame for accidents, Smith said, "Good safety depends on personal responsibility."

B.J. Case, a worker at the nearby Pasadena Refining facility, had a different point of view. Case is a member of United Steelworkers Local 13-227, which includes the LyondellBasell refinery.

For the companies, "it's cheaper for us to die and pay the fines," said Case. "If they put as many hours into maintenance as they do for these studies and these investigations—all they really do is

deflect the blame away from them to us anyway—there would be a lot less accidents and injuries."

"Months and months of investigation, somebody gets fined—that's it!" said Case, whose worked at the nearby refinery for 20 years and has seen the results of these "investigations" by OSHA.

"More of us will keep on dying until we do something about it, and it has to start with using our union safety committees to protect us. And it is truly *us*, against them," said Case.

There were 26 crane-related deaths in Texas in 2005 and 2006, more than any other state. Texas has no inspectors of its own; it relies on OSHA inspectors only. The state does not require crane operators to have a license.

The crane collapse in Houston was the deadliest incident in the industry since a 2005 explosion at BP refinery in Texas City, Texas, that killed 15 workers and injured 180 other people.

Steve Warshell contributed to this article.

## LETTERS

**Nonunion means unskilled?**

A July 14 *Militant* article headlined "N.Y. construction workers march to defend unions" quotes a shop steward from the carpenters union saying, "We have young, skilled union workers finishing apprenticeship programs who cannot find union jobs. Unions are needed."

It seems that the steward is implying that nonunion workers are not skilled. This isn't true. Otherwise it wouldn't be possible for so much of construction to be non-union.

The greater occurrence of accidents in nonunion construction sites has to do with the bosses having more control over working conditions, particularly over workers

without documents, not the skills of the workers on the job site.

Candace Wagner  
New York, New York

**Prisoner wants paper**

I've not seen a *Militant* in many months. I guess my free subscription expired.

It was very much enjoyed and

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A prisoner  
Florida

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# Afghanistan

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more helicopters, more satellites, more Predator drones in the Afghan border region. And we must make it clear that if Pakistan cannot or will not act, we will take out high-level terrorist targets like [Osama] bin Laden if we have them in our sights."

Speaking the same day in Albuquerque, New Mexico, McCain called that remark "bluster" that makes it harder to get cooperation from the Afghani and Pakistani governments. But he made clear that he would also take military action in Pakistan. "When I am commander in chief, there will be nowhere the terrorists can run, and nowhere they can hide," the Republican candidate said.

**Afghanistan surge**

McCain has stressed his support for the surge of U.S. troops in Iraq when the Bush administration sent tens of thousands of additional troops there last year.

In his Albuquerque speech McCain said, "Senator Obama will tell you we can't win in Afghanistan without losing in Iraq. In fact, he has it exactly backwards. It is precisely the success of the surge in Iraq that shows us the way to succeed in Afghanistan."

Pointing to the increased size of the Iraqi army as part of the surge in Iraq, McCain said the size of the Afghan army needed to be at least doubled to around 160,000 troops.

McCain also said he would work to get agreement from NATO allies to have a single "supreme commander" of all coalition troops in Afghanistan.

**No 'precipitous withdrawal'**

In Iraq Obama met with Iraqi prime minister Nouri al-Maliki. An Iraqi government spokesman said afterward that "the Iraqi government believes the end of 2010 is the appropriate time for the withdrawal" of U.S. troops.

Obama has been criticized in the media for appearing to backtrack on his promise to withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq within 16 months of taking office. During a campaign stop in North Dakota on July 3 Obama said he was ready to "refine" his plans.

In an interview published in the July 8 online edition of the *Military Times*, Obama said he welcomed the opportunity to "correct the record."

"This whole notion that I would initiate a precipitous withdrawal just isn't borne out by anything I've said. What I have repeatedly said . . . is that we should be as careful getting out as we were careless getting in," Obama said.

The Illinois senator further said that if the violence continued to subside and the Iraqi army and police continued to improve that he hoped troops could be drawn down in a deliberate fashion. "If, on the other hand, you've got a deteriorating situation for some reason, then that's going to have to be taken into account," he added.

Asked if he would keep any Bush appointees, Obama said that Defense Secretary Robert Gates "has brought a level of realism and professionalism and planning to the job that is worthy of praise."

Obama was met at the Baghdad airport by Gen. David Petraeus and later flew with him by helicopter to the heavily fortified Green Zone that houses the U.S. embassy and Iraqi government offices.

Both Obama and McCain have congratulated Petraeus, the former head of U.S.-led troops in Iraq, and his former deputy, Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno, on the confirmation of their promotions by the U.S. Senate July 10. Petraeus will now head the Central Command. Odierno will replace him as head of U.S.-led forces in Iraq. The almost unanimous Senate vote keeps together the two men most responsible for operations of the "surge" and integrates the two major fronts of Washington's "global war on terror"—Iraq and Afghanistan.