

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

New book by Fidel Castro
on Cuba's revolutionary victory
—PAGE 7

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 74/NO. 49 DECEMBER 27, 2010

Iowa unionists back locked-out workers



Militant

Locked-out workers picket grain processor Roquette America in Keokuk, Iowa, December 10.

BY DAVID ROSENFELD

KEOKUK, Iowa—After almost three months on the picket line, locked-out grain millers at Roquette America continue to win support.

On December 10, four members of United Steelworkers (USW) Local 310 in Des Moines, Iowa, made the three-hour trip to Keokuk to deliver a \$1,300 donation. Union volunteers had collected the money at the gate of the Bridgestone-Firestone tire factory during shift changes.

After George Cox, vice president of Local 310, presented the check to Steve Underwood, president of Local 48G of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers union, they joined the picket line outside Roquette's main gate. Three of the steelworkers, like many others at the tire plant who made contributions, had gone through a long and bitter strike against Firestone in 1994–95. They exchanged experiences with the

Continued on page 5

U.S. 'stimulus' measures have little impact on crisis

BY DOUG NELSON

The U.S. government has pitched one stimulus measure after another, propping up mounds of worthless debt in an effort to keep the sinking capitalist economy afloat. But as the world depression continues to unfold these fiscal and monetary prods have less and less the desired results. Their effects are more fleeting and only postpone bigger problems.

In November the Federal Reserve began creating \$75 billion a month out

of thin air through its second "quantitative easing" program, a government bond-buying scheme that provides financial institutions with cash and raises the U.S. government's budget deficit. Dubbed QE2, the Fed plans to carry this through June of next year.

After the Fed had lowered short-term interest rates to near zero in its initial efforts to stimulate growth, it enacted its first round of quantitative easing in early 2009, effectively print-

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Cubans who fought in Angola 'inspire future generations'



Militant

Ceremony in Pretoria, South Africa, December 12, day before opening of World Festival of Youth and Students there, celebrates role of Cuban internationalist fighters in helping defeat South African apartheid regime's invasions of Angola in 1970s and '80s.

BY PAUL PEDERSON

PRETORIA, South Africa—At a joyous and militant ceremony here, hundreds of young Cubans paid tribute to Cuban internationalist fighters who lost their lives fighting, jointly with Angolans and Namibians, against the South African apartheid regime's invasions of Angola beginning in 1975.

The Pretoria event took place December 12 in Freedom Park, whose patron-in-chief is Nelson Mandela. A wall in the park lists the names of some 75,000 people who lost their lives in the struggle for freedom in southern Africa, from precolonial struggles until today. In 2006, the names of more than 2,000 Cubans

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Black farmers win payments, keep fighting discrimination

BY SUSAN LAMONT

WASHINGTON—On December 8 President Barack Obama signed a measure to provide additional funding in the settlement of a long-standing discrimination lawsuit brought by Black farmers against the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The law provides \$1.15 billion for Black farmers. It also includes \$3.4 billion for Native Americans who sued the federal government in 1996 for swindling them out of revenues earned from tribal lands.

Additional funding for the Black
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PUBLIC MEETING — NEW YORK CITY

California prisoners fight dehumanizing conditions

BY BETSEY STONE

One prisoner dies unnecessarily about every eight days in California jails due to medical care being denied, delayed, or incompetent. The suicide rate averages one a week. And the prisons are so overcrowded that inmates are stacked in triple-bunk beds in gymnasiums, classrooms, day rooms, and even hallways.

Testimony before the U.S. Supreme Court on December 7 in the case of *Schwarzenegger v. Plata* put the spotlight on these and other inhuman aspects of the California state prison system.

The case that is now before the Supreme Court began as two class-action suits brought by prisoners seeking to end long-standing medical abuses. The first, filed in 1990, charged that prisoners with acute mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, were not receiving basic care. A second, filed in 2001, argued that health care in the California prisons is so bad that it constitutes "cruel and unusual punishment," prohibited by the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution.

In 2009, the decision of a three-judge panel in California put major blame for the continuing abysmal level of medical care on the crowded conditions, where a system designed to house 80,000 prisoners now contains twice that many. The judges mandated that the prison population be reduced through the release of roughly 44,000 prisoners over the next two years.

That decision has been appealed to the Supreme Court by the state of California on the basis that courts should not interfere with how prisons are administered and that releasing 44,000 prison-

ers threatens public security. Lawyers for 18 other states, including Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, have joined in support of the appeal.

Medical procedures done in prisoner's cells, without access to basic requirements of sanitation—like clean water or gloves—was an example of the type of abuse prisoners at San Quentin have faced, according to Christine Thomas, a paralegal with the American Civil Liberties Union.

Thomas told the *Militant* that the closing of facilities for the mentally ill in earlier decades has added to the numbers in prison who need psychiatric care. "Prisons are the place where many of those who are mentally ill are taken," she said. "Mental illness has been criminalized."

Medical and psychological illnesses have also been made worse by conditions faced by the growing numbers of prisoners in Security Housing Units (SHUs) in California. Prisoners labeled as dangerous by their jailers, including those targeted because they have re-



Inmates at California Institution for Men in Chino face overcrowded conditions

sisted injustices and brutal prison conditions, are placed in the SHUs, where they are isolated in individual cells, unable to communicate, eat, or exercise with others.

The 750 percent increase in the prison population in California since the mid-1970s is attributed in part to "get tough on crime" legislation, including mandated sentencing, imprisonment for even minor parole violations, and the "three strikes law" passed in 1994.

As the prison population has grown, budgets for prison educational programs have been slashed. Up to 900 instructors in English, math, vocational, and other classes were laid off as a result of this year's \$250 million cuts.

In addition, *Prison Focus*, a newsletter filled with letters from prisoners, describes cutbacks across the board, including daily showers denied, visits reduced, and yard exercise time limited to once a week.

Court lets stand gov't plan to assassinate U.S. citizen

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

A federal judge recently ruled that the courts have no business interfering with a White House decision to target a U.S. citizen for assassination.

The decision comes in the case of Muslim cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, 39, a U.S. citizen born in New Mexico, who is believed to be living in Yemen. The U.S. Treasury Department declared he is a "specially designated global terrorist," and government officials have

placed him on the CIA and Joint Special Operations Command "kill lists."

Washington claims al-Awlaki is affiliated to al-Qaeda and corresponded with Maj. Nidal Malik Hassan, the U.S. Army psychiatrist charged with killing 13 people in Fort Hood, Texas, in 2009.

In August the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the Center for Constitutional Rights filed a lawsuit by Naseer al-Awlaki demanding a halt to government actions to kill his son. President Barack Obama, Defense Secretary Robert Gates, and CIA Director Leon Panetta were the defendants.

U.S. District Judge Robert Bates on December 7 threw the case out, saying the plaintiff had no standing to file such a suit. Targeted assassinations are political and military questions that the executive branch decides, the judge said. "There are circumstances in which the Executive's unilateral decision to kill a U.S. citizen overseas is . . . judicially unreviewable," he wrote.

The court's ruling gives the government authority "to carry out the

targeted killing of any American, anywhere, whom the president deems to be a threat to the nation," stated ACLU attorney Jameel Jaffer.

In this case the Obama administration invoked the "state-secrets privilege," where the executive branch refuses to reveal information on "national security" grounds.

Washington has a long record of ordering assassinations of its adversaries around the world. In the 1960s, top government officials approved numerous covert plans to kill Cuban president Fidel Castro. During the Vietnam War the CIA's Operation Phoenix was exposed for assassinating thousands who opposed the U.S.-backed puppet regime in South Vietnam, including mayors, teachers, and doctors. Recently, stepped-up drone attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan have killed Taliban and other opposition figures.

In the case of al-Awlaki the government is openly declaring its intention to kill someone, in this instance a U.S. citizen.

THE MILITANT

U.S. drone strikes double in Pakistan

As many as 850 people have been killed so far this year in 106 U.S. drone attacks in Pakistan, double the amount in 2009. As Washington ramps up its war in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the *'Militant'* tells the truth and calls for all imperialist troops out now. Subscribe today, don't miss a single issue.



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Chicago SWP candidate: 'We need a labor party'

BY BETSY FARLEY

CHICAGO—"I will use my campaign to organize solidarity with workers in struggle throughout the state and region, across the country, and around the world—from the locked-out grain millers in Keokuk, Iowa, to the locked-out nuclear workers in Metropolis, Illinois, to workers resisting austerity measures in Ireland, Greece, and France," said John Hawkins, a long-time unionist and fighter for Black rights, in announcing his campaign as Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor here.

Hawkins will be an official write-in candidate. Discriminatory election laws make it difficult for working-class candidates to be on the ballot.

Twenty candidates have filed petitions for ballot status in the February 22 election, since Richard M. Daley announced he would not seek a seventh term as mayor. The Daley family has run Chicago politics for the capitalist rulers for all but 12 of the past 56 years.

Among the capitalist politicians in the race are Rahm Emanuel, former White House Chief of Staff; Carolyn Moseley Braun, former U.S. senator from Illinois; and U.S. Rep. Daniel Davis. At least a dozen candidates have had their ballot status challenged over validity of signatures, residency, and other issues.

"Working people throughout Chicago are confronting a severe crisis. Like workers around the country and around the world, we are living through the deepest and longest economic depression since the 1930s. And there is no end in sight," said Hawkins.

"The only party offering a program to defend working people and a perspective for fighting to end the dog-eat-dog capitalist system in favor of a socialist world is the Socialist Workers Party," he said.

"We tell the truth, that working people must organize a mass revolutionary movement to take political power and



Militant/Betsy Farley

John Hawkins, right, SWP candidate for mayor of Chicago, participates in December 3 picket by United Steelworkers members locked out by Honeywell in Metropolis, Illinois.

replace the rule of the capitalist class with working-class rule.

"Working people must stop relying on the twin capitalist parties—Democrats and Republicans alike. These parties always put the interests of the bankers, landlords, and industrialists first.

We need a labor party, based on unions that are fighting to put workers' interests first," stated Hawkins. "I plan to use my campaign to advance this perspective."

In the days leading up to the filing, the socialist mayoral candidate traveled to Metropolis, Illinois, to learn more about the struggle of nuclear fuel workers there locked out by Honeywell in June when they refused to agree to a takeback contract. Although the workers, members of United Steelworkers Local 7-669, offered to continue working under the current contract, Honeywell refused, demanding the elimination of seniority and retiree medical benefits, along with pension cuts and a wage reduction of 10 percent over three years.

The locked-out steelworkers have received support from dozens of unions in the area, and won unemployment benefits during the lockout.

"By standing up to the boss, your fight is an example to many other workers who are facing similar attacks," Hawkins told the unionists.

Workers on the picket line welcomed a fellow worker running for political office.

Thousands in London protest tuition raises

BY PAMELA HOLMES AND PAUL DAVIES

LONDON—Thousands of students demonstrated here outside Parliament December 9 against the government proposal to increase university tuition fees in England.

Since the first national demonstration November 10 (see the November 29 *Militant*) there have been more than 30 occupations of campus buildings by students. Some took the form of "all-night study-ins" while others were more prolonged. Two further days of action received support around the country with demonstrations in a number of cities from Edinburgh to Brighton that involved students from universities, colleges, and schools, as well as education workers.

The government's austerity program cuts funds for higher education by 40 percent as part of a sweeping assault that includes raising the retirement age, slashing government jobs, reducing housing funds, and other cutbacks.

Maximum annual tuition will rise to

£9,000 (US\$14,190), nearly three times the current level. Students also oppose big cuts to university teaching budgets and the removal of education allowances for low-income students.

"These proposals will triple student debt, effectively end all public investment in arts and humanities courses and, crucially, put off students from poorer backgrounds from going to university," said Liz Rawlings, president of the Edinburgh University Students' Association.

In a letter to the National Union of Students, Deputy Prime Minister Nicholas Clegg said the new system is "in line with our fair, progressive values." David Willets, universities minister, said, "The package is fair . . . and affordable for the nation."

Thousands of students marched through London on the day of the vote, with cops preventing many from joining the main protest in Parliament Square. Some demonstrators, who did not have the backing of most of the students there, smashed the windows of the Treasury building. The car driving Charles

Windsor, heir to the British throne and future head of state, was attacked by a few of the protesters.

The government and the police have used these incidents to call for tougher policing. Police officials have urged the authorities to consider making water cannons available for the first time in Britain. (They have been used in north-ern Ireland since the 1970s.)

The London *Times* denounced the cops' "incompetence" and warned, that "with more cuts to come . . . the police must be far more ruthless." Prime Minister David Cameron called for applying the "full force of the law." So far, 175 arrests have been made coming out of the demonstrations in London.

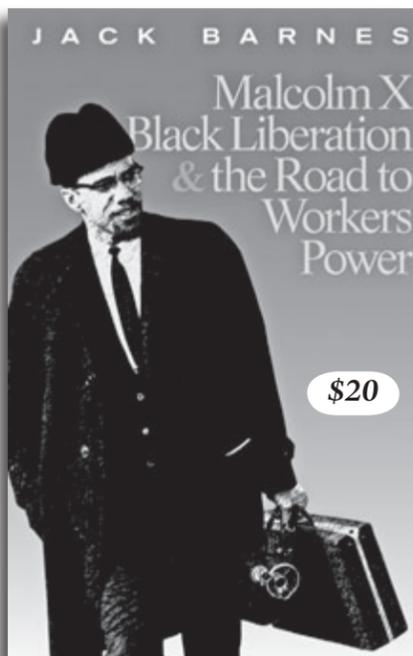
Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power

by Jack Barnes

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Quebec students rally against fee increases



Militant/John Steele

QUEBEC CITY—Some 3,000 students from across Quebec rallied December 6 outside a government-organized conference by the Quebec Liberal Party here on education. It was attended by government, student, union, and boss representatives. The gathering was billed as a discussion on how to improve financing of higher education, but was in fact organized around a government proposal to significantly increase university tuition over the next few years.

Student and trade union representatives opposed to the fee hikes walked out in the middle of the conference, protesting its fake character. Banner above reads, "We too, our decision is to say no to tuition fees."

—MICHEL PRAIRIE

Bangladesh: Thousands strike for higher wages

BY ANGEL LARISCY

Thousands of garment workers from some of the 4,500 apparel factories in Bangladesh participated in protests beginning December 10 against companies' refusal to pay the new government minimum wage. Some 20,000 workers employed by manufacturers near Dhaka in central Bangladesh blocked the main roads into the Suhi Industrial Park, in effect shutting down production.

On December 12 four workers there were killed and more than 100 injured in clashes with police, who fired tear gas and rubber bullets at protesters.

The recent protests follow strikes and demonstrations that rocked Bangladesh in August, as garment workers

demanded an increase in the minimum wage, one of the lowest in the world. Out of those actions the government agreed to raise the minimum wage to the equivalent of \$43 per month. There had been no increase since 2006. The new amount, however, remains far below the country's extremely low poverty line.

The new minimum wage promised by the government was supposed to go into effect in November. Workers who are demonstrating say many bosses have still not implemented the change.

Shikdar Mesbahuddin Ahmed, a director of the Youngone garment company, complained to the press that the workers "became unruly and didn't wait for our decision" to raise wages.

Apparel manufacturers who have made fortunes off the labor of workers in Bangladesh—many who toil 10 hours a day, six days a week—say the increase in wages is "too heavy" and that they are being "crushed by global turmoil" in the industry.

Garment production accounts for 80 percent of Bangladesh's exports. More than 3 million workers, 85 percent of them women, produce clothing for stores such as Wal-Mart, H&M, Gap, JCPenny, Tommy Hilfiger, and Levi Strauss.

The government and garment man-



Protest by garment workers in Bangladesh for implementation of higher minimum wage. The country's more than 3 million garment workers manufacture 80 percent of the country's exports while earning low pay and facing abysmal work conditions.

ufacturers have a history of targeting labor leaders and cracking down on strikes and protests. The country's home minister, Sahara Kahtoon, told Al Jazeera that the recent demonstrations were part of a conspiracy to destabilize Bangladesh's export sector. "We will find out the conspirators and give them exemplary punishment," she said.

An example of the disastrous conditions faced by garment workers in Bangladesh is the fire in a garment factory just north of Dhaka on December 14 that killed at least 25 people and

injured more than 100.

The 10-story building employs 5,000 workers who make pants for export to the United States and Europe. The death toll would have been higher except most workers at the time were outside for lunch.

While the cause of the blaze is unknown, stacks of garments in factories can easily catch fire. In addition, some factory owners have been known to lock exit doors to prevent workers from leaving their machines. In February a factory fire outside Dhaka killed more than 20 workers.

Arizona ends some Medicaid transplants

BY ANGEL LARISCY

In October the Arizona state government decided to end Medicaid financing for lung transplants, liver transplants for hepatitis C patients, and some bone marrow and pancreas transplants. The action amounts to a death sentence for some. The state says it will save \$4.5 million a year.

Already several people have died who had been on Medicaid and couldn't afford to pay for the operations themselves. Some who had been on transplant waiting lists for a year or more were told they would not receive their needed procedure.

"I know times are tight and cuts are needed but you can't cut human lives," said Flor Felix, whose husband needs a liver transplant. The state refused to pay for it and the family has not been able to raise the money.

"There will have to be more difficult cuts looking forward," Jennifer Carusetta, chief legislative liaison at the state Medicaid agency, told the *New York Times*.

—CALENDAR—

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Gov't in Spain breaks air controllers strike

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Air traffic controllers in Spain walked out December 3 in an 18-hour strike opposing government privatization of the airports, longer work hours, speedup, and pay cuts. As airports across the country were shut down, the government immediately imposed stiff military measures to break the strike.

The workers were responding to the government's deficit-cutting move to sell off about 50 percent of the airport authority AENA to raise \$12 billion. The two largest airports in Madrid and Barcelona would be completely privatized. At the same time, the size of the air traffic workforce has been declining as its workload has risen, and there has been no new hiring.

Spanish prime minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero declared December 4 a 15-day "state of emergency," for what he claimed was an "act of disobedience and a challenge to the democratic order." This is the first time the government has enacted a state of emergency since dictatorial rule by Gen. Francisco Franco ended in 1975.

"The controllers only returned to work after the Socialist government sent in the army to take over control towers and threatened controllers with jail," reported Reuters. More than 2,000 cops were deployed to the airports and 190 air force officials to patrol the air traffic control towers.

Spain's attorney general told the media December 9 that he would recommend prison sentences of as long as eight years for controllers who organized the strike.

The government's plan is to cut annual pay for air traffic controllers from \$470,000 to \$263,000. The high wages of controllers, 10 times an average

worker's wage in the country, makes them an easy target. Government officials and the capitalist media have played up the contrast of 20 percent unemployment in Spain to justify the union-busting moves and military measures being taken against workers.

Similar steps were taken in the

United States when, in the midst of a deep recession in 1981, U.S. president Ronald Reagan intervened to crush a strike by the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization. That defeat emboldened employers in other major industries and the government to broaden their offensive against the unions.

Workers donate bosses' bribes to help build the communist movement

Two workers at an agricultural implements plant in Des Moines, Iowa, sent in a total of \$1,106 in bonuses they recently received to the Capital Fund, which helps to finance long-term projects of the communist movement.

"This comes from one of the company's insidious programs," wrote Helen Meyers, who contributed her bonus, as did Becca Williamson. "The company pays production bonuses so there is always pressure to work faster and reduce the workforce. One supervisor said the more you cut, the more dollars in your pocket."

Class-conscious workers refer to these types of bonuses as blood money—bribes by the bosses to buy workers' silence over speedup, low pay, long hours, and unsafe conditions.

From Chicago, Laura Anderson sent in \$25 she received from the company as a Thanksgiving holiday bonus. "Coworkers weren't particularly thankful," wrote Anderson, "faced with a 150-day probation, short workweeks, and no time-and-a-half for working on the holiday."

Other workers in New York have sent in the "turkey bonuses" they received. "Enclosed is my check for \$68.30," wrote Sarah Katz. "All employees, including temps, were given a bonus 'for all our hard work.'" Dan Fein, a pharmaceutical worker, contributed a \$15 turkey coupon along with a \$77 bonus check.

After receiving a \$25 Christmas bonus and a \$15 "birthday gift" from bosses at a meat processing plant in the Atlanta area, John Benson sent it in to the Capital Fund. "These are part of the constant little bribes the company hands out to try to convince workers that our wages are a gift from them," he wrote.

From Seattle, Dean Peoples donated \$1,500. "It comes from an annual contractual lump sum payment—like a 'signing bonus' between the company and the union to dampen the fight for a better contract and get acceptance of the company proposal," he wrote. "Let it be used to advance the interests of the working class."

—BRIAN WILLIAMS

U.S. Steel locks out workers in Hamilton, Ontario

HAMILTON, Ontario—U.S. Steel locked out 900 workers at its plant here November 7. Rob Hinton and Glen Faulman, members of United Steelworkers Local 1005, told the *Militant* December 11 on the picket line that the company is trying to drastically reduce pensions for existing retirees and new hires. There are 9,000 pensioners, 78 percent of whom are widows.

Hinton was hired along with about 200 others in September. Faulman is a third generation steelworker who has more than 11 years in the plant. U.S. Steel bought the company from Canada-based Stelco in October 2007. Faulman said U.S. Steel is trying to “drag us down.” On December 17 there will be a children’s Christmas party and open house at the Hamilton convention center in support of Local 1005, and as Hinton put it, “to let the community get more into our fight.”

The blast furnace was shut down before the lockout and cannot be started up again until the spring for safety reasons, so workers expect this is will be a long lockout.

—Joe Young

Paperworkers in Australia strike Visy cardboard plants

SYDNEY, Australia—Some 29 union supporters were arrested in Melbourne December 13 for attempting to block truck access to a strikebound plant of Visy, a large cardboard recycler and manufacturer.

Almost 400 workers, most of them members of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, began an indefinite strike at three Visy facilities December 3. The paperworkers are fighting to defend union rights as they seek parity pay increases with workers at newer company plants without union agreements.

The strike is also against the reduction of casual (temporary) workers’ pay to the minimum rate and the halving of severance payments. The union is defending its position to back workers during dispute procedures, and is demanding a “heat policy” with better breaks during very hot conditions.

Unionists at Visy sites in Dandenong, Melbourne, and at Warwick Farm and Smithfield in Sydney set up continuous pickets to discourage truck drivers and strikebreakers from entering the plant. Many drivers, members of the Transport Workers Union, have refused to cross. Several workers at Warwick Farm told the *Militant* that some biker

gang members had been used to “ride shotgun” on strikebreaking trucks to try to intimidate union members.

The indefinite strike was preceded by a 24-hour work stoppage November 29 that included more than 100 other workers at Visy plants in Western Australia and Queensland. Unionists there are supporting the strike action with overtime bans.

—Ron Poulsen

Philadelphia: Sky Chef workers rally for new contract

Dozens of LSG Sky Chef workers, represented by UNITE HERE, rallied in Philadelphia December 6 to demand a new contract. The previous one expired more than a year ago.

The union represents some 7,000 Sky Chef workers in the United States and Canada. The company supplies catering and in-flight products to more than 300 airlines around the world. In 2005 Sky Chefs cut wages and benefits by 30 percent. In January health care costs will rise to over \$500 per month for family plans. Average wages are \$10 per hour.

The union says Sky Chef workers will be holding informational rallies around the United States.

—Angel Lariscy

Minnesota: Grocery workers fight for contract



UFCW Local 1189

ST. PAUL, Minnesota—Some 125 grocery workers, organized by United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1189, and supporters rallied here December 2 as they prepare for contract negotiations set to begin in January. After the protest they picketed on a nearby busy street corner. The union contract covers more than 4,500 workers at stores in the east Twin Cities metro area. “They talk about doing more with less,” said union steward Alex Kunan. “Everybody is burnt out. Part-timers are on 10 hours less a week.”

—TONY LANE

Iowa unionists back locked-out workers

Continued from front page
locked-out workers.

Soon after the tire workers left the picket line, more solidarity arrived from the Des Moines area. Mark Cooper, president of the South Central Iowa AFL-CIO, and another unionist brought 250 holiday food baskets to the Keokuk Labor Temple for the Roquette workers. Cooper joined the picket line before returning to Des Moines.

Picketing workers are prepared to keep the picket line going during the sometimes brutally cold weather of an Iowa winter. A trailer made of corrugated metal and wood has been set up outside the Roquette gate. Workers have dubbed it “Club 48G,” named after their union. Equipped with a wood-burning stove and donated couches and chairs, the picketers can keep warm as they maintain their 24-hour picket line. Donated firewood is

stacked up outside the trailer.

Roquette has hired Ohio-based LB&F, Inc., to provide scabs. The anti-union company’s name is believed to refer to what many bosses call their “last, best, and final offer” when they are trying to pressure workers to accept a concessionary or union-weakening contract proposal.

Buddy Howard, a locked-out worker, told the *Militant* that LB&F has provided about 60 replacement workers. Another 30 others have been hired locally.

Roquette has tried to recruit scabs through local employment agencies, job fairs, and direct hiring. In November, three members of Local 48G stood outside a job fair hosted by a temporary agency. The newspaper ad said the jobs paid \$13.50 per hour, with weekly bonuses of up to \$200—an attractive offer in this part of Iowa, which has the highest unemployment

in the state. The unionists outside wanted to make sure applicants knew that the jobs were for strikebreakers at Roquette, something the ad in the newspaper failed to mention.

Howard says that whenever they can, they try to talk with applicants about why they should not become strikebreakers.

The Roquette unionists also offer their solidarity to other workers in struggle. A sign outside the Keokuk Labor Temple, which houses the offices of Local 48G and other local unions, states, “Local 48G members salute our brothers and sisters of USW Local 7-669 locked out by Honeywell in Metropolis, IL.” Some 220 workers at the Honeywell uranium processing plant have been locked out by the company since June 28. Two Local 48G members visited Honeywell workers to extend solidarity.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



December 27, 1985

President Ronald Reagan has launched what administration officials called a concerted effort to resume direct military funding to the U.S.-organized counterrevolutionary (*contra*) army fighting against Nicaragua.

This is part of the Reagan administration’s escalation in recent weeks of the U.S.-organized war against Nicaragua.

As a cover for this terrorist war, Washington has embarked upon a new slander campaign, centered on the charge of Cuban domination of Nicaragua. The U.S. government has made new threats against revolutionary Cuba as well.

The Reagan administration hopes that war weariness will create conditions that could lead to an internal revolt against the Sandinista government, opening the door to a possible direct U.S. invasion.



December 26, 1960

Dec. 22—It is estimated that the rate of steel production next week will be at 40 percent of capacity or lower. Next week’s rate, says the Dec. 20 *New York Times*, “may be the lowest for a nonstrike period since the depression days of the Nineteen Thirties.”

The slump in steel and auto is reflected in the rise of unemployment and part-time employment. Unemployment is now nearing the five-million mark.

Some time ago the United Steelworkers union published figures showing that the industry can operate at 40 percent capacity and still make a profit. Technological advances in the process of steel making have sharply increased productivity. Today more than half the force is partially employed or totally unemployed.



December 28, 1935

DETROIT, Dec. 22—About 100 delegates from Detroit, Toledo, Cleveland, Defiance, Pontiac, Chicago and other cities, representing the three independent unions: the Mechanics Educational Society of America, the Associated Automobile Workers of America and locals of the Automobile Industrial Workers Association came together Saturday night for a “constitutional convention” at the Fort Wayne Hotel here to amalgamate into one independent union.

After a day and a half of deliberation, a constitution and preamble were adopted, stating that the final objectives of the new union were “the complete industrial and political freedom of all workers and to this end we dedicate our lives.”

The Changing Face of U.S. Politics:

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People of southern Sudan to vote on independence

BY CINDY JAQUITH

In Sudan a referendum on independence for the south is scheduled in less than a month. The roots of the conflicts in this war-torn country lie in its colonial past and the current race for oil profits between U.S., European, and Chinese energy companies, as well as capitalists inside Sudan.

The people of southern Sudan are voting January 9 on whether to maintain their autonomous status or establish their own independent state. A large vote for independence is expected.

The Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), which governs southern Sudan, announced December 11 that it favors independence. The National Congress Party of Sudanese president Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir, based in the north, says it is working for "unity."

Sudan has the third largest reserves of oil in sub-Saharan Africa. Some 80 percent of the oil fields are located in southern Sudan, but the processing facilities are in the north.

Until 1956 Sudan was a colony of Britain. London ruled by pitting the many different ethnic groups and tribes against each other, favoring northern Sudanese, the majority of whom speak Arabic and practice Islam, over southern Sudanese, the majority of whom are black, speak English, and consider themselves Christian or animist.

Independence, general strike

When Sudan won its independence in 1956, that opened the door for Sudanese workers and peasants to begin the struggle to overcome economic backwardness and divisions fostered by colonialism. Led by the railroad union, the labor movement carried out a successful general strike in 1958. Not long after that rebel forces in the south took up arms to combat discrimination against them that was maintained by the new government in Khartoum, in which Arab Sudanese were dominant.

Within a month of the general strike the military took over the government. A civil war has wracked the south for most of the time since, killing 2 million people. The toll of years of fighting and brutal attacks by Khartoum's army on southern villages led increasing numbers of ethnic groups in the south to support the rebels.

In the north opposition to the war mounted in the Arab population. In 1988 the government began peace talks with the SPLM. Demonstrations in the north urging rapid conclusion of a peace drew trade unionists and soldiers of

Khartoum's army. The next year Bashir carried out a coup, banned the unions, and stepped up the war. Under a peace accord brokered in 2005 by Washington and London, the south got autonomy and leaders of the SPLM were given seats in the central government in Khartoum. Profits from the oil revenues were to be jointly shared. The accord also stipulated that a referendum on independence for the south should take place in 2011.

Imperialist powers have taken advantage of the conflict to deploy 10,000 UN "peacekeeping" troops in Sudan.

Washington has been at odds with Bashir since the 1990s, when he sided with Saddam Hussein in the first U.S.-led war against Iraq.

The William Clinton administration placed Sudan on the "state sponsors of terrorism" list and imposed trade sanctions. The European Union likewise adopted sanctions. The presidencies of George W. Bush and Barack Obama continued this policy. Obama backed the International Criminal Court indictment of Bashir for "war crimes" and has urged his arrest.

The sanctions have meant no U.S. or European oil firms invest in Sudan's vast reserves, a condition they want reversed. China has become Sudan's main trading partner and purchases 60 percent of its exports.

The wars, sanctions, and the failure of any Sudanese government—the central government in the north or the autonomous government in the south—to advance the living conditions of the toilers has left Sudan one of the poorest countries in the world, despite its natural re-



UN Photo/Tim McKulka

Women in Wau, southern Sudan, wait at school to register to vote November 22. Referendum of southern Sudanese January 9 will decide whether to declare independence from rest of Sudan.

sources. Forty percent live beneath the official poverty level. Children attend school for an average of four years.

'Islamic militias'

Bashir has gone after his opponents in the name of upholding Islamic law and Arab culture. He organized "Islamic militias" known as "Janjaweed" to pursue southern rebels he termed "Zionist collaborators" and "infidels." They later persecuted toilers of the Darfur region, who have also faced discrimination by Khartoum.

The SPLM came out of the unification of several armed groups representing different tribes in the south that had fought in the civil war, including against each other. The SPLM's 2007 program called for building a "New Sudan" based on "a mixed free market economy" and a democracy that would be "non-tribal" and "non-sectarian."

In a speech in September 2010 in

New York, SPLM leader Salva Kiir called upon imperialist governments and banks for help. "We need support . . . especially from the United States of America, we need the support . . . of the multinational institutions, such as the World Bank, IMF, and all other institutions," Kiir said.

This fall, leading up to the referendum, the Obama administration offered to take Khartoum off the "terrorist" list and reduce sanctions if Bashir allows the voting to proceed unhindered.

On December 7 officials of the SPLM charged that the Sudanese army had bombed a southern region in an attempt to sabotage the referendum. Khartoum denied the charge but said it will continue to pursue rebels from Darfur, in western Sudan. In the past Bashir has accused the SPLM of offering refuge to Darfur insurgents, who are waging a separate struggle against discrimination by Bashir's government.

Cubans who fought in Angola set example

Continued from front page

who fell in the Angola war were added to the wall.

The Cubans present for the ceremony are in Pretoria for the 17th World Festival of Youth and Students taking place December 13–21.

The Cuban combat mission in Angola involved some 375,000 volunteers over a period of 16 years. It culminated in the victorious 1988 battle at Cuito Cuanavale, described by Nelson Mandela as a "milestone in the history of struggle for southern African liberation."

Present for the ceremony were a number of prominent participants in the Angola campaign and other Cuban internationalist missions in Africa. They included Jorge Risquet, a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, who went to Congo-Brazzaville in 1965 to assist the liberation forces there. Risquet was head of Cuba's civilian mission in Angola from 1975–80.

In his remarks at the Wall of Names event, Risquet listed the countries in which combatants from Cuba have fought, including Algeria, Congo, Congo-Brazzaville, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Mozambique, and Namibia, as well as Angola. "We salute the lives of all those who fought," Risquet said, giving special mention to Raúl Diaz Argüelles, first head of Cuba's military mission to Angola. Diaz Argüelles was killed by a land mine on

Dec. 11, 1975, just one month after going to Angola, almost 35 years ago to the day of the Pretoria ceremony, at which his daughter Natasha was present.

"The heroism of those who fought continues in the lives of the Cuban Five, three of whom fought in Angola," Risquet continued, referring to the Cuban revolutionaries who have been locked up in U.S. jails for more than 12 years. "We demand their immediate release." Among the Cuban delegation and present for the event were Irma González, Antonio Guerrero, Jr., and Aili Labañino, children of three of the five.

Others in the Cuban delegation who fought in Angola are Brig. Gen. Amels Escalante, Chief of the General Staff of the Cuban Military Mission in Angola from 1982–83; Commander René Hernández Gattorno who, with Diaz Argüelles, was one of the first to arrive in 1975; and Col. Fidencio González, hero of the Republic of Cuba and head of Cuban troops in the victorious battle at Cangamba, Angola.

The delegation includes former combatants in other African nations: Commander Víctor Dreke was second-in-command to Che Guevara in the 1965 Cuban internationalist mission in the Congo and leader of Cuba's military mission to Guinea-Bissau 1966–68; Rodolfo Puente Ferro led the medical section in the Congo-Brazzaville mission and was a former Cuban ambassador to Angola; and Col. Orlando Cardoso, Hero of the

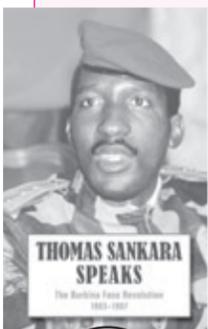
Republic of Cuba, who spent nearly 11 years as a prisoner of war in Somalia as a result of Cuba's international solidarity with Ethiopia.

Welcoming those present were Wally Serote, director of Freedom Park, and Ramzie Abrahams, head of Freedom Park's department of Heritage and Knowledge. Serote joined the African National Congress while in high school and was an activist in the anti-apartheid struggle from then on. He was detained and placed in solitary confinement for nine months in 1969 under the apartheid regime's infamous Terrorism Act. He is today an internationally renowned literary figure and an ANC member.

"Why did we put the [Cuban] names on the wall?" Serote asked. "The answer is that those names stand for combat readiness, freedom, and peace around the world," describing the internationalist solidarity of the Cuban people and their government.

In her remarks, Liudmila Alamo Dueñas, first secretary of the Union of Young Communists of Cuba, said that coming to the aid of Angola and other African countries was how the Cuban revolution pays its debt to humanity, fighting against lies and hate, for sovereignty and independence, and for a more just world, something that Cuba will continue to do "wherever we are needed and can do so." She stressed that the fighters in Angola were "a source of inspiration for future generations."

Thomas Sankara Speaks The Burkina Faso Revolution 1983–87



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New book by Fidel Castro on revolutionary victory

Por todos los caminos de la Sierra. La victoria estratégica (Through all the paths of the Sierra. The strategic victory) by Fidel Castro. In Spanish. 855 pages (including more than 200 pages of photos, maps, copies of original documents, and graphics of the weapons used by both sides in the revolutionary war). Office of Publications of the Council of State, Havana, Cuba.

BY SETH GALINSKY

Today, in the midst of the worst capitalist economic crisis since the 1930s, workers and young people will appreciate the new book *La victoria estratégica* by Fidel Castro. It gives a vivid picture of how workers and farmers are capable of defeating even the most powerful oppressor with the most modern weapons of destruction at its disposal.

Through *La victoria estratégica* the reader gains an understanding of the history of the Cuban Revolution. It is

IN REVIEW

an excellent recounting of the military tactics and strategy during key battles that broke the back of the army of one of the most repressive regimes in Latin America at the time. More importantly, through this book you get a sense of the type of organization, leadership, program, cadres, discipline, and selfless functioning that is needed (and possible) for working people to take power out of the hands of the ruling rich.

On Dec. 2, 1956, Fidel Castro and 81 other members of the July 26 Movement, traveling on the yacht *Granma*, landed in Cuba's Oriente Province to initiate the guerrilla struggle to overthrow the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista.

Rapidly discovered by Batista's forces, half were either captured and thrown in prison or assassinated. Over the next several weeks, those fighters who elud-

ed the Batista army made their way to the Sierra Maestra mountains in the southeastern part of the island. Within a little over a year, Castro turned the Rebel Army into an experienced fighting force, recruiting peasants and workers to its ranks, and defeating numerous attempts by Batista to dislodge them.

Then in April 1958 the July 26 Movement in the cities launched an ill-conceived and ill-prepared general strike that was rapidly defeated by the dictatorship. Batista calculated that the strike's failure would demoralize workers in the cities and the guerrilla fighters in the Sierra and allow him to deal a decisive blow to the Rebel Army and the revolutionary struggle.

La victoria estratégica tells the story of how, instead, fewer than 300 guerrillas decisively defeated the offensive by 10,000 heavily equipped soldiers, in fighting that stretched almost nonstop for 74 days, marking the beginning of the end of the dictatorship.

The failure of the general strike was a blow to the revolutionaries. To draw the lessons of what had happened, Castro organized a meeting of the leadership of the July 26 Movement from the cities and the Sierra, which took place in the Sierra Maestra on May 3, 1958.

Lessons of general strike defeat

The meeting concluded that the strike did not arise out of the struggle itself and was organized in a sectarian fashion. Although key trade unions were led by the Popular Socialist Party (PSP), a party allied with Moscow, July 26 Movement leaders did not seek to involve the PSP in the strike. The main error, Castro said in an interview in the Sierra Maestra in July 1958, was that "the strike committee subordinated the mobilization of the masses to a surprise action by armed militias."

"The strike is the most formidable weapon the people have in a revolutionary struggle and the armed struggle



Staff of Radio Rebelde in Sierra Maestra, 1958, during fight against U.S.-backed dictatorship.

should be subordinate to it. You can't lead people into battle, just like you can't lead an army, if you don't adequately mobilize," Castro said.

Out of that meeting the July 26 Movement was reorganized. Its leadership body moved to the Sierra Maestra, and Fidel Castro named the movement's general secretary.

The revolutionaries began preparing for the Batista army offensive they knew was coming. Since the *Granma* landing, rebel fighters had consolidated their base of operations, not to prepare for an extended guerrilla war, but to speed the extension of the movement to the entire island. They set up rudimentary hospitals, a plant that produced salted beef, a radio station, a newspaper, a school for new recruits, and a jail.

Castro points out that the rebel fighters obtained most of their weapons and ammunition by taking them from Batista's soldiers. At the beginning of the regime's attempt to take the Sierra Maestra, ammunition was so tight among the rebels that Castro ordered careful rationing of bullets. It was not unusual for rebel fighters to go into battle with less than a dozen bullets each.

While the guerrillas were keeping track of almost every bullet used, Batista was bombarding rebel positions from the air, with rockets and napalm provided by the U.S. government.

Radio Rebelde stuck to the truth

In contrast to the dictatorship, which broadcast lies aimed at confusing working people about the course of the unfolding war, Castro gave precise instructions to Radio Rebelde to make sure "its news broadcasts stick to the truth. . . . We don't hide our casualties because they are glorious ones. We don't exaggerate the enemy's casualties because the cause of freedom cannot be defended with lies."

The revolutionaries, while doing everything possible to stop the invading

government forces in their tracks, did not revel in the killing of the soldiers. On the contrary, the Rebel Army provided medical treatment to wounded Batista troops and treated them with dignity and respect. The guerrillas took advantage of every lull in the fighting to talk to the regime's soldiers and explain what the July 26 Movement was fighting for.

Near the end of July, when the Rebel Army had defeated the bulk of the invasion force, a unit headed by Che Guevara surrounded another government column. After consulting with Castro, Guevara sent a message to the Army captain in charge, offering his troops safe passage out of rebel territory, if they turned over their arms and ammunition.

"You should know that you are surrounded and that you can't expect any outside help," Guevara wrote in an attempt to convince the captain to avoid "a useless bloodbath."

If the captain didn't accept the rebel offer, Guevara advised him to tell his men "to get out of the houses and protect themselves in trenches, because all the high ground is ours."

The book was edited by journalist Katiuska Blanco. She noted that the book was possible because Celia Sánchez, a leader of the July 26 Movement and part of the Rebel Army who died in 1980, collated every note written in the Sierra Maestra, and after the triumph of the revolution, organized a team to research the terrain and interview many protagonists of the revolutionary war.

After defeating the Batista offensive and shattering the dictatorship's army, the Rebel Army rapidly organized to extend its victory, overthrow the dictatorship, and bring Cuba's workers and farmers to power, opening the door to the socialist revolution. The story of the final push is told in a second volume: *De la Sierra Maestra a Santiago de Cuba: La contraofensiva estratégica*. (From *the Sierra Maestra to Santiago de Cuba: The Strategic Counteroffensive*).

Por todos los caminos de la sierra La victoria estratégica By Fidel Castro



Castro's *Strategic Victory*, an account of 74 days of battle in 1958, where 300 revolutionary combatants, supported by workers and farmers all over Cuba, defeated the "final offensive" of 10,000 Batista troops. Available in Spanish. Expected in English and other languages soon. Publisher: Publications Office of the Council of State of the Republic of Cuba \$35

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World youth festival opens in South Africa



Militant/Maceo Dixon

PRETORIA, South Africa—The 17th World Festival of Youth and Students opened here December 13 with thousands of delegates from countries throughout the world gathering for an opening ceremony in the Lucas Moripe Stadium in Tshwane. The theme this year is "Let's defeat imperialism, for a world of peace, solidarity, and social transformations." This is the first time the festival has been held in sub-Saharan Africa.

The festival is dedicated to Nelson Mandela and Fidel Castro. Among those who spoke at the opening was Jacob Zuma, president of South Africa. He said, "We are saying that this country which was isolated for so many decades due to the evils of apartheid has opened its borders to progressive events of this nature." Julius Malema, head of the African National Congress Youth League, also spoke and a message was read to the delegates from Fidel Castro.

—LAURA GARZA

Capitalist rulers scapegoat Jews for economic crisis

Below is an excerpt from *How Can the Jews Survive? A Socialist Answer to Zionism* by George Novack, one of *Pathfinder's Books of the Month* for December. The pamphlet describes how the capitalist rulers in times of crisis resort to anti-Semitism to scapegoat Jews for the crimes of decaying capitalism. This piece comments on an essay by Isaac Deutscher titled "The Non-Jewish Jew." Copyright © 1969 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BY GEORGE NOVACK

Marxism takes issue with the mystique of the chosen people in reference to the Jews or any other nationality. It gives a historical and materialist explanation for the exceptional endurance and peculiar characteristics of the Jews since their dispersion. The Jews have maintained existence and individuality as a nationality primarily because of the special role they played as a people-class in precapitalist society, where they were agents of the money economy among peoples living in a natural econ-



Picket line at German consulate in New York, November 1938, demanding Washington "Open the doors to victims of Hitler's Nazi terror." During 1930s liberal Democratic Roosevelt administration refused to allow more than a handful of Jewish refugees into the country.

omies and prospects for perpetuating Jewry as a people apart, since its special function became the general condition of the social economy. During the 19th century both liberals and Marxists held the view that the Jews would shed their distinctive traits and separate identity through gradual absorption into an enlightened bourgeois or a future socialist society. Progressive capitalism did institute a certain degree of assimilation in Western Europe and North America, although it failed to complete it there. The process of social and cultural homogenization was barely begun in Eastern Europe because of its backwardness.

The development of world capitalism in this century upset this perspective. Imperialistic, crisis-torn capitalism swung over to an exacerbated nationalism of its own. One of its most malignant manifestations was the resort to anti-Semitism, a ready-made means for diverting the wrath of despairing and deluded people away from the real authors of their misery by making the Jews a scapegoat for the crimes of a decaying capitalism. This relapse into barbarism was consummated in Germany, the most highly developed capitalist country of Europe, through the frenzied chauvinism of the Nazis capped by Hitler's extermination of six million Jews.

The degeneration of capitalism coupled with the failure of the socialist movement to replace it in time gave the Jewish question an acuteness and urgency unanticipated by the first generations of Marxists. Hitlerism served to spur and fortify the feelings of national solidarity among the Jews which, for different reasons, had been fading in both East and West Europe. The harried Jews had to defend and define themselves anew in reaction to the menace to their very physical existence.

For the sake of self-preservation and national perpetuation, the survivors of East European Jewry who, especially among the workers, had been widely won over to the Marxist ideals of socialism, turned toward Zionism as the last hope of salvation. The project of seeking and securing refuge in a new Jewish state located in Palestine pushed aside the internationalist program and perspective.

There were dreadful pitfalls in this forced decision. "The world has driven the Jew to seek safety in a nation-state in the middle of this century when the nation-state is falling into decay," Deutscher pointed out. The Jewish people, which was denied the benefits of bourgeois nationalism in its best days, was compelled to embrace a

bourgeois nationalism of its own and constitute a separate Jewish state at a time when the progressive potential of that form of political organization within the capitalist framework had been reduced to a minimum.

To heap up their ill fortune, the Zionists chose to build their state in a tiny, poor and unfavorable terrain already occupied by another people, slowly awakening to its own national consciousness, which they then displaced by economic and military pressures. . . .

During the 1930s Roosevelt's liberal Democratic administration did not heed the cries of the victims of Nazism and refused to open the doors guarded by the Statue of Liberty to more than a handful of Jewish refugees who were lucky enough to find sponsors here. . . .

The American ruling class, whose agents dropped the first atom bombs on the Japanese, conduct genocidal warfare in Vietnam, stood ready to use the H-bomb in the Caribbean confrontation of 1962 and maltreat their minorities at home, has shown itself capable of monstrous crimes. In case the survival of its power and profits hangs in the balance, why should it consider the six million American Jews to be less expendable than the six million European Jews it let Hitler exterminate? Inconceivable? So assimilated German Jews of the 1920s thought, too. . . .

Every expedient short of the struggle for socialism, any substitute for that, will end in calamity for the Jews. They cannot achieve security for themselves or anyone else so long as the root causes of discrimination, racism and reactionary nationalism continue to exist. Indeed, the Zionists have dealt fatal blows to themselves by succumbing to these practices. These curses can be removed only by abolishing capitalism, as the East European Jewish workers formerly believed and the non-Jewish Jews of the Marxist school taught.

The Jews have to link themselves with those forces in their own country and on a world scale that are fighting to overthrow imperialism and striving to build the new society. The solution of the Jewish question is indissolubly bound up with the complete emancipation of humanity that can be brought about only along the road of international socialism.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

omy. Judaism and anti-Semitism had common roots in the distinctive functions which marked off the commercial Jew from the rest of the nations.

The coming of capitalism eliminated the necessity and changed the possi-

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Gov't 'stimulus' is for the wealthy

There is no doubt capitalists are concerned about the state of the economy. Their worries, however, have nothing to do with how high levels of unemployment affect working people, with how workers are increasingly being forced to labor under deteriorating conditions on the job, or with how the rising costs of food and fuel are lowering the standard of living of working-class families. All of *their* solutions exacerbate *our* problems.

The government has been moving from one "stimulus" scheme to the next trying to shore up the capitalists' declining profit system. The latest tax-cut package includes an extension of unemployment benefits for some workers who have been without a job between 26 and 99 weeks, in the midst of a bill that is a boon for the wealthiest corporations and individuals.

Democrats and Republicans are concerned about the U.S. budget deficit, which is growing in part due to these "stimulus" measures. The capitalists depend on their government to keep the system

functioning. But with their profit margins under pressure, they don't want more of the surplus value they extract from workers going to finance the state than the rulers consider necessary. Whether through taxes or otherwise.

What concerns working people is not their deficit per se, but *how* they intend to balance it: freezing wages, cutting social programs, and putting more workers out on the streets. At the same time the bosses and their government clamp down on workers, they urge us to get deeper into debt—spend and borrow—to prop up what is increasingly a teetering house of cards.

Economic devastation and wars are what working people can look forward to under capitalism in the coming decades. The necessity and possibility of working people taking power to end these horrors will be discussed at an upcoming public meeting in New York January 15 on "What Kind of Socialism for the 21st Century? The Long, Hard Battles Ahead." (See announcement on front page.)

Measures have little impact on crisis

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ing \$1.75 trillion over the course of a year.

One of their aims is to increase demand for government bonds and thereby lower long-term interest rates, which unlike short-term interest rates are ultimately determined by the capitalist market, not the Fed. This lower long-term rate is then supposed to encourage businesses and individuals to borrow and spend. But lately none of this has been happening.

Interest being paid on government bonds is instead going up in the United States and around the world. Worries of inflation because of money-printing in the United States and United Kingdom, and the spiraling debt crisis in the euro zone, is unnerving investors in sovereign debt denominated in dollars, euros, and pounds. And the concomitant rise in mortgage rates is having a similar effect on inflated real estate markets.

Financial institutions continue to pay down debt more than they are investing; their debt has declined from 121 percent of the gross domestic product in 2008 to 98 percent today. U.S. companies are hoarding cash. And individuals continue to snub enticements to spend on their credit cards, take out loans, or refinance mortgages as they try to save and reduce their debt burdens.

Credit card companies have begun a new round of pushing high-interest cards on individuals. They are now targeting those with low credit scores previously considered too high a risk by creating new subcategories and archetypes of people they have convinced themselves will pay.

Despite this, consumer credit in November heading into holiday shopping was at its lowest in six years—excluding federal loans pushed on students to pay for hyperinflated tuition on hopes they will be able to pay them off with higher-paying jobs after graduation. Workers are paying more

with available cash and savings, rather than going deeper into debt.

In early December the Federal Reserve was forced by a congressional act and a suit by Bloomberg LP to disclose details of its lending in 2008–2009. The data reveals the degree to which a panic-stricken Fed acted behind the scenes to patch up the crumbling world financial system—to the tune of some \$3.3 trillion. They did it earlier than many knew and took on big risks with very low interest loans and paltry collateral. It also illustrates the paramount role of U.S. capitalism as well as the deep interconnections between the financial systems of Europe and America that had developed along with the growth of the so-called shadow banking system made up of unregulated financial institutions dedicated to "making money" from buying and selling debt.

Fed pumps billions into European banks

The Fed responded in December 2007 to the impending financial crisis with a \$10 billion loan to the European Central Bank. While pumping tens of billions into European banks, most went to U.S. institutions with Citigroup topping the list, followed by Morgan Stanley, Merrill Lynch, and Bank of America.

The failure of the various stimulus moves to turn the economy around has led to sharpening factional disagreements among capitalist politicians over how to deal with the crisis. Ron Paul, a Republican congressman from Texas who is opposed to the Fed's very existence, was recently named head of the House subcommittee that monitors the agency.

In the latest effort to stimulate the economy, the Barack Obama administration put together a bipartisan \$990 billion tax cut and spending bill, which is expected to pass Congress. It maintains and adds to tax cuts and business incentives enacted under the previous George W. Bush administration.

About 5 percent of the bill will be used to extend unemployment benefits for the millions of jobless who are between 26 and 99 weeks without work. There will be nothing, as unemployment continues to hover at 10 percent, for the tens of thousands even longer-term jobless who are being cut off monthly.

Concerned about the impact of all these stimulus measures on their rising national deficit, capitalist politicians are united in their determination to make working people bear the maximum cost.

A two-year pay freeze for employees of the federal government proposed by President Obama passed the House of Representatives December 8.

Correction

The article "Crisis strains 'unity' of capitalist Europe" in the December 20 issue should have said the Spanish government decided to raise 780 million euros (about US\$1 billion), not 780 billion euros.

Black farmers

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farmers' case was promised by the Obama administration in February 2010, after years of protests by farmers. After passing the House of Representatives, the money was stalled in the U.S. Senate until November 19. While many senators claimed to support the settlement, others were able to hold up approval for months, stating that they couldn't vote for any measure that would increase the federal deficit.

The measure finally passed when funds were made available from a "surplus" in nutrition programs for women and children known as WIC, a Department of Treasury program to recover "overpayments" of unemployment benefits, and other sources. Gary Grant, president of the Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association, asked, "How in the world, we wonder, can WIC have a nearly \$570 million surplus in these times? If folks who need food assistance have been bureaucratically removed from the rolls to create a surplus, we are outraged."

The Black farmers' class-action lawsuit, known as *Pigford v. Glickman*, was filed in 1997. Farmers, mainly in the South, sued the USDA for discrimination in loans, disaster relief, and other farm programs.

Lucious Abrams, 57, a farmer from Waynesboro, Georgia, was one of the original six plaintiffs in the *Pigford* case and helped organize other farmers into the fight. In the mid-1980s, local USDA loan officers kept telling him to come back later or wait a little longer on his loan applications. "When you can't get your money on time to operate, two or three weeks in the farming industry—that's like if you need water to drink and you can't get it till three days later," Abrams told the *Augusta Chronicle*. In 1999 a consent decree settling the Black farmers' case was approved. That settlement promised farmers a \$50,000 payment, as well as loan forgiveness, tax breaks, and priority consideration for future loans.

Of the original 22,547 claims filed, 41 percent were denied. An additional 75,000 claims were also denied on the basis that they were filed after a September 2000 deadline. Some \$1 billion was disbursed.

Black farmers continued to demand that the settlement be expanded to include those denied, finally resulting in the measure signed December 8.

Contesting Black farmers' claims

Some capitalist politicians and media began taking aim at the settlement before the ink was dry. An editorial in the December 8 *Investor's Business Daily* was titled "Reparations? When Pigford Flies." "Pigford is an outright raid on the U.S. Treasury that needs to be investigated. No doubt there are valid minority claims for discrimination, but when there are more claimants than farmers, we smell a scam," the editors wrote.

The law signed by Obama includes provisions to investigate each application and make regular reports to Congress. As in the first *Pigford* settlement, this will undoubtedly mean that thousands of staff hours and millions of dollars will be spent by the federal government to contest Black farmers' claims.

Black farmers report that the day-to-day functioning of local USDA offices where decisions are made about loan applications remains largely unchanged. "The USDA is still refusing us," Willie James Brown, 77, of Marbury, Alabama, told the *Militant* in a phone interview. He raises corn, peas, watermelon, hay, and cattle on his 451-acre farm north of Montgomery. "In some ways, it's worse than when we started."

"We organized 50 young Black farmers into a cooperative in 2005," Brown said. "Now all but a few have given up because they couldn't get financing. We've had disastrous weather conditions. You apply for a loan or for disaster relief and it doesn't come or you only get a small part of what you need."

"We go up to the [USDA] office to inquire about our applications. They're sitting in there, drinking coffee and talking and laughing. 'We're working on it,' they say. If you do a budget and take it up there to request a \$30,000 loan, which isn't very much, they will say, 'Can you get by with \$5,000 or \$6,000?' And then they only give you a few hundred dollars at a time; you have to keep going back," Brown added.

"We talk to our white farmer friends and they always get their money first. They ask us, 'You mean you haven't gotten yours yet?' This kind of treatment is what has run all these young farmers out. Our fight is not near over."

Capitalism's World Disorder

WORKING-CLASS POLITICS AT THE MILLENNIUM

The social devastation and financial panic, coarsening of politics, cop brutality, and imperialist aggression—all are products not of something gone wrong with capitalism but of its lawful workings. Yet the future can be changed by the united struggle of workers and farmers increasingly conscious of their capacity to wage revolutionary struggles for state power and to transform the world. —\$25

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