

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Cuba solidarity conference held in Caracas, Venezuela
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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LETTER TO READERS

ing the working-class press. You can contact distributors in your area listed on page 10. Or mail back the renewal form you received with the last three issues of your subscription.

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Most who subscribed during the drive signed up for the introductory offer of \$5 for 12 weeks. Some also took advantage of the special deals on nine book titles available to subscribers. These book specials are still available for regular readers. Check
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Supporters of rights respond to political attack in Omaha

BY LAURA GARZA

OMAHA, Neb. — Supporters of the Socialist Workers Party and other defenders of political rights and free speech are campaigning here to respond to a July 16 political break-in at the home of Jacob Perasso, SWP candidate for Omaha City Council District 4 in the May elections.

“The authorities or their vigilante

DEFEND POLITICAL RIGHTS!
— editorial, p. 11

friends hope to intimidate us and deal a blow to the rights of all working people in Omaha,” Perasso told the *Militant*. “That’s what we explained to everyone we met going door to door Aug. 4 in south Omaha, where I live. We showed them the Aug. 12 *Militant* with its front-page coverage of the attacks and the socialists’ response.”

“Your campaign is necessary,” Lorenzo Quijano, 37, a worker at the Old Chicago restaurant, told Perasso. “This kind of harassment shouldn’t be carried out against a person because they are fighting for a better system for workers.”

Supporters of political rights and
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‘Workers in Egypt are more confident today’ ‘Militant’ on-the-scene following Morsi ouster



Reuters/Mohamed Abd El Ghany

Massive demonstration in Cairo’s Tahrir Square July 26 dealt blow to Muslim Brotherhood efforts to reimpose unpopular and unstable Islamist government of Mohammed Morsi.

BY PAUL MAILHOT

CAIRO — A month after mass demonstrations and a nationwide petition-signing campaign involving millions of people that prompted the military to oust Muslim Brotherhood President Mohammed Morsi, working people here are beginning to focus on the next steps in their struggle to keep political space open and improve their conditions of life.

On July 26 massive demonstrations

across Egypt squashed any momentum toward the return of Morsi, who remains under arrest.

Workers and others here give many reasons why they campaigned to push out the Muslim Brotherhood after a year in office.

“Morsi’s campaign for president was a campaign of promises,” Mahitab Elgilani, an organizer of a tent city of several hundred camped out in

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Under pressure, Bangladesh parliament amends labor law



Reuters/Andrew Biraj

Amid labor unrest and international pressure following profit-driven factory deaths, Bangladesh parliament passed law that bars labor ministry from turning over names of union supporters to bosses, but also includes anti-union provisions. Above, workers from textile company Envoy Group on strike in Dhaka June 10, demand wage raise, back pay and larger lunch allowance.

BY EMMA JOHNSON

Bangladesh’s parliament amended the country’s labor law July 15 in response to mass protests and mounting political pressures after more than 1,200 garment workers were killed

on the job — sacrificed on the alter of profit as a result of the bosses’ disregard for the most basic safety standards and workers’ lives.

To win recognition, unions still
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Socialist candidates tour Egypt in solidarity with workers, farmers

See page 7

Fast-food workers demonstrate for \$15 per hour, unionization

BY BETSY FARLEY AND SUSAN LAMONT

Hundreds of fast-food and retail workers marched through Chicago’s busy downtown Loop business district here Aug. 1, chanting and handing out fliers to press demands for a wage raise to \$15 an hour and

seven cities around the country, including New York; Milwaukee; Detroit; St. Louis; Kansas City, Mo.; and Flint, Mich.

Many protesters carried signs that
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FIGHT FOR BIG RAISE IN MINIMUM WAGE!

— editorial, p. 11

the right to form unions. Protesters stopped and held several rallies along the march route.

The workers — from McDonald’s, Wendy’s, Burger King, Dunkin’ Donuts and other fast-food restaurants, along with workers from Sears and Walgreens — were part of several days of strikes and protests in at least

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- Calif. prisoners’ hunger strike protests solitary confinement 4
- Bosses respond to ‘Obamacare’ by cutting workers’ hours 7

Marchers condemn cop killing of Toronto youth

BY JOHN STEELE

MONTREAL — Some 1,000 people marched through downtown Toronto July 29 to condemn the killing of Sammy Yatim, 18, by Toronto cop James Forcillo two days earlier.

Forcillo fatally shot Yatim on a Toronto Transit Commission streetcar after passengers said he had ordered them to leave the car while brandishing a small knife.

Yatim's death sparked outrage across the city and around the country after a video of the killing taken by a passerby hit the Internet. The video shows Yatim alone, standing in the aisle near the front of the streetcar as five cops order him to drop his knife. Fourteen seconds later Forcillo fires nine shots at Yatim in 12 seconds. Another video taken from a nearby security store camera released to the

public shows Yatim crumpling to the floor after the first three bullets are fired, his legs still moving. It then shows Forcillo firing six rounds at Yatim.

Yatim, who moved to Toronto from Syria five years ago to live with his father, was planning to start college in the fall. His mother, a pediatrician in Syria, was in Toronto at the time of the killing. She and other family members took part in the demonstration wearing T-shirts that said, "Protect us from our protectors" with a picture of Yatim underneath.

Militant supporter Gabriel Charbin and his coworker Matt Murphy at the Brampton Chrysler auto assembly plant joined the demonstration after work. "We saw it on TV and decided to go," said Charbin. "It's important to react to this. There is a pattern to



Matt Murphy

Demonstrators in Toronto July 29 protest killing of Sammy Yatim, 18, by cop James Forcillo.

what the police do. We have to hold them accountable."

Constable Forcillo has been suspended with pay while Ontario's Special Investigation Unit carries out

an inquiry.

Another "Justice for Sammy" demonstration has been called for Aug. 13 at the next scheduled Police Services Board meeting.

Demonstrations protest Australian gov't closing door to refugees

BY LINDA HARRIS

SYDNEY — Thousands joined demonstrations across Australia July 27-28 to protest the Labor government's latest decision to send all refugees arriving in Australia by boat to Papua New Guinea.

In Melbourne 5,000 demonstrated July 27 while other protests took place in Brisbane, Canberra, Adelaide and Perth. The following day up to 3,000 joined a rally in Sydney.

"Any asylum seeker who arrives in Australia by boat will have no chance of being settled in Australia as a refugee," Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd an-

nounced July 19. The governments of Australia and Papua New Guinea signed an agreement July 19 to send asylum seekers to Papua New Guinea's Manus Island for processing in the island's immigration detention facilities, which are being expanded to hold as many as 3,000 people. "Genuine refugees," Rudd said, "will be resettled in Papua New Guinea."

The increasing number of refugees arriving by boat — most crossing from neighboring Indonesia to the Australian territory of Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean — has become a major is-

sue for the Labor government as it heads towards federal elections later this year.

Last year the government of Prime Minister Julia Gillard — who was replaced June 26 by Rudd as the leader of the Labor Party — reopened detention centers on Manus Island and the Pacific island of Nauru. There have been escalating protests by refugees on Nauru against their indefinite detention. On July 19 much of the immigration jail on Nauru was burned to the ground.

While there is bipartisan support for the government's policy to prevent refugees arriving by boat from being processed in Australia, the opposition Liberal Party-led coalition is pressing for harsher measures.

Last week the government ran full-page advertisements in daily papers and announcements on radio and TV saying, "This is the Australian Government's message for anyone associated with people smuggling: If you come here by boat without a visa you won't be settled in Australia." The ad was run in nine languages, including Farsi, Arabic and Tamil. The majority of asylum seekers are from Afghanistan, Iran and Sri

Lanka.

Since Rudd's July 19 announcement, 1,267 people have arrived on 16 boats, Home Affairs Minister Jason Clare announced July 27.

In the last four years more than 800 people have drowned trying to make their way across the Indian Ocean to Christmas Island, an Australian territory nearly 1,000 miles from the mainland and some 200 miles from Indonesia. Refugee advocates say the figure is much higher, as some boats have disappeared without a trace and have not been counted.

"Attacks on refugees and immigrants are part of the wider assault on the working class," said Ron Poulsen, Communist League candidate for senate in New South Wales, in a press release. "The Australian rulers are tightening border controls while seeking to deepen divisions among workers. It is in the interests of all workers to join the calls to close the detention centers and open Australia's borders to refugees."

More demonstrations defending asylum-seekers have been called in the lead up to the federal election.

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Militant/Clay Dennison
Farmworkers employed by Sakuma Brothers in Washington state win raise after walkout.

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Rights fight in Omaha

Continued from front page

free speech are circulating an open letter to Omaha Mayor Jean Stothert, demanding that she put an end to the harassment of Perasso and other supporters of the Socialist Workers Party.

Signers of the letter join Perasso in demanding “the Omaha Police Department carry out a thorough investigation of this break-in and arrest and prosecute those who carried it out and those who organized it.”

The July 16 break-in “had all the classic earmarks not of a typical burglary but of an attempt at political intimidation and harassment,” the letter explains. “The culprit left clear evidence that he went through the whole house, looking through drawers, files, and leaving things strewn about. Valuable items including electronic devices were in the house, but the only thing stolen was a wireless phone that contained call records, showing who Perasso called while the phone was active earlier this year during his activity with others against police brutality in Omaha.”

Opponents of cop brutality demanded the city press charges against the cops who on March 21 beat and framed up three brothers — Octavious, Juaquez and Demetrius Johnson — in the Black community of north Omaha.

Among those who have already signed the open letter are August Hogan Sr., former president of the Omaha NAACP and former human relations director, city of Omaha; Ethel Landrum-Shobe, former chair of the Nebraska Board of Parole; Charles Jones, professor of Africana Studies at the University of Cincinnati; Tariq Al-Amin, president of Nebraskans for

Justice; and Carlos Carr Sr., Malcolm X Memorial Foundation.

All five participated in the Black August Weekend Human Rights-Political Prisoner Commemorative Festival, Aug. 2-3 at the Malcolm X Memorial Foundation Center here, the city of Malcolm X’s birth.

The conference was held to build support for the Omaha Two, Mondo we Langa (formerly David Rice) and Ed Poindexter, who were framed up and railroaded to jail 43 years ago as young members of the Black Panther Party. They had been organizing protests against police brutality and working on community programs for youth in the Black community.

Perasso spoke at the event about the case of the Cuban Five, five Cuban revolutionaries framed up and imprisoned in the U.S. since 1998 for gathering information on rightist paramilitary groups in southern Florida who had a record of carrying out murderous attacks on supporters of the Cuban Revolution in Cuba, the U.S., Puerto Rico and elsewhere.

Hank and Barbara van den Berg, political activists in Lincoln, Neb., also added their names to the open letter.

The Omaha Police Department told Perasso Aug. 1 that the cop assigned to investigate the break-in was “not available” the week of July 29-Aug. 2 and that fingerprints taken at the scene of the black-bag job still had not been processed.

“We will continue to bring this case to the attention not only of working people and supporters of political rights here, but around the country and internationally,” Perasso said. “We aim to put as much pressure as



Militant/Fredy Huinil

Jacob Perasso, left, Socialist Workers candidate for Omaha City Council in May election, wins support in fight for party’s political rights from waitress Rose Harvey, 63, while going door to door in Omaha Aug. 4. Harvey said she opposes harassment of anyone for their political views.

possible on city officials and the cops to identify and prosecute those who organized and carried out this break-in.”

To find out how you can get in-

involved in the free speech fight in Omaha, contact the SWP, P.O. Box 7908, Omaha, NE 68107. Telephone: (402) 779-7697; Email: swpomaha@fastmail.net.

Don’t miss an issue! Renew now

Continued from front page

out the ad on this page and contact a distributor near you.

The purpose of the introductory 12-week offer is to allow new readers the opportunity to experience the paper’s breadth of coverage and the value of a socialist newsweekly published in the interests of working people.

“I have learned so much reading the *Militant*,” said John Murtagh, a printer from Gorton, Manchester, England, when he renewed his subscription July 16, explaining that he takes the paper into work and pins it on the notice board for others to read.

“Your paper is great!” wrote a prisoner from Florida on his renewal

form. “I pass it around to others when I finish reading it.”

“We need more leadership to make workers aware of what the system is doing to them and how to fight back,” wrote Vivian Gilbert-Strell from San Diego when she mailed back her two-year renewal.

The *Militant* is a unique source of information and politics for working people and others attracted to the struggles of workers and their allies. It discusses the roots of the world economic crisis, reports on working-class resistance around the world. And it helps chart a class-struggle course to strengthen the confidence and fighting capacities of the working class today along the road toward building a revolutionary movement of millions to take political power out of the hands of the capitalist exploiters and begin building a new society based on human solidarity and cooperation.

In the coming weeks, *Militant* readers will find of special interest its coverage:

— On-the-scene reports of struggles by workers and farmers in Egypt and the challenges they face;

— The VII Continental Conference in Solidarity with Cuba that was held July 24-27 in Caracas, Venezuela, and the international fight to free the Cuban Five;

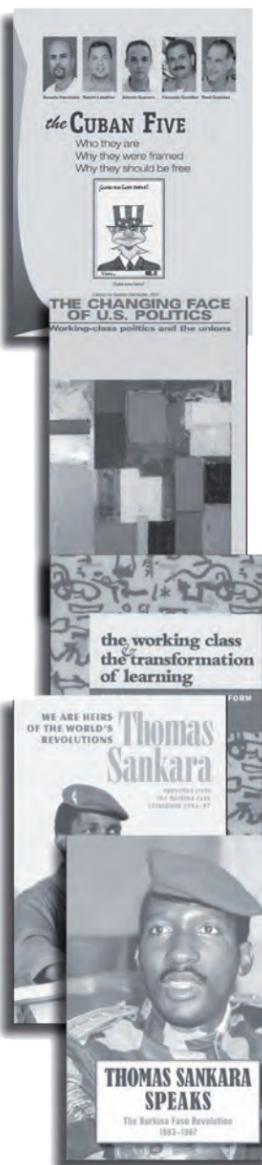
— The campaign to respond to a political break-in at the home of Jacob Perasso, former Socialist Workers Party city council candidate in Omaha, Neb., by defenders of democratic and workers rights;

— The 60th anniversary of Korean workers and peasants victory over U.S. imperialism’s murderous 1950-53 attempt to conquer the entire peninsula, crush struggles of workers and farmers there, demoralize the toilers and subjugate the Korean people.

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Calif. prisoners keep up hunger strike over solitary confinement

BY BETSEY STONE

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — “End long-term solitary confinement” and “Stop the Torture” were signs carried by some 50 supporters of the prisoners on hunger strike in California at a protest here July 30.

The hunger strike began July 8, with 30,000 prisoners participating, putting a spotlight on the inhumane conditions faced by prisoners in solitary in California.

Now, almost a month later, more than 500 remain on strike, fighting for demands that include an end to long-term solitary confinement and group punishment.

“We’re going to continue fighting to bring more people into this,” Dolores Canales told demonstrators who gathered outside the state Capitol. Like Canales, whose son is on hunger strike at the Pelican Bay State Prison, many were members of California Families to Abolish Solitary Confinement, a group that organized the protest along with the National Religious Campaign Against Torture.

Canales and Maria Levin, whose brother is one of the leaders of the hunger strike in Pelican Bay, delivered petitions with more than 60,000 signatures to Gov. Jerry Brown’s office, calling for an end to solitary confinement.

“The prisoners have forged unity inside the prison. This is a public display of the unity that’s outside, the unity of the families,” Canales said.

The protest in Sacramento was one of many throughout the state and beyond that have helped spread the truth about the brutal conditions faced by the more than 12,000 California prisoners held in solitary confinement, including at least 3,000 in the Security Housing Units (SHUs).

Amnesty International released a statement supporting the hunger strike and calling for an independent investigation of hunger striker Billy Sell’s July 22 death, which the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation termed a suicide.

A 2012 report by Amnesty International titled “The Edge of Endurance: Prison Conditions in California’s Security Housing Units” reported that

more than 500 prisoners had spent 10 or more years in the Pelican Bay SHU. More than 200 had spent over 15 years and 78 more than 20 years.

To date, the CDCR has taken a stance of no negotiations with the hunger strikers, claiming that the leadership of the hunger strike is in the hands of prison gangs.

A July 28 article in the *Los Angeles Times* describes Todd Ashker, one of the hunger strike leaders, as being covered with Nazi tattoos, and possibly a member of the Aryan Brotherhood, a white supremacist prison gang. Terri McDonald, until recently head of California’s 33 prisons, told the *Times* that Ashker and other strike leaders are not fighting for rights, but power. “From my perspective, they are terrorists,” she said.

Ashker, who earned a paralegal degree behind bars, has filed or been party to 55 federal lawsuits against the California prison system, winning the right of prisoners to order books. He sent a message to the *Times* describing the strike as “a collective effort initiated by a multiracial group.”

In August 2012, Ashker and other leaders of the 2011 hunger strike is-



Militant/Betsy Stone

Rally in front of California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation in Sacramento July 30 to back prisoners on hunger strike against solitary confinement and other harsh conditions.

sued an “agreement to end hostilities” between racial groups in the prisons. “We can no longer allow CDCR to use us against each other for their benefit,” the agreement said.

Speaking at the protest here, Daletha Hayden, a nurse whose son is a striker in Tehachapi prison, answered the CDCR’s slanders: “They call them the worst of the worst,” she said. “How can this be true if they come together across racial lines? Doing it

peacefully. Asking for education. For food appropriate to making learning possible.”

Prison authorities have also tried to undermine the hunger strike by claiming they have made progress in cutting the numbers in solitary, releasing 208 into the general prison population since the 2011 hunger strike. But prisoners point to the lack of progress on the key issue of thousands of prisoners

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Under pressure, Bangladesh amends labor law

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need the support of at least 30 percent of the workers at a workplace, but the labor ministry is now barred from the practice of turning over a blacklist of union supporters to the boss.

Leaders of Bangladeshi worker federations say the change is still inadequate and sharply criticized other provisions in the amended law.

On April 24 Rana Plaza, an eight-story building housing five garment factories, shops and a bank in Savar, 20 miles from the capital Dhaka, caved in. In spite of major visible cracks in the wall the day before — prompting evacuation of the bank and shops — garment bosses pressured workers to return to work the next morning. About an hour into the workday the building collapsed, killing more than 1,100 workers.

Tens of thousands of workers took to the streets in response. A wave of strikes and other demonstrations demanded arrest of bosses and landlords, compensation to families of workers killed and wage raises in the industry.

Just five months earlier more than 120 workers died in a fire in the Tazreen Fashions factory on the outskirts of Dhaka. According to survivors, the exits were locked, fire extinguishers didn’t work and highly flammable stacks of yarn and clothes blocked parts of the stairs.

Bangladesh’s 5,000 garment factories generate 80 percent of the country’s export income. It is today the second biggest exporter of garments after China. Over the last two decades the garment workforce has grown from 1 million to 4 million, the majority women from rural villages.

The law against turning over names to the boss “is not a strong bar,” said Kalpona Akter, a leader of the Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity, in an Aug. 1 phone interview from Dhaka. “Factory owners have ways of getting around this.”

Bribes and collusion play a big part in political life and factory owners have decisive influence in parliament, many point out. To form a union, workers would also need registration from the directorate of labor. In recent years, hardly any registration has been given.

“I have another concern,” Akter said. “Owners can outsource workers to other factories, where unions are not allowed. And if you’re outsourced you can’t belong to a union.”

Unions barred in export zones

Workers in export zones where a large percentage are employed, are still prohibited from forming unions. The law adds more sectors, among them “hospitals, clinics and diagnostic centers,” to the list where unions are not allowed.

To go on strike, two-thirds of the union’s membership would have to vote in favor, a small change from the previous requirement of three-quarters. The government can stop strikes on the pretext that they cause “serious hardship to the community” or are “prejudicial to the national interest.” Strikes are prohibited during the first three years of operation in any factory “owned by foreigners or is established in collaboration with foreigners.”

“Maternity leave is still four months,” said Nazma Akter, a leader of the Bangladesh Combined Garment Workers Federation, in an interview Aug. 2. “We demanded six months as workers in the public sector have. This is very important, women make up the big majority of workers in the industry.”

Kalpona Akter and Nazma Akter said the most important issues for workers in Bangladesh are the fight for safer workplaces, the right to form unions and negotiate a contract, and higher wages.

“A new law doesn’t change anything,” Kalpona Akter said. “We have to keep mobilizing and organizing to put the pressure on.”

Parliament adopted the law three

weeks after Washington suspended Bangladesh’s trade preferences, ending the country’s duty-free exports to the U.S. “The decision will have little practical effect because important products such as apparel are excluded,” Stephanie Lester of the Retail Industry Leaders Association, a retail lobby group, told the *Financial Times* June 27.

The European Union has threatened to revoke Bangladesh’s trade privileges. The EU’s duty-free privileges include apparel and EU countries buy 60 percent of Bangladesh’s garment exports.

Workers organizing unions in Bangladesh face harassment, intimidation and brutality from the police and company-hired goons.

In the midst of a strike wave in 2010, the government set up a 2,900-strong industrial police force to spy on workers, subvert union organizations and protect the interests and property of the bosses.

Aminul Islam, a union leader, was tortured and killed in April 2012. No one has been charged with his murder.

Kalpona Akter, along with Babul Akter, president of the Bangladesh Garments & Industrial Workers Federation, were imprisoned in August 2010 on frame-up charges for trying to improve the working conditions of garment workers. They were freed on bail a month later.

The government is in the process of dropping the charges. “This comes because of the threat to revoke the trade privileges. The government hopes this will be seen favorably by governments in the U.S. and Europe,” Kalpona Akter said.

Police have reopened an investigation into the Tazreen fire. An earlier investigation blamed “unidentified miscreants,” and no one was charged. Arrests have been made, but no charges filed in connection with the Rana Plaza collapse. No factory owner in Bangladesh has ever been charged with a crime related to an industrial disaster.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

CALIFORNIA

San Francisco

Join the International Campaign to Free the Cuban Five! Speaker: Gerardo Sánchez, Socialist Workers Party, attended recent VII Continental Conference in Solidarity with Cuba in Caracas, Venezuela. Sat., Aug. 17. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. 5482 Mission St. Tel.: (415) 584-2135.

FLORIDA

Miami

Korea Is One! The Korean People’s Fight for Reunification and Against U.S. Imperialism. Speaker: Tom Baumann, Socialist Workers Party, recently returned from Pyongyang, North Korea, celebrations of 60th anniversary of victory over U.S. imperialism. Sat., Aug. 17. Dinner, 6 p.m.; program, 7 p.m. Donation: \$5 dinner, \$5 program. 7100 Biscayne Blvd., Suite 306A. Tel.: (305) 757-8869.

Fast-food workers press for \$15

Continued from front page

read “Fight for \$15,” a slogan of the Workers Organizing Committee of Chicago, which initiated the protests there. WOCC is backed by the Service Employees International Union.

The day ended with a rally of 300 at Navy Pier, where strikers were joined by SEIU members and other supporters.

At \$8.25 an hour, the minimum wage in Illinois is a dollar higher than the federal minimum wage. That translates into \$17,160 a year, if someone works full time. Many fast-food and retail workers are employed only part time, however, because bosses don’t want to pay for benefits workers might be eligible for if they worked a 40-hour week.

DeJuan Jackson and several co-workers from Walgreens drugstore and Chick-fil-A restaurant joined the Navy Pier protest. “I work part time at Walgreens for \$10.72 per hour and part time at Chick-Fil-A for \$8.75 an hour,” Jackson told the *Militant*. “The reason I’m striking is because I have to work two jobs to take care of my family. I have two children who are asleep when I leave for work and they’re asleep by the time I get home.

“We’re not looking for bonuses tied to sales, but something we can depend on in our paycheck every week,” Jackson said. “And it’s not just for ourselves, but for all people who have kids and want a better life.”

Workers at Whole Foods in the Lake View neighborhood of Chicago walked off the job July 31. “After the

last demonstration, they gave us two paid 15-minute breaks. Before, we had only one,” Whole Foods employee Matthew Camp, 32, told the *Chicago Sun Times*. “They renovated our break room and put our attendance policy under review. After this protest, yeah, we’re at least expecting to hear back about the attendance policy.”

Fast-food workers winning support

In New York, several hundred fast-food workers and supporters rallied at Union Square July 29. SEIU-backed Fast Food Forward helped organize this and earlier protests, which have won widespread support from fellow workers around the city.

“If we keep fighting together, we can pull this thing through,” said Jessica Cogle, 22, in an August 5 interview with the *Militant*. “\$7.25 an hour just doesn’t pay the bills, especially when you can’t get the hours or any overtime.

“People from the union came to my job at McDonald’s in Harlem last October,” said Cogle. “They talked about the fight to win \$15 an hour and the protest they were organizing in November. We asked if we would lose our jobs. They said, ‘no,’ so four of us went out. I didn’t lose my job and I participated in the second strike in April too.”

Cogle, who is living in a battered women’s shelter with her new baby, was fired in June. McDonald’s is challenging her unemployment claim.

Sonya, 38, who did not want to give her last name for fear of reprisal, is a



Militant/Betsy Farley

Fast-food workers rally at Navy Pier in Chicago Aug. 1 demanding \$15 an hour and union.

worker at a McDonald’s restaurant in the Times Square area of Manhattan. She has worked as a cleaner for six months, making \$7.25 an hour, she told the *Militant*.

With two children, a daily commute from Jersey City, N.J., and a schedule of 30 hours a week or less, she was supportive of the protests, although no one from the McDonald’s where she works attended, she said. But they all knew about it and many were sympathetic. “Next time, I think I will take part,” she said.

McDonald’s and other fast-food chains and retail companies have responded to workers’ demands for a minimum wage raise with the claim that higher wages would force them

to increase prices, leading to layoffs.

A full-page ad appeared in *USA Today* July 26 in response to the fast-food workers’ latest round of protests. Raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour “would have negative consequences for employees,” the ad stated. If wages go up, companies “will be forced to replace employees with less-costly, automated alternatives like touch-screen ordering and payment devices.”

The ad was paid for by the Employment Policies Institute, a research organization that “focuses on issues that affect entry-level employment,” according to its website.

Earlier this year President Barack Obama called for increasing the minimum wage to \$9 an hour over time. Bills calling for a raise introduced into Congress earlier this year have so far gone nowhere. The last increase in the federal minimum wage was in 2009, when it rose to \$7.25.

In 1968, the federal minimum wage was \$1.60 an hour. That would be \$10.56 an hour today, when adjusted for inflation.

There was no reply from McDonald’s corporate headquarters in Chicago to the *Militant*’s request for comment.

Courts strike down discriminatory marriage laws

BY JOHN STUDER

Anti-gay discriminatory laws are being pushed back in one state after another since the Supreme Court struck down the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act June 26 as unconstitutional because it prevents gays from receiving spousal benefits available to heterosexual couples.

The June 26 ruling means same-sex couples in the 12 states where their marriages are held to be legal are entitled to file joint federal tax returns, collect Social Security survivor benefits, be free from tax liabilities in certain inheritances when their spouse dies, and other matters covered by federal law.

On July 22 federal Judge Timothy Black in Cincinnati suspended a 2004 Ohio law banning recognition of same-sex marriages from other states.

In Detroit June 28 federal Judge David Lawson issued a temporary order striking down a Michigan law denying family health insurance to public employees who are gay and their companions, pending the trial in that case.

The Supreme Court’s ruling reflects swiftly changing attitudes among working people and others, toward discriminatory marriage laws that deny equal protection to individuals on the basis of their gender or sexual orientation, as well as widespread opposition to government intrusion on people’s private affairs.

These changing attitudes within the working class strengthen workers’ unity and capacity to be the standard bearers in the fight against all forms of discrimination.

On Aug. 1, Rhode Island and Min-

nesota became the 12th and 13th states to legalize same-sex marriage.

The shift has caused both Democratic and Republican politicians to scramble to change their opposition to same-sex marriage laws. The same day the Supreme Court issued its ruling on DOMA, it also declined to rule on a second case, *Hollingsworth v.*

Perry, involving lower court rulings declaring unconstitutional Proposition 8, a 2008 California voter initiative that banned same-sex marriage. This means same-sex marriage is legally recognized in California.

Laws on the books in 29 other states against recognizing same-sex marriages still stand, for now.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



August 12, 1988

“With what will we carry forward the revolution, with what will we rectify, with what will we solve our problems? Basically with the pride and honor of Cubans, with their patriotism and awareness!” Cuban President Fidel Castro told a congress of the National Union of Construction Workers in Havana.

Castro described some of the conditions that had developed in the construction industry that are beginning to be corrected. They included, “indiscriminate start of projects to give the impression that a lot was being done in terms of value, but they were never finished, in contrast to other periods when schools, highways, and factories had been built.”

The minibrigades, made up of volunteer workers, were first organized in the early years of the Cuban revolution, but were permitted to decline in the 1970s and early ’80s. Today they are being organized again to build housing, child-care centers, clinics, and other badly needed social facilities.



August 19, 1963

NEW YORK — “Freedom Now” — the rallying cry in the struggle for first-class citizenship across the nation — is a central plank in a campaign to elect a Negro City Council member from Brooklyn.

Independent nominating petitions are being circulated for Clifton DeBerry, a Negro union man and socialist for councilman-at-large. He will be the only Negro candidate in Brooklyn. DeBerry, 39, is the nominee of the Socialist Workers Party. DeBerry’s platform is based squarely on the issue of Negro rights.

Other proposals of DeBerry’s to create more jobs and to help the unemployed are a call for a \$2 per hour minimum wage, unemployment checks for the entire period of unemployment, instead of a fixed limit of 26 weeks and a 30 hour week at 40 hours pay. This last would spread the existing work among more people with no reduction of wages.



August 20, 1938

For the workers of Spain, for the workers of the whole world, there is nothing more important at the present moment than to defeat the Spanish, German, and Italian fascists. For that not only is necessary to have the utmost unity of the working class but also correct policies. There are those who do not see the overwhelming importance of correct policy but demand unity. We ask them to consider: who is responsible for breaking the unity of the working class in the face of fascist attack?

To jail the most valiant fighters against fascism, those who drove the fascists out of Barcelona in July, 1936; to accuse them of being fascist spies is to break the unity of the working masses, to bring demoralization into their ranks and to prepare the ground for the victory of the fascists.

That is what the Loyalist government, under the prodding of the Stalinists, has done. To defeat the fascists we must fight for the liberation of the anti-fascists.

Egypt workers

Continued from front page

Tahrir Square, said July 29. “One of those was to release the thousands who were imprisoned in the course of the successful struggle against former dictator Hosni Mubarak in 2011. Instead, Morsi added to the numbers in jail for political protest.” Elgilani also pointed to rampant cronyism and deteriorating economic conditions.

A reminder of the price paid to advance the democratic openings are portraits of hundreds of youth who died in the struggle against the Mubarak dictatorship, along with others killed protesting the Morsi government, painted on walls throughout the city.

Because of the widespread expectation that economic, social and political conditions would improve following the February 2011 ouster of Mubarak, it did not take long for most layers of society to turn against the corrupt, violent, and politically stifling Islamist government.

“We began to protest after the first 100 days,” said Elgilani. “In the three months before the Morsi presidency was pushed aside on July 3, millions of Egyptians signed the Tamarod petition calling on him to resign.” Tamarod, which means rebellion, is the loose political coalition that initiated the petitioning campaign that spread in neighborhoods, workplaces and schools throughout the country for a change in government.

Although most Egyptians *Militant* correspondents spoke to expressed support for the military’s role in the ouster of Morsi, many were also quick to point out that the military leadership had collaborated with the Muslim Brotherhood to impose repressive measures. The military has appointed an interim government, which includes many prominent capitalist politicians, some of whom were part of the Mubarak regime. New elections are being planned.

Workers point to deteriorating economic conditions over the past two years, leaving many workers and farmers on the edge of survival. In Ismailia, an industrial city surrounded by farmland 75 miles northeast of Cairo along the Suez Canal, three construction workers sat down with *Militant* worker-correspondents Aug. 2 to talk about the struggles of daily life.

“We had illusions that things would simply be better once Mubarak was ousted from office,” said Mahmud Salama,



Militant/Paul Mailhot

Murals all over Cairo, like one above, depict martyrs of struggle against governments of Hosni Mubarak and Mohammed Morsi.

a construction worker and leader of the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions. “We thought we would no longer have to fight in the streets, but we have learned that is not the case.”

“The average construction worker makes between \$3 and \$8 a day, and most of us don’t work a full month,” said Salama. All three construction workers said they had not worked at their trade in the past three months.

“We used to be able to leave the country and look for work in other parts of the Middle East if things were slow here,” said Mahmoud Ali Mahmoud, “but that became severely restricted under the Brotherhood.” Disputes with other Arab governments also closed opportunities for work. Mahmoud, a plumber, said he was expelled from Saudi Arabia where he was working, following a dispute between Cairo and Riyadh.

Salama said workers are trying to find ways to unify the campaigns of the labor movement in Egypt. “We need to raise the wages of the lowest paid, to equalize conditions. The level of poverty is very high throughout the country. If the government subsidy on basic food items was ended it would be a disaster for millions.” Egyptian workers also need health care and social security that carries over whatever job you have, he said.

‘Workers have more confidence’

“Workers in Egypt have more confidence today because of what we have fought for,” Salama continued. “We brought down Mubarak, we petitioned for Morsi to step down, and we are learning from each other. It is a tremendous change from a couple of years ago. We could not have even discussed the

Tamarod petition then.”

During the Mubarak regime, nearly all unionized workers belonged to the government-controlled Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF). Following the overthrow of Mubarak, independent unions mushroomed as part of growing struggles for higher wages and better working conditions and reinstatement of militant workers fired for leading strikes or protests. Many of these new unions gravitate to the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU).

“There are a growing number of struggles involving workers in Egypt,” said Fatma Ramadan, a member of the EFITU executive board. “But that doesn’t mean there are a growing number of workers in unions. The old Trade Union Federation has not been a good advertisement for belonging to a union. Also, because of ETUF’s relationship with the government, it offers certain benefits to be a part of their union federation that an independent union can’t.”

Workers who have pensions in Egypt, for example, have retirement funds tied to being a member of the government union. If you leave that union your pension is forfeited, Ramadan said.

Textile workers join anti-Morsi fight

“Workers in our plant and throughout Mahalla participated in a massive way in the mobilizations that led to the June 30 revolution,” Kamal Fayoumy, a leader of the Mahalla textile workers, said in an Aug. 4 phone interview, referring to the ouster of the Brotherhood. “Thousands of us — women as well as men — participated in six large workers protests in Mahalla demanding Morsi step down, because the Morsi government stood against the workers all along the line.

“Right now our main campaign is the collection of signatures on a petition of workers’ demands,” said Fayoumy. These include the legal right to join any union and recognition by the government of the choice of the workers; return to public ownership of companies that have been privatized, often leading to massive layoffs; a significant increase in the minimum wage and a cap on sala-

ries for management personnel.

“The independent union in Mahalla continues to try and establish itself in the plant. Our numbers are growing and that is positive,” said Fayoumy. The government union officially remains in the plant, although it has little support among the workers and has remained aloof from their struggles.

There has been a lull in strikes and other workers actions since the overthrow of Morsi, as many are waiting to see what happens now. In an apparent effort to placate widespread dissatisfaction among working people, the military appointed former EFITU President Kamal Abu Eita as the new Manpower Minister, a post similar to a labor minister in many countries.

‘Gov’t sitting on time bombs’

“The government is sitting on a half-dozen time bombs right now,” said Ibrahim Abdel Gawed, a former farmer and leader of an independent farmers organization, who took part in the discussion in Ismailia. “Transit workers, port workers, farmers, all have long-standing grievances and demands that there are no proposals to satisfy.

“People’s attention is diverted temporarily with the ouster of the Muslim Brotherhood government,” he said, “but that won’t last long and decades of workers and farmers demands will soon come to the fore again.”



Militant/Paul Mailhot

Top, Mary Martin, far right, SWP candidate for Seattle mayor, and translator Georges Mehrabian, meet with workers, farmer representative and student supporters of Tamarod movement in Suez Canal city of Ismailia. Inset, from left, students Nada Saed and Shymaa Ashraf and construction worker Mahmud Salama.



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Socialist candidates from US meet fellow fighters in Egypt

BY PAUL MAILHOT

CAIRO — “What does Egypt have to do with campaigning to be mayor of Seattle?” National Public Radio reporter Ross Reynolds in Seattle asked Socialist Workers Party mayoral candidate Mary Martin before she left on a fact-finding campaign tour of Egypt.

Working people in Egypt recently mobilized in their millions to oust the capitalist Muslim Brotherhood government of Mohammed Morsi, Martin said. “People in Egypt, like people in the U.S., are resisting the grinding economic effects of the capitalist crisis and attacks on democratic rights. We are going to Egypt in solidarity with workers and farmers, and I’m sure we will get a warm welcome when they hear we are on their side. They won’t have a problem seeing the connections.”

Dan Fein, SWP candidate for mayor of New York City, was also part of the delegation from the United States, United Kingdom and Greece, visiting Cairo for the second time since 2011 to learn about workers’ struggles here. Upon arriving July 28 Fein led the delegation to visit Tahrir Square, the site of a mobilization of several million two days before that dealt a giant political blow to the Muslim Brotherhood’s campaign to reverse the July 3 ouster of the Morsi regime.

Fein and Martin met Mahitab Elgilani, a protest organizer and head of security for the tent city at the square to prevent attacks from the Muslim Brotherhood.

After explaining her decade-long involvement in the fight against dictatorship in Egypt, and why the masses of Egyptian people turned against the Muslim Brotherhood after only one year in office, Elgilani asked Fein what he thought of the developments here. “Working people in the U.S. and Egypt have some common challenges,” Fein said. “Our election campaign fights along a course toward working people taking political power from the capitalist exploiters. Millions of workers are without jobs, work conditions and health care are deteriorating, and no solutions are being put forward by the capitalist class and their politicians. That’s true in the United States, and in Egypt.”

The candidates visited two cities along the Suez Canal, where many militant struggles have been fought in recent

years, to learn about issues working farmers and fishermen face. In Fayid and Ismailia the delegation met construction workers, students, mango farmers and local leaders of a farmer’s union.

“We are not sure that workers in Egypt and the United States have all that much in common,” Mahmud Salama, a young construction worker initially told the socialist candidates. “We haven’t worked in three months, we have no health care, and no social security. Some things are worse now than they were under Hosni Mubarak.” His coworker Mahmoud Ali Mahmoud asked, “Don’t workers in the United States have unemployment insurance, health care, and a nice warm home if they lose their job? We have none of those things here.”

“Conditions are more difficult for workers in Egypt, but what the capitalists are doing in the United States is aimed at destroying our unions and lowering our standard of living to ensure their profits,” Martin said. “Every day, more and more workers are losing their health care, running out of unemployment benefits, and learn that the banks are the real owners of their homes. The capitalist economic crisis is driving workers from all countries together.”

“That is why we are here,” Martin said, “to build solidarity and make contacts with workers and farmers in Egypt and elsewhere who are fighting to reverse the disastrous situation facing working people the world over.” One of the central demands of the labor movement in Egypt, to raise the wages of the lowest paid workers, Martin pointed out, is the same as what socialists campaign for in the United States, to raise the minimum wage. “This helps overcome the divisions in the working class and puts us in a stronger position to fight,” Martin said.

At the end of the conversation, the construction workers asked how to deepen the contacts that were being made with the socialists’ visit.

At an Aug. 2 meeting with Fatma Ramadan, a leader of the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions, Fein asked how the overthrow of Mubarak and then Morsi affected strikes and labor struggles. “After Mubarak’s downfall, workers launched many struggles to assert their demands



Militant/Paul Davies

Dan Fein, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New York mayor, and Mary Martin, SWP mayoral candidate in Seattle (at right), meet with Mahitab Elgilani in Cairo’s Tahrir Square, July 28. Elgilani, a co-founder of April 6 Movement against former U.S.-backed dictator Hosni Mubarak, talks about why millions took to streets to oust Mohammed Morsi government.

for better wages, putting an end to temporary work, and halting the privatization of factories,” Ramadan said. “Workers are still protesting and over more questions, like the imprisonment of militant workers.”

Ramadan was interested in the experiences of socialist workers who are running for political office in the United States. “What response are you getting? Will you get a lot of votes?” she asked.

“We talk to a very broad number of workers through our door-to-door campaigning in working-class neighborhoods with the *Militant*, the campaign newspaper,” Martin said. “Many like what we have to say and identify with the struggles that we talk about, including the example of workers here in Egypt using the new political space available to

them to press for greater rights, jobs and a better life.”

“The Socialist Workers Party candidates are the only working-class voice in the elections, so most workers appreciate the discussion when we knock on their doors asking about what they are going through, why a socialist revolution is needed, and how we can fight for it,” Fein said. “Most workers will never have the experience of a Democrat or Republican party candidate knocking on their door asking what their views are. After many of our discussions, the conversation often ends with ‘I might vote for you.’”

On their last day in Cairo, the candidates were interviewed by a reporter from *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, one of the main daily newspapers in Egypt.

Bosses respond to coming ‘Obamacare’ provisions by cutting hours of workers

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

As major sections of the Affordable Care Act — known as “Obamacare,” — are set to take effect in the coming months, many working people are already beginning to feel the negative consequences of its provisions, while the quality of health care for millions continues to decline.

The legislation is “very much a compromise dictated by the perceived political need to change existing coverage and challenge entrenched interests as little as possible,” summarized *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman, a supporter of the plan.

The aim by many of the program’s liberal authors and backers was to take a step toward something resembling a single-payer health-care system without cutting too deep into the capitalists’ surplus extracted from our labor. And the plan compels everyone to come under the framework of a new government bureaucratic apparatus that will funnel even greater profits to the health insurance giants, which were both eager to make “suggestions” on the law to help ram through its passage in 2010.

The law provides incentives for many employers to offer some basic insurance. The millions who aren’t “covered” by their boss will be forced to purchase their own insurance policies or pay fines. The program will subsidize plans for those with the lowest incomes. By 2016 the tax penalty will rise to 2.5 percent of household

income, at least \$695 and as much as \$2,085 per family.

Seeking to avoid fines, many bosses are offering “bare-bones” plans, notes the *Wall Street Journal*, which “cover minimal requirements such as preventive services, but often little more. Some of the plans wouldn’t cover surgery, X-rays or prenatal care,” or hospital stays.

Obamacare is based on insurance companies raking in profits from millions of healthy people who are today uninsured. The White House says this will keep down prices for the sick, elderly and infirm. “Young, healthy adults today spend an average of \$854 a year on health care,” stated the *Wall Street Journal*, pointing to comments made by Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito during hearings on the Affordable Care Act last year. “ObamaCare would require them to buy insurance policies expected to cost roughly \$5,800.”

One of the law’s provisions is already hitting many workers hard. Under Obamacare bosses do not have to provide any coverage for those working less than 30 hours a week.

As one of the inevitable consequences, bosses have been reducing work hours for current employees and hiring mostly part-time and temporary help. In June, for example, full-time jobs declined by 240,000, while part-time jobs soared 360,000. Since the recession began at the end of 2007,

Continued on page 11



Militant/Paul Davies

Dan Fein and Mary Martin, Socialist Workers candidates for mayor in New York and Seattle, being interviewed by *Al-Masry Al-Youm* reporter Azza Moghazy in Cairo, Aug. 3.

Cuba solidarity conference held in Caracas, Venezuela

Discusses fight against US imperialist domination, stepping-up international campaign to free Cuban 5



BY NAOMI CRAINE AND JACOB PERASSO

CARACAS, Venezuela — “Nothing is won without struggle,” Kenia Serrano, president of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples, told participants in the VII Continental Conference in Solidarity with Cuba. She was referring to the fight to free the Cuban Five — political prisoners held by Washington for the last 15 years. “We need to keep knocking on the door and pressing [U.S. President Barack] Obama,” she said in a session held in the meeting chamber of the Venezuelan National Assembly. “He’s the one who can release them, but to win that victory we must mobilize a jury of millions.”

Some 500 delegates attended the conference, held here July 24-27. Three hundred delegates from across Venezuela joined 196 from more than 30 other countries, seven outside of the Americas. More than 50 participants came from Colombia, 30 from Cuba, about a dozen from the Dominican Republic and nearly 20 from the United States.

The Cuban delegation included Lázara Mercedes López Acea, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Cuba and a

vice president of the Cuban Council of State; Ana María Mari Machado, vice president of the National Assembly; former ambassador to Venezuela Germán Sánchez Otero; and Miguel Barnet, president of the Union of Artists and Writers of Cuba.

Among the themes taken up in plenary sessions, panels, workshops and cultural events were the need for united action in the face of U.S. imperialist domination of Latin America, Washington’s half-century-long economic war against Cuba, and the fight to win the freedom of the Cuban Five. A highlight of the conference was the live July 26 broadcast from Santiago de Cuba of the event there marking the 60th anniversary of the assault led by former Cuban President Fidel Castro on the Moncada barracks, the opening battle of the revolutionary struggle that culminated in the mobilization of millions of workers and farmers in Cuba to take political power out of the hands of the capitalist class and destroy their bloody military and economic dictatorship.

Fight against imperialist domination

The conference opened on the 230th anniversary of the birth of Simón Bolívar, the Venezuelan-born



Militant photos by Jonathan Silberman
Above, participants at Continental Conference in Solidarity with Cuba, in Caracas, Venezuela. Left, panel on campaign to free Cuban Five. From left, Kenia Serrano, president of Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples; Venezuelan member of parliament María León; Irma Schewerert, mother of René González; Ailí Labañino (speaking), daughter of Ramón Labañino; Camilo Rojo, whose father was killed when CIA-trained mercenaries blew up Cuban airliner in 1976; and Moisés Rodríguez, former Cuban state security agent who penetrated counterrevolutionary groups in U.S. and Cuba.

leader of the fight for Latin American independence from Spain in the early 19th century. Venezuelan historian Alexander Torres spoke about this proud chapter in the struggle by the peoples of Latin America to unify their forces in the fight for independence and sovereignty.

He was joined on the opening panel by Pedro Pablo Rodríguez from the Center for Study of José Martí in Cuba. Rodríguez, holder of Cuba’s 2009 National Social Sciences prize, cited the final letter written in 1895 by Martí, Cuba’s national hero and leader of the country’s third war for independence from Spain. Martí wrote of the need to prevent “the United States from spreading through the Antilles as Cuba gains its independence, and from overpowering with that additional strength our lands of America.” Today, Rodríguez noted, “there remains one colony in the Americas, not of Spain but of the United States — Puerto Rico.”

Many panelists throughout the four-day gathering spoke about the initiatives taken by the government of Venezuela under the leadership of President Hugo Chávez, from his election in 1998 until his death earlier this year, to marshal the economic resources of oil-rich Venezuela to aid other governments of Latin America and the Caribbean resisting econom-

ic, political and military pressures from Washington and other imperialist powers.

Along this course, the collaboration between the governments of Cuba and Venezuela was underscored by numerous participants. “When Chávez first met with Fidel Castro in 1994, he asked, ‘What can I do to help Cuba?’” said former Ambassador Sánchez, speaking on a panel on the legacy of Hugo Chávez. He noted that this was four years before Chávez was elected president of Venezuela, when Cuba was going through the worst years of the economic crisis that followed the implosion of the Soviet Union.

Today PetroCaribe, an energy cooperation agreement begun in 2005, provides Cuba and other countries in the Caribbean and Central America with oil at preferential prices, weakening the stranglehold of the imperialist-dominated oil conglomerates. Other initiatives Sánchez pointed to include the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), which promotes trade and economic cooperation among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean as a counter to the U.S.-dominated trade blocs, and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), a political initiative launched in 2010 to counter the U.S.-dominated Organization of American States.

Cuba’s internationalist solidarity: from Venezuela to Colombia to Haiti

In interviews with the *Militant*, many delegates from Venezuela and other countries commented on the impact of Cuba’s revolutionary example and international solidarity on the day-to-day lives of working people in their communities.

Doriscat Jean Guimy was part of a delegation of seven from the Friends of Cuba Club in Leogane, Haiti. “Our club formed in 2006 to work with Cuban doctors to help people get medical care and to help Haitian youth obtain scholarships to study, including in Cuba and Venezuela,” he said. “Together with the Cuban doctors, we’re organizing a free mobile health clinic Aug. 28 and that will also be an opportunity to inform people about the Cuban Five.”

“I think it’s important to be here for solidarity,” said Martín Jaimes, a telecommunications worker and union activist from Bucaramanga, Colombia. “Cuba is an example of resistance.” He described the challenges union members face in Colombia, including intimidation and murder by paramilitaries.

“Before there was only one hospital and two private clinics in the entire state, and they were horrible,” said Angelica Figuera, from Delta Amacuro in northeast Venezuela. “Now with the Cuban doctors we have good health care,” she said, referring to the 32,000 Cuban medical personnel working in Venezuela.

“I came to the conference to learn,” Silvana Cedeno, 24, told the *Militant*. “There isn’t a campaign for the Five where I live in Ecuador, but I have been explaining to people the lies about Cuba. I’m a member of the Socialist Party in Ecuador,” Cedeno said, “and I work in defense of workers in my country. The government of Ecuador recently banned temporary agencies by law but it is not actually happening. People who speak out against subminimum wages or the use of temp agencies are often fired.”

— NAOMI CRAINE AND JACOB PERASSO



Militant/Jonathan Silberman
Members of Cuba’s medical mission in Venezuela at event in Caracas during Continental Conference in Solidarity with Cuba. There are 44,000 Cuban internationalist volunteers in Venezuela, 32,000 of them doctors, nurses and other health care workers.

Cubans celebrate 60th anniversary of July 26 assault



Fernanda Le Marie/Cancillería del Ecuador

"This will continue to be the socialist revolution of the humble by the humble and for the humble," Cuban President Raúl Castro told more than 10,000 people in Santiago de Cuba July 26 celebrating the 60th anniversary of the opening of the revolutionary fight to overthrow the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista.

The July 26, 1953, bold assaults led by Fidel Castro on the Moncada barracks in Santiago and the Carlos Manuel de Céspedes barracks in Bayamo were an attempt to "storm the heavens," Raúl Castro said. The revolutionaries failed in their objective to take the garrisons and spark a mass revolutionary insurrection; more than 50 of the young combatants were captured, tortured and murdered by Batista's forces. "But exactly five years, five months and five days later, on Jan. 1, 1959, we were passing through the main entrance of the city to demand the unconditional surrender of the garrison there, made up of more than 5,000 men."

The celebration was attended by the heads of state or high-ranking government officials from Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Dominica, Ecuador, Nicaragua, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, Venezuela, and Uruguay. In brief speeches several spoke about the interconnected legacy and ties among the nations of the Caribbean and the deep social and political impact the 1959 Cuban Revolution had on the region. Government representatives also highlighted the role revolutionary Cuba has played in standing up to U.S. imperialism and in providing medical aid and other assistance to Latin America, the Caribbean and other semicolonial countries around the world.

— SETH GALINSKY

The first evening featured an inaugural cultural gala, which included a beautiful performance by the youth orchestra Orquesta Sinfónica Alma Llanera, broadcast live on TV. Venezuelan Vice President Jorge Arreaza welcomed the conference participants. "Events like these are necessary," he said, "to let the world know that we won't be imposed upon, neither by formulas nor by imperialist military boots."

Darío Vivas, vice president of Venezuela's National Assembly, invited the conference to hold a session in the assembly chamber, where he addressed participants along with Serrano and renowned Venezuelan writer Luis Britto García.

U.S. economic war vs. Cuba

"Despite the whole history of war, there are commercial relations today between the United States and Vietnam," noted Nidia Alfonso from the Cuban Foreign Ministry. "Why not Cuba? Because of the revolutionary process" that Washington will never accept. Alfonso was one of several speakers to describe the severe impact of Washington's decades-long economic war against Cuba.

"There are some medicines that carry a U.S. patent which no one will sell to Cuba, because of fear of the extraterritorial reach of the blockade," explained Aleida Guevara, a practicing pediatrician in Cuba and daughter of revolutionary leader Ernesto Che Guevara. She described the case of a child who died for lack of one of these drugs. Guevara and others also pointed to the expansion of the number of U.S. military bases throughout Latin America in recent years as a threat to regional sovereignty.

José Ángel Pérez of the Center for Study of the World Economy in Cuba gave a presentation on the economic measures being introduced in Cuba

today. "Let me be clear, our economy is socialist. It's not a mixed economy. It's not state capitalist," he began. "We're not going back to capitalism."

The severe economic problems Cuba is addressing today are due to three factors, Pérez said — the U.S. economic war that adds billions to the cost of imports and deprives Cuba of essential products; the collapse of the Soviet bloc at the opening of the 1990s, abruptly wiping out 85 percent of Cuba's foreign trade; and "our own errors."

"While the means of production will remain social property," Pérez noted, the measures being taken today are aimed at increasing labor productivity by decreasing centralized state controls over economic decisions and promoting both individual entrepreneurship and cooperative enterprises, especially in agriculture and in services.

"Ours is the course of scientific socialism," Pérez emphasized. "It's not '21st Century Socialism' or the road of 'Buen Vivir,'" he said, referring to the terms used in Venezuela and Bolivia to describe their respective policies of capitalist reform.

Work in defense of Cuban Five

Mobilizing the broadest and largest possible forces to win the freedom of the Cuban Five — Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González — was the central campaign discussed throughout the conference. A feature panel on the case included Irma Schwerert, mother of René González, and Ailí Labañino, daughter of Ramón Labañino.

"There's many more opportunities to reach out to the American people," Schwerert noted. She pointed to the success of the second "Five Days for the Cuban Five" actions in Washington, D.C., at the beginning of June,

and urged delegates to begin planning for the next international gathering in D.C. She also highlighted new support within a few trade unions. This has included the presence of campaigners in defense of the Five — from the Cuba Solidarity Campaign in the United Kingdom and from the

International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban 5 — at the Service Employees International Union convention in May 2012 and at this year's United Steelworkers "Women of Steel" gathering.

Sehwerert noted that there is currently a habeas corpus petition pending in U.S. court on behalf of the Five, but that there has been no response from the court yet.

Labañino described the obstacles that had to be surmounted to visit her father in prison — a degrading process familiar to the families of the more than 2 million men and women incarcerated in the United States today. "And then there are the lockdowns," she said. "One time I had a 30-day visa to visit him at the penitentiary in Beaumont, Texas. The day I arrived I was informed the prison was on lockdown and no visits were allowed. I tried every visiting day for a month, and was never allowed in."

Camilo Rojo, whose father was killed in the 1976 bombing by counterrevolutionaries of a Cubana Airlines flight over Barbados in which 73 Cubans lost their lives, and Moisés Rodríguez, a former Cuban state security agent who spent 28 years infiltrating counterrevolutionary groups in Cuba and the United States, described the kinds of violent attacks that the Cuban Five were working to prevent at the time of their arrest.

María León, a member of Venezuela's National Assembly, concluded the panel by describing her work in initiating committees of Mothers for

Continued on page 11

NY event commemorates opening of Cuban Revolution

BY CANDACE WAGNER

NEW YORK — More than 300 people here July 27 celebrated the opening of the revolutionary fight to overthrow the U.S.-backed-dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in Cuba that began with the July 26, 1953, attack on the Moncada barracks in Santiago de Cuba led by Fidel Castro.

The young combatants sought "to completely transform the national picture, in which 600,000 Cubans were unemployed; 500,000 peasants were living in miserable homes; they worked four months a year and starved the rest of the time," Oscar León, Cuba's deputy ambassador to the United Nations, told the meeting.

"We have been together for 15 years in one of the most important struggles in the history of our revolution," León said, "the release and return to Cuba of Antonio Guerrero Rodríguez, Fernando González Llort, Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, Ramón Labañino Salazar and René González Sehwerert. That is still an unfinished task and we will not stop until our other four comrades finally return to their homeland."

A video prepared for the New York event featured René González, the only



Militant photos: left, Hilda Cuzco; right, Arthur Hughes
"We will not stop fighting" until all of Cuban Five are back in Cuba, Cuban Deputy Ambassador to the UN Oscar León told July 27 meeting in New York. Cuban and Puerto Rican people "are fighting the same enemy," said Puerto Rican independence fighter Rafael Cancel Miranda.

one of the Five who has been freed and is back in Cuba; his mother Irma Sehwerert; Rev. Luis Suárez from the Martin Luther King Center in Havana; and Kenia Serrano, president of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples. Serrano called on meeting participants to keep fighting for the freedom of the Five, an end to the U.S. economic blockade of Cuba, for the right of U.S. citizens to travel freely to Cuba, and for the return of the U.S. military base at Guantánamo to Cuba.

Rafael Cancel Miranda, who spent 25½ years in U.S. jails for carrying out



an armed protest action in the U.S. Congress in 1954 to support independence for Puerto Rico, also spoke. The Cuban and Puerto Rican people "are one and the same," he said. "We are fighting the same enemy."

The New York event, held at the Service Employees International Union Local 1199 hall, was organized by a coalition of 32 organizations. Other speakers included Julio Escalona, Venezuela's deputy ambassador to the U.N.; Rosemary Mealy, a professor at City College; and Jonna Baldres of the Philippine Forum.

In 1930s Omaha was 'rotten ripe' for union organizing

Below is an excerpt from *Teamster Power*, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for August. It is the second of four books on the 1930s strikes, organizing drives and political campaigns that transformed the Teamsters union in Minnesota and the Midwest into a fighting industrial union movement. Farrell Dobbs, a central leader of these battles, was Socialist Workers Party candidate for president in 1948, 1952, 1956 and 1960 and SWP national secretary from 1953 to 1972. Copyright © 1973 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY FARRELL DOBBS

Around mid-June 1938 the North Central Area Committee fought a brief skirmish with long distance trucking firms operating out of Omaha, Nebraska. The clash was only a prelude to a long, bitter struggle that was to erupt there a bit later. To explain why this situation developed, a short sketch of the background is needed.

Omaha lies on the west bank of the Missouri river, opposite Council Bluffs, Iowa. It is the industrial and commercial center of Nebraska. As a transportation hub for the surrounding region, the city is also an operational base for several railroads and truck lines.

In the 1930s Omaha had a population of around 200,000. Of its 17,000-odd industrial workers, about 6,000



Victorious strikers celebrate in front of first truck to move following Arrow Motor Freight's signing of a closed-shop agreement with the union, June 1937. Trucking bosses boasted they could operate with low labor costs and prevent unions from organizing industry.

were employed in packinghouses and some 4,000 in trucking. The conditions under which they toiled were exemplified by a Chamber of Commerce boast that capitalists could operate with "low labor costs."

To have cheap labor it was necessary to maintain open shop standards. This required an unremitting anti-union campaign, which was carried out by the Omaha Business Men's Association (a counterpart of the Minneapolis Citizens Alliance). In 1919, for example, the Association had been instrumental in viciously smashing a packinghouse strike, and as recently as 1935 it had broken a strike of streetcar workers. A general anti-union weapon had been devised for such purposes in the form of a state-enacted anti-picketing law, which declared in its key provision:

"It shall be unlawful . . . to loiter about, beset, patrol or picket in any manner the place of business . . . or any street, alley, road, highway or other place in the vicinity . . . for the purposes of inducing . . . others not to trade with, buy from, work for, or have business dealings with [any firm or corporation]."

These brutal policies had long held the Omaha labor movement down to little more than a few small craft unions of skilled workers. Previous attempts to organize truck drivers in 1929, in 1931, and again in 1933, had been defeated. As a result the average wage in truck-

ing was twenty-five cents an hour. The usual work week was eighty hours.

Although a charter existed for General Drivers Local 554, it had remained more or less a paper union, dominated by right-wing officials in the Omaha Central Labor Union (AFL), and utterly lacking in organizational initiative. This was criminal neglect. Conditions were rotten ripe for a membership campaign in the industry, as the workers themselves demonstrated in the spring of 1937. One day they simply launched a spontaneous strike against Watson Brothers Transportation Company, headquartered in Omaha. Long after the event Louis Miller, who emerged as one of the Local 554 leaders, wrote a letter to me describing how their first walkout began. . . .

"We came to an agreement that the best way to get our fight going was to tie up Watson's, where we worked. Tom would get the men lined up on the Chicago end of Watson's runs. Lee and Fritz would take care of Lincoln. John, Earl and I would tie up the company's Kansas City terminal.

"The night we tied up Watson in Kansas City, the first driver who had been called for a run was Bert [Albert S.] Parker. He had a hot-freight load of bakery goods that was supposed to be in Omaha by 3 a.m. When we told him about the strike he refused to pull out the rig and everyone else on the dock

also quit work.

"That's the kind of guts the men had, with no union behind us.

"Tom Watson, who had charge there, told us we couldn't do that to him. We answered: 'They ain't rolling, Watson.' Then we held a meeting on the street to decide what to do next.

"We called Omaha to report that the Kansas City terminal was shut down. Then we called the Teamster business agent at our end, O.B. Enloe of Local 41. The first thing he said when he came down was: 'I have been waiting for this for over a year.'

"About 3 a.m. Mace Brown, president of the Omaha Central Labor Union, called and I talked to him. He said we should bring the trucks to Omaha and join Local 554, which he called 'his union.' I didn't know Brown from Adam's green fox, so I asked to talk to one of the Watson drivers. I don't recall who it was I talked to, but he said it was okay to come on in because they had Omaha tied up and were about to join Local 554."

Developments similar to those described by Miller had also been taking place at other Watson terminals. Once the Omaha road drivers were all back in town, they marched in a body to the Labor Temple. There they joined Local 554 and Mace Brown helped to arrange a meeting at which they elected new local officers. After that Watson and the other trucking employers agreed to negotiate with the union, so the strikers returned to their jobs.

In the talks that followed the bosses offered little and stalled a lot. Things dragged along until the angry workers again launched a spontaneous walkout, this time at several trucking companies. The new tie-up, which lasted about two weeks, was conducted in defiance of the state's anti-picketing law, and it was very effective. Finally, on June 16, 1937, the bosses gave in. They signed a contract providing a minimum wage of forty-five cents an hour, well above the previous average rate for the city, along with other concessions. They also agreed to reinstate eleven workers who had been fired for union activity.

It was the first strike victory in the recollection of the oldest Omaha union worker.

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August **BOOKS OF THE MONTH**

PATHFINDER READERS CLUB SPECIALS

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Defend political rights in Omaha!

With the July 16 political break-in into the home of Jacob Perasso, Socialist Workers Party 2013 candidate for city council, authorities in Omaha, Neb., or their vigilante associates are issuing a direct challenge to supporters of the party and to working-class fighters everywhere.

Omaha, an industrial and financial center in the Midwest, has a long history of working-class battles. The city's propertied rulers have used both legal and extralegal methods to intimidate and deal blows to their class opponents — from the use of federal immigration raids to break up union organizing drives in area packinghouses in 2000 to Ku Klux Klan night riders threatening and driving out of town Earl Little, an activist in Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association and the father of Malcolm X, in 1925.

The party's initial efforts to respond have uncovered more recent attacks by cops and others against

political activists in the city.

We urge readers to join party supporters in responding by stepping up their political work with others involved in struggles in the interests of working people. Go to Omaha, join in teams taking the *Militant* door to door to workers throughout the area, help build the fight to win freedom for Mondo we Langa and Ed Poindexter, get out the word about the international campaign for the Cuban Five. Help show the authorities that efforts to push socialists and other working people out of politics will have the opposite effect.

Wherever you are, join in the campaign to defend the party's right to free speech in Omaha. Circulate copies of the open letter supporters of political rights are getting around and win new signers. Help press city officials to arrest those responsible for the break-in and expose those behind the political attack. An injury to one is an injury to all!

Fight for big minimum wage raise!

The protests by fast-food workers from New York to Chicago and beyond, demanding \$15 an hour and unionization, deserve the support of the entire labor movement. These demands have won widespread sympathy from working people, who in their great majority face a relentless push by the bosses to cut jobs, speed up work, lower wages and minimize hours and benefits. These attacks are driven by the deepening crisis of world capitalist production and trade.

Four years into the "recovery" from the 2007-2009 recession, only 47 percent of the U.S. adult population have full-time jobs. Meanwhile, provisions of Obamacare promise only to exacerbate the expansion of part-time work.

The protests highlight the need for a nationwide fight for a big raise in the federal minimum wage. Such a campaign is not only necessary for millions of workers to get by. It would also strengthen working-class unity, self-confidence and combativity, and put us in a better position to effectively or-

ganize, resist and set a course toward independent working-class political action.

Wages under capitalism are set from the bottom up. When the bosses are able to hold down the minimum wage, it drags down the wages of all.

The propertied rulers' always play on divisions, often scapegoating the very sections of the working class to whom they pay the lowest wages, including workers without "proper papers." And they peddle lies to convince us that a higher minimum wage is not in the interests of all workers — from empty threats that they can simply replace us with machines to debunked theories that rising wages contribute to inflation.

In addition to fighting for a big raise in the minimum wage, the labor movement should campaign for a massive government-funded public works program to put millions to work — lessening the competition fostered by high unemployment — and mount a major effort to organize unions and bring union power to bear that could draw millions into action.

Obamacare prompts bosses to cut hours

Continued from page 7

there are now 3 million more part-time positions.

While the Obama administration recently postponed until 2015 fining employers with 50 or more workers who do not provide some health coverage for full-time employees, fines on individual workers without insurance take effect in January 2014.

For employees in workplaces where past union struggles have won higher quality health plans, Obamacare is adding pressure on employers to cut them back. Starting in 2018 a so-called Cadillac tax is slated to penalize employers for providing comprehensive health care plans to their workers. Bosses are wasting no time in cutting these plans, including through raising deductibles and co-payments.

The act considers employer-sponsored insurance

"affordable" if workers pay out-of-pocket 9.5 percent or less of their household income. Above that amount individuals can file paperwork to apply for subsidies and tax credits. But for family coverage each worker would have to pay thousands of dollars more.

Many of the Affordable Care Act's provisions "are inconsistent with the promise that those who were satisfied with their employer-sponsored coverage could keep it," Kinsey Robinson, president of the United Union of Roofers, Waterproofers and Allied Workers, told the media. He backed the act's passage and is now calling for its repeal, as is the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. The United Food and Commercial Workers, Teamsters and UNITE HERE, have also protested aspects of Obamacare in recent months.

Prison hunger strike

Continued from page 4

held in isolation for long periods in small, windowless cells, with no hope of getting out.

Nor has there been an end to the situation where prisoners can be put in solitary after being "validated" as gang members — not on the basis of any gang-related activity or crime, but on "evidence," such as possession of art work, a tattoo, a book by Malcolm X, an accusation from another inmate in exchange for their release from SHU or association with another prisoner labeled as gang affiliated.

"Don't let the support stop," former prisoner Luis Jaukegui told a rally at San Quentin prison on August 3. "It's for humanity. We need to put an end to solitary! We need a situation where people can function if they get out of prison! We need jobs!"

Cuba solidarity conf.

Continued from page 9

the Five throughout Venezuela.

Their presentations were followed by remarks by Gloria La Riva, coordinator of the National Committee to Free the Cuban Five in the United States, and Alicia Jrapko, U.S. coordinator of the International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban 5. They reported ongoing efforts, and plans for future actions to broaden support for the fight.

A lively two-hour discussion continued the next day. Delegates heard reports of activities bringing attention to the case in numerous countries, as well as plans for actions in the coming months that were incorporated in the Declaration of Caracas and Plan of Action adopted by the conference at the closing session.

While many delegates are already involved in work for freedom of the Cuban Five, a good many others were learning details about the case and about the Five themselves — their histories of revolutionary activity — for the first time.

One of the most popular items at the conference was the compilation of *Militant* articles published in the book *The Cuban Five: Who They Are, Why They Were Framed, Why They Should Be Free* from Pathfinder Press. It provides that kind of information about the Five and the 15 years of the fight for their freedom. Some 120 copies of the book were purchased by conference participants, including small bundles by delegates from Argentina, El Salvador, Haiti and Lebanon to take home for use in their own countries.

Tania Blanco, 40, a cleaning worker at a school in Aragua province in Venezuela, was typical. She said she has been involved in organizing activities in defense of the Cuban Five in her region and bought a copy of *The Cuban Five* to learn more about who they are. Blanco is a candidate for city council for the governing United Socialist Party of Venezuela.

Many delegates were interested to find out how the book is being used to broaden knowledge about the case in the United States, including through door-to-door sales in working-class neighborhoods.

Venezuela-Cuba solidarity

The final morning of the conference, participants visited several joint Venezuelan-Cuban projects that highlighted mutual collaboration and solidarity. One of these was Ciudad Caribia, which when completed will include 20,000 modern apartments, along with schools, medical and sports facilities, factories, and shops. Many of those living in the more than 1,500 units already completed are people who lost their homes in 2010 during torrential rains and massive mudslides. Many Cubans are involved in the project, serving as teachers, doctors, and organizing recreational activities.

Other visits included a predominantly Cuban-staffed medical clinic in the working-class 23 de Enero neighborhood in Caracas, as well as the national José Gregorio Hernández Medical Genetics Center in Miranda — part of a genetics study to aid the handicapped that is a joint project of the governments belonging to ALBA.

The conference closed with a march and cultural activity paying tribute to Chávez's legacy in the fight for Latin American unity in the struggle against imperialist domination. The next day many participants still in Caracas took part in the official commemoration of the 59th anniversary of Chávez's birth, a gathering of several thousand at which Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro gave a major address aimed at mobilizing supporters of the governing United Socialist Party of Venezuela for the municipal elections scheduled for December.

In their final plenary session delegates at the conference adopted a Plan of Action that highlights "redoubling the campaign of solidarity" for the freedom of the Cuban Five and Puerto Rican political prisoners held in the United States. Among the upcoming events it points to are the IX Colloquium for the Freedom of the Five and Against Terrorism, Nov. 13-17 in Holguín, Cuba; the World Festival of Youth and Students, Dec. 7-12 in Ecuador; the International Commission of Inquiry into the Case of the Cuban Five in London, March 7-8, 2014; a third round of actions to be organized in Washington, D.C., next year; and the III World Conference in Solidarity with Cuba to be held Oct. 27-31, 2014.

Workers sign to put socialist candidates on ballot in NYC

Supporters of the Socialist Workers Party collected 7,524 signatures by Aug. 7 to put the party's citywide candidates — Dan Fein for mayor, John Studer for comptroller and Deborah Liatos for public advocate — on the New York City ballot for the November elections. Petitioners fanned out across all five boroughs, gathering more than twice the signatures required. Talking to workers on street corners, at shopping centers and door to door in working-class neighborhoods, campaign supporters also sold a couple of hundred copies of the *Militant*.

—JOHN STUDER