

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Chinese immigrants are not
'passive victims of discrimination'
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 82/NO. 2 JANUARY 15, 2018

US gov't lies, misconduct bring mistrial in Bundy case

BY DENNIS RICHTER

In an important victory for ranchers, workers and farmers, federal Judge Gloria Navarro declared a mistrial Dec. 20 in the government's frame-up trial against rancher Cliven Bundy, two of his sons, Ryan and Ammon, and supporter Ryan Payne. The four defendants faced 15 charges in the Las Vegas trial, including conspiracy against the United States, which could have sent them to prison for decades.

"They have been putting forth untruths, lies. They are doing everything that the government is not supposed to do," Ryan Bundy told the press after the ruling. "Our government is supposed to protect rights — not take them, not destroy them."

Judge Navarro set a hearing for Jan. 8 to decide whether the government's egregious conduct means her ruling should be entered "with prejudice," which would bar a new prosecution. Prior to the hearing Navarro had released the defendants from jail.

Cliven Bundy, however, remains in
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Bosses push for profits fuels rise in job deaths



New York City Central Labor Council

Construction workers rally to protest attacks on unions, safety in New York City Nov. 14.

Deaths on the job go up for third year in a row

BY EMMA JOHNSON

For the third year in a row the number of workers who were killed on the job increased in 2016. Some 5,200 workers paid with their lives for the bosses' drive for profits, with immigrants and older workers hardest hit.

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EDITORIAL

No worker has to die!

"The unions are important not just for pay but for safety," Pete Batteast told a memorial meeting in honor of his father, a steelworker who was killed on the job in March.

The number of workers killed or injured on the job — from steel and construction to mining and oil refining — is rising, a direct consequence of the bosses drive for profits.

All work can be performed safely. It won't happen by relying on the bosses or their government. Workers need

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Economic crisis behind protests in Iran cities

BY TERRY EVANS

In the wake of years of economic hardship, Tehran's wars in Syria and Iraq, and recent price increases, daily protests by workers and youth spread across Iran in late December. Some participants have chanted slogans opposing Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Others have called for the fall of the country's cleric-dominated bourgeois regime. Press reports Jan. 3 say more than 20 people had been killed in clashes with the authorities.

Recognizing the harsh realities facing working people that kindled the protests the government initially held cops and Revolutionary Guard forces back from brutal assaults on demonstrators. Youth unemployment stands at 40 percent.

The protests began in Mashhad Dec. 28. The government had proposed a budget that included a 50 percent increase in fuel costs and elimination of millions of dollars from subsidies that cut the cost of basic necessities for roughly 30 million people — more than a third of the population. At the same time it proposed a 20 percent increase in military spending, which would put the defense budget at \$11 billion. The *London Times* said protests spread to 40 cities and towns over the next couple days, including the capital Tehran.

The impact of the world capitalist
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Amtrak, gov't seek to cover up bosses' role in Wash. derailment



Reuters/Steve Dipaola

Amtrak train on first trip on new tracks spills onto highway in DuPont, Washington, after derailment Dec. 18. Bosses rushed to put crews on new bypass without adequate training.

BY EDWIN FRUIT

After Amtrak Cascades train 501 derailed and crashed Dec. 18 as it traveled over the just completed Point Defiance Bypass on its way from Seattle to Portland, government officials and railroad bosses began to try to blame the engineer. Three passengers were killed in the crash and over 100 injured.

Unnamed government officials rapidly leaked the fact that the train appeared to be traveling at almost 80 mph in a curve marked for 30 mph.

The headline in the *Washington Post* blared, "Official: Feds Look at Whether Train Engineer Was Distracted." No other possible cause was even mentioned.

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North, South Korea discuss talks as US sanctions squeeze Pyongyang

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

In his annual New Year's speech, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said his government would like to discuss with its South Korean counterparts participating in the Winter Olympics in South Korea next month.

"The Winter Games will be a good occasion for the country's unity," he said.

In response, Cho Myoung-gyon, Seoul's minister in charge of inter-Korean relations, proposed a meeting be held between government officials of both the North and South at the border village of Panmunjom Jan. 9.

"We hope this proposal will serve as an opportunity for the two Koreas to seek a solution towards establishing peace on the peninsula," presidential spokesman Park Su-hyun said Jan. 1.

The meeting would be the first official talks between the two Koreas in two years.

South Korean leaders have been

in contact with Washington over the moves. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said he hoped the diplomatic efforts could produce "a meaningful

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'Unions are important not just for pay, but for safety'

Truckers on strike across Russia face gov't attacks

Senate probe of Green Party is threat to workers’ rights

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The Senate Intelligence Committee announced Dec. 18 that it’s opening an investigation into the campaign of Jill Stein, who ran as Green Party candidate for U.S. president in 2016, claiming the move is part of its witch hunt into whether “collusion with Russians” determined the outcome of the election.

The attack on the Green Party comes as the fishing expedition being led by special counsel Robert Mueller goes on and on. Mueller, a former head of Washington’s FBI political police, has been given far-reaching powers to target President Donald Trump and those around him, looking for evidence of “collusion” with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Stein was a thorn in the side of Democratic Party presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, who claimed Stein was taking votes away from her. The Green Party, a so-called independent smaller capitalist party, was on the ballot in 44 states in 2016. Stein, a Massachusetts physician, received 1 percent of the vote.

The Senate committee said it’s investigating Stein because she attended and spoke at a 2015 dinner in Moscow to celebrate Russia Today, a state-owned media company. Stein was seated at the head table with Putin and Michael Flynn, who was Trump’s first White House national security adviser until being ousted from his job after 24 days. Flynn recently pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about contacts with the Russian ambassador as part of the transition team after Trump had won the election and is now cooperating with prosecutor Mueller.

RT, which has operated in the U.S. since 2005, does slavishly slant its “news” to fit Moscow’s political needs. But that isn’t the reason the U.S. Justice Department ordered it to register as an agent of a foreign power in November. That attack on freedom of the press and workers’ rights was engineered for Washington’s own political reasons.

“Miss Stein did attend that infamous dinner,” Virginia Democrat Mark Warner, vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, told CNN, in motivating this harassment probe. “We have seen reports that Stein ... [was] very complimentary of Julian Assange and WikiLeaks, which we know was one of the pawns being used by the Russians.”

The Democrats would like to see Stein take a hit. They believe that all those that stood against Clinton as well as Trump should have been prevented from doing so — including the Socialist Workers Party. The editors of the *New York Times* ran a piece in the Oct. 29, 2016, issue, a few days before the election, urging readers disgusted with both the Democratic and Republican candidates not to vote for the SWP, “at least this time,” and to hold their nose and vote for Clinton.

In announcing the investigation of Stein’s campaign, Republican Richard Burr, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, told reporters Dec. 18 that the committee was “just starting” to dig into Stein.

It’s hard to figure why Stein decided to fly to Moscow to speak at a love-fest for RT, but any charge that her campaign was a secret plot by Putin is a canard.

Protests in Puerto Rico: 1 million plus still without power



Twitter

Anger is rising in the U.S. colony of Puerto Rico over the slow pace of government efforts to restore electricity and other basic necessities more than three months after hurricanes Maria and Irma. The Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority admitted Dec. 29 that at least 45 percent of its customers are still without electricity. Workers and small-business people have taken to the streets across the island over the last few weeks to protest the outages. Above, Dec. 27 action in the Bayaney neighborhood of Hatillo.

Even the government’s 45 percent figure is misleading, Fredyson Martínez, vice president of the electrical workers union, told the press. While 90 percent of industries and 75 percent of businesses have power, residential areas are disproportionately in the dark.

The government says that 21,000 electric poles have arrived, or will soon, far short of the 50,000 needed to restore power. Tens of thousands of working people who the government calls “squatters,” because they don’t have legal title to the land they have lived on often for decades, are not eligible for aid.

But for some U.S. bosses the disaster is a blessing. Dakota Provisions sent a recruiter seeking workers for its turkey packinghouse in Huron, South Dakota, which depends on immigrant labor. He convinced 22 of the up to 2,000 people fleeing the tough conditions on the island every day to sign up. The company loans the money for the plane ticket, and then deducts the cost over time from each paycheck. Pay starts at \$10 an hour.

— SETH GALINSKY

Send bosses ‘blood money’ to SWP

BY TERRY EVANS

When Corsair Components in Hayward, California, laid off its workforce, but needed the workers it had just fired to stay on for several weeks to clear the warehouse shelves, the company offered them each \$2,000 in addition to their wages.

“I’m sending mine to the Socialist Workers Party,” Eric Simpson, one of those hit by the layoffs, told a co-worker when she texted him to see if he’d gotten the money. “So you’re not keep-

ing it for yourself?” she asked.

“We do this so party members can’t be bribed by companies,” Simpson explained. “The bonus wasn’t wages, it was a small bribe to get us to stay to the end. It was cheap for the company.”

SWP members and supporters proudly turn over production, attendance, safety and other “bonuses” to the party, because the bosses’ aim in handing out these bribes is to deter workers from resisting speedup, lower wages and worse working conditions.

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THE MILITANT

End US economic war against people of Cuba!

Cuba’s socialist revolution sets an example for working people worldwide, earning Washington’s undying hatred. The ‘Militant’ reports on the revolutionary actions of Cuban workers and farmers at home and abroad, and on activities elsewhere in solidarity with their revolution.



Militant/Dan Fein
Cuban literacy volunteer, Griselda Aguilera defends Cuban Revolution at Chicago event.

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Fla. rail worker fights firing after speaking out on safety

BY ANTHONY DUTROW

Louis Billingsley, a freight rail conductor with 12 years experience, is fighting his firing after speaking out against unsafe practices and conditions at the CSX railroad in a televised interview on CBS Action News Jax in Jacksonville, Florida. Jacksonville is CSX’s corporate headquarters.

CSX, one of the two large Class 1 railroads covering the eastern half of the country, along with Norfolk Southern, has been on a drive to combine trains, eliminate workers’ jobs and make more profit for the bosses and bondholders.

Action News Jax reported last June that freight trains often keep traffic backed up in the area for hours, preventing people from getting to work or to medical or other appointments.

One woman interviewed had to miss her treatment for Stage 3 cancer, as all roads out of her neighborhood were blocked by a train.

These longer trains are part of a drive for profits in the rail industry, especially in the seven Class 1 roads in North America — which each rake in at least \$453 million annually. Together they control 69 percent of the industry’s trackage, 90 percent of its workers and 94 percent of all freight revenue.

When Billingsley was on a train crew that kept a series of crossings closed, he told Action News in July that seeing people disrupted this way “was heartbreaking.” Billingsley told the reporter that at one point he separated one of the trains in the Dinsmore neighborhood that had blocked traffic for two hours.

“These trains are getting longer and doubling up,” Billingsley told Action News, adding that CSX “stocks are going up, that’s all they care about.”

“I have to walk back here and fix the train, and my radio can’t even reach the engineer it’s so long,” he said.

The day after the interview was aired, CSX sent Billingsley a voice-mail saying he was fired. Then 40 minutes later the company sent another voicemail saying he was rehired.

For the next two months, CSX managers followed Billingsley, looking to pressure him into any infraction of their rulebook. They found a pretext to fire him. Billingsley’s “crimes?” They said he stepped on a rail and threw a switch with one hand, neither of which was any conceivable threat to the communities residing near the tracks.

Billingsley has refused to be intimidated. He retained a lawyer, John Magnuson, and filed a claim with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. They are considering a “whistle-blower” suit through the federal courts.

In August 2017, just eight months after CSX inaugurated its “Precision Scheduled Railroading” — a term coined by its new CEO Hunter Harrison — a two-mile-long train, hauling dangerous chemicals, derailed in Hyndman, Pennsylvania.

Tank cars filled with liquid propane and molten sulfur ruptured and burst into flames, forcing the evacuation of over 1,000 people from the town and surrounding areas for days.

Harrison’s version of “precision” railroading is admired and imitated by profit-hungry rail bosses across North America.

Harrison died suddenly in December. The bosses at CSX and its shareholders had brought him over from Canadian Pacific Railway earlier in 2017 because of his record of “turning around” the profit rates at Illinois Central Railway and Canadian National Railway.

He led the bosses there in attacks on jobs, safety conditions, elimination of less profitable yards and train combinations that led to stockholders pocketing higher returns on their shares — 516 percent at Illinois Central, 1989-97; 353 percent at Canadian National, 1998-2009; and 319 percent at Canadian Pacific.

In addition to dangerously increasing train lengths and eliminating safer practices and rules, Harrison



Conductor Louis Billingsley is fighting firing by CSX. In an interview with Action News Jax in Jacksonville, Florida, he explained how job cuts and train combinations by CSX bosses have led to long trains that block area neighborhoods. Above, screen shot from Action News video.

and CSX bosses closed major yards, including in Atlanta and Cumberland, Maryland, and they’ve laid off close to 10 percent of the railroad’s 28,000 workers. Nine cars derailed on another CSX train in Hyndman Dec. 29.

Management at CSX — and their competitors across the continent — have made clear they will continue their productivity and profit drive, as they have done throughout the industry for decades.

Amtrak seeks to cover up bosses’ role in derailment

Continued from front page

But facts began coming out Dec. 23 that tell another story, a story of rushed efforts by Amtrak bosses to meet the deadline for the new service that seemed to make it impossible to be prepared.

“Anyone who points their finger at this engineer in this accident is making a very bad mistake,” John Hiatt, a former BNSF engineer and 25-year railroad investigator for the Bremseth Law firm in Minnetonka, Minnesota, told KIRO 7-TV, the CBS affiliate in Seattle. Hiatt lives in Puyallup, Washington, and had spent the last four or five days talking with Amtrak and other rail workers in the area.

The problem, he said, was that the rail bosses were in a hurry to meet a deadline and shorted the training to do so. “Deadlines can’t be the dictator of how you do things,” Hiatt said. “Safety has to be.”

“All the railroads in the country, including Amtrak, do not require training like they should,” John Risch, national legislative director of the SMART Transportation Division, which repre-

sents rail operating crew workers, told the *Seattle Times*.

All of the engineers who would be working the new bypass were trained at night. “All of them,” Hiatt said. “When they got off their regular run, they had to figure out a way to squeeze them some way into this training, plus be able to keep their other trains running.”

“I’ve heard six people were in the locomotive cab” at a time, Hiatt said. “They had all of them in there to qualify as a group, so they would take turns running the locomotive.”

And, he said, they did most of their training not in the front engine, but in the rear locomotive, at the back of the train.

“Riding a trailing locomotive, in the dark, what’s the benefit?” he asked. “That’s like learning to drive a car while riding in the trunk.”

Hiatt says that the fact Amtrak started the new service without having Positive Train Control operating — a system that automatically can slow or stop trains that are traveling too fast — is part of the problem. The bypass is

fitted with PTC equipment, but it is not yet up and running.

Even though Congress voted in 2008 to mandate all rail bosses to put Positive Train Control on their tracks by the end of 2015, rail companies have gotten extensions, saying it’s too expensive.

Rail bosses try and isolate and fire workers who speak out about safety, Hiatt told the *Militant*. “What the companies do, if someone reports a safety problem,” he said, “is to get rid of them at a later date on a minor infraction, claiming there is no relationship to what the worker had reported.”

Rail bosses and their government allies go out of their way to try to pin the blame for any problem on the workers involved. That’s what Canadian rail bosses and government prosecutors are trying to do in their frame-up trial taking place now of engineer Tom Harding and traffic controller Richard Labrie in the derailment, explosion and fire that destroyed downtown Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, in 2013, killing 47 people.

John Studer contributed to this article.

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Communist League in UK to go ‘deeper into working class’

BY TONY HUNT

MANCHESTER, England — “Workers’ anger has intensified since the 2007-2008 crash, with declining real wages, growing job insecurity and uncertainty of what the future holds in today’s world of crisis, conflict and wars,” said Jonathan Silberman, a leader of the Communist League, reporting on a political resolution that was adopted by the League’s 10th Constitutional Congress here Dec. 16-17. “There’s a deep desire for change within the working class. Millions of workers are prepared to discuss politics with communists.”

Going door to door in working-class neighborhoods to discuss a communist program and perspectives is the foundation of our work, the resolution begins. “We carry out this work as CL members building a proletarian party. In the course of this work, we seek to establish long-term relations with fellow workers, pave the way for engaging together in political activity, and recruitment,” it states. “Central to this, and a key measure for assessing how we’re doing, are sales of books on communist politics and subscriptions to the *Militant*.”

“At this congress, we’re proposing an additional step to go deeper into our class to build the party,” Silberman said. “That’s to organize League members where they work into trade union fractions — meeting up with workmates for relaxed discussion outside of work, meeting with co-workers’ families and friends, organizing house meetings and going door to door in areas nearby to their places of work.”

Fraternal delegates to the congress from the Communist League in Canada and the Socialist Workers Party in the United States enriched the congress discussion with reports on the experiences of their parties’ trade union fractions.

“As the League carries out this course, some members will be changing jobs, others will move to allow them to live closer to where they work,” Silberman said.

“Our job is not to explain how *bad* things are. Nor is our thrust to make fun of the difficulties of the capitalist class and its politicians. Most workers know these things,” he said. “We address the crisis *our class* faces, *our* need to break from the self-image the rulers teach us and recognize we can take power and organize society.

“Central to this is defense of Cuba’s socialist revolution — the best living example of what working people are capable of achieving when they come to realize that their condition will never change as long as we remain trapped in the con-trick of the capitalist political set-up, and embark upon a revolutionary line of march toward taking power,” he said. Building participation in a May Day brigade from the U.K. to Cuba will be a central League activity.

“The changes in the working class were given electoral expression in the June 2016 Brexit referendum, and again in the 2017 general election. But how someone votes doesn’t determine who we talk with,” Silberman said. “There’s nothing for workers in the shifting sands of the capitalist political divide over Brexit. Prime Minister Theresa May used to say, ‘no deal is better than a bad deal.’ Now her government speaks of ‘structural alignment’ with the EU.

“This marks a change. It’s a reflection of the rulers’ fear of the new increasingly outweighing their hatred of the old,” he said. “That’s true for the rival capitalists in Germany and France, as well as in the U.K. Our course is not to choose between factions within the capitalist parties, but to point toward independent working-class political action. We reach broadly to the working class, *as a whole*.”

Silberman announced that to facilitate expanding its reach into the working class, the League plans to run in the May 3 local elections in London and Manchester. “We’ll take on all comers, including the Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour Party, which looks to the capitalist state as our protector and benefactor,” he said. “Whereas they see the working class as a problem to be socially engineered, we see workers as the solution.”

Discussion enriches League’s course

Dag Tirsén reported in the discussion how the League’s Manchester branch had responded to the arson attack on a mosque in Newton Heath. “Left-wing groups saw this working-class district as enemy territory,” Tirsén said. “We went door to door explaining that opposition to such attacks is in the interests of all workers. We’ve sold many subscriptions to the *Militant* and books by communist leaders in the process.”

Ólof Andra Proppé reported on how the London branch reached toward workers who joined a march called by the Football Lads Alliance, which raises reactionary demands for government action to counter Islamist terrorism and “extremism.” “We found that among the marchers — condemned by middle-class counter-protesters as ‘racist scum’ — were workers looking for a solution to the crisis, and open to discussing with League members and buying communist literature,” Proppé said.

A public meeting held on the Saturday evening of the Congress heard



Pete Clifford, a leader of the Communist League, speaks at Dec. 16 public meeting during congress in Manchester. Members voted to deepen proletarian party-building, based on expanded propaganda work and organizing League members into trade union fractions.

Communist League leader Pete Clifford speak about the “gut-wrenching” memorial service for the 71 victims of the Grenfell Tower fire two days earlier, attended by members of the British royal family, Theresa May, Jeremy Corbyn and others. “Six months after the blaze just 42 of the 209 families made homeless have permanent new homes,” Clifford said. “It’s another example of how the rulers have no solution to the crisis other than to make workers pay.”

Clifford explained how the League had campaigned on independent working-class proposals to answer the social catastrophe. “We should join with the survivors of Grenfell Tower in their fight for immediate quality rehousing in the local area and serious compensation,” Clifford quoted from the CL’s public statement the CL campaigned with after the deadly fire. “The trade unions should engage in a mass campaign — working together with tenants around the country — demanding immediate dismantling of cladding,

installation of sprinklers and other protective measures nationwide.”

“They’re clinging to the relics of the ‘special relationship’ with the U.S.,” Clifford said, pointing to how the U.K. rulers’ political crisis is intensified by London’s relative decline within the imperialist world pecking order. “Much was made in the media of Theresa May’s distancing herself from President Trump over his Jerusalem statement. In fact she emphasized the government’s support for what Trump is doing in the Middle East.”

Clifford was joined on the platform by Patrick Tremblay, a leader of the Communist League in Canada; and by Steve Clark and Bea Stanswick, leaders of the Socialist Workers Party in the U.S.

“I was stunned by how similar were the conditions in the U.K., U.S. and Canada — and also the work of the communist movement in the three countries,” Sajda Begum told the *Militant* after hearing the presentations. “It was a real eye-opener.”

The capitalist rulers face a deepening political crisis

Below is an excerpt from the political resolution adopted at the Dec. 16-17 Communist League congress. It is from the section titled, “The rulers’ deepening political crisis.”

The post-World War II imperialist relations and structures are becoming unstable and un dependable; all of the consequences of U.S. imperialism and its closest allies losing the Cold War are deepening. Profit rates have continued their tendency to decline over four decades, resulting in a worldwide slowdown and stagnation of production, of trade, and above all of the rate of increase in productive employment.

The relationship of forces between capitalist states has been, and is being, transformed. Washington is the only imperialist power able to use sustained military power anywhere in the world. In comparison to any other single capitalist power, U.S. imperialism continues to grow relatively stronger, and it continues to consolidate its dominant place among the imperialist powers, all of whom are dependent upon U.S. military might. Russia and China are seen today less as new markets for

investment, trade and capital growth, and more as aggressive capitalist competitors — changing the relative position in world politics of Washington, Moscow, and Beijing.

The European Union is being torn at its seams, but with the rival bourgeoisies’ fear of the new continuing to weigh more heavily than their hatred of the old. Nation states in Europe whose borders encompass more than one substantial nationality also tend toward becoming unstuck, but the resistance of the central bourgeoisies and their states is hardening.

It’s this world that underlies the “Brexit debate.” The propertied rulers in the U.K. face the differential decline of British capitalism. One wing of the capitalist rulers reacts against what they see as the straightjacket of an EU “ever-greater union” but knows nothing about what they favor. Another wing clings to yesterday’s world, hoping to keep the Brexit “transition period” going for as long as possible; including some who have in their sights ultimately calling a statute of limitations on the June 2016 referendum result itself. This is an ongoing conflict. It runs through all parties

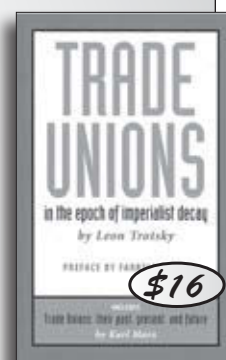
and the government. Within bourgeois confines, there is nothing for the working class in this debate. Our task is to point a proletarian way forward in face of the deepening world capitalist crisis.

The propertied rulers have no solution other than to make working people pay.

Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay

BY LEON TROTSKY

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‘Unions are important not just for pay, but for safety’

BY BETSY FARLEY

EAST CHICAGO, Ind. — In the early morning hours of Dec. 11, 2017, Alfred Cadena, a 61-year-old operator on the Continuous Annealing Line, was killed on the job at the Arcelor-Mittal Indiana Harbor mill here. He had 41 years’ experience working in the mill.

Cadena was driving an open buggy to haul scrap to a truck trailer when the buggy ran under the trailer. The coroner’s office has not yet released a ruling on the reason for the steel-worker’s death. Workers throughout the mill routinely use these golf-cart style buggies, few of which have any protective cab or cage to protect the driver.

Cadena didn’t have to die. “No one has to die trying to make a living,” United Steelworkers Local 1010 President Tom Hargrove told the *Militant*. “It’s all preventable, a fatality is the ultimate failure of the system.”

Cadena was the second member of Local 1010 to die on the job last year. Willie Batteast died in March when he was pinned under a crane at the ArcelorMittal compact strip mill in Riverdale, Illinois.

Batteast’s son Pete spoke at a workers memorial day gathering at the 1010 union hall in April after his father’s death. “When I worked at the plant the training was so watered down it was just ridiculous,” he said, adding that unions are important “not just for pay but for safety. Lives are more important.”

As steel bosses pare back workers and force job combinations, deaths and injuries have increased. Two steelworkers were killed at U.S. Steel Gary Works in 2016 after the company laid off 75 maintenance workers and demoted 230 more onto roving labor gangs, with pay cuts of \$3 to \$9 an hour. Charles Kremke, a 67-year-old electrician, and Jonathan Arizzola, a 30-year-old maintenance worker, were both killed by electrocution.

The USW organized protests, including a march of hundreds from downtown Gary to the mill gate in August 2016.

State safety agencies fined U.S. Steel \$42,000 in the two deaths, cit-

ing “serious” disregard of the workers’ safety.

Arizzola’s wife Whitney told the *Northwest Indiana Times* that her husband, who had worked at the mill four years, told her he was increasingly worried about deteriorating safety conditions there.

“All they care about is making money,” she said. “They keep cutting when they should have a safer environment for the people.”

After the two deaths and the public protests, the company was ordered by an arbitrator to reinstate the 75 laid-off maintenance workers.

Deaths on the job go up for third year in a row

Continued from front page

This is a 7 percent increase from the year before.

The increase reflects the impact of the employers’ relentless efforts to weaken our unions and toss aside safety protections won in struggle as the bosses fight to compete for market share and garner higher profits.

The 2016 Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries report by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, released Dec. 19, records the highest number of fatalities since 2008, when the financial crisis hit. The report is a stark illustration of the price working people pay for not having fighting unions in face of bosses pitting workers against each other, pressing speedup and long workdays, downsizing workforces and cutting corners on safety.

The highest number of fatalities — some 40 percent — involves work in transportation, such as truck and delivery crashes, and train derailments. Second is violence at work, including homicides and suicides, which rose substantially in 2016. Deaths from drug overdoses also increased. Deaths in construction continue to climb. Workers 65 years and over run about three times as high a risk of being killed on the job as those who are 20 years younger.

The employers ongoing anti-union drive means that today only 6.4 percent of workers in the private sector belong to unions. In addition, there are



USW Local 1066/Benard Taylor

Hundreds march in downtown Gary, Indiana, Aug. 26, 2016, in one of several protests organized by United Steelworkers union after two workers were killed at U.S. Steel Gary Works.

some 11 million undocumented immigrants forced into jobs with lower wages and less or no health coverage, benefits and pensions. Bosses exploit their situation, pushing them into ever more dangerous jobs and hazardous working conditions.

Construction has one of the highest fatality rates. Workers lose their lives for lack of the most elementary safety precautions, like guardrails and safety harnesses and nets.

Construction in New York used to be overwhelmingly union labor, but over the last few decades this has changed. Today union construction in New York is down to 30 percent. Of the 16 workers who were killed here in 2015, 14 were nonunion, 14 were Latinos.

The picture for 2016 is similar. In February, 62-year-old Konstantinos Potamouisis fell six stories to his death. He didn’t have a safety harness. In September, Bruno Travalja, 52, fell more than 40 floors. He was wearing a harness but it wasn’t attached to anything. In December, Wilfredo Enriques, 59, and just about to retire, died in a two-story fall from scaffolding. They all worked on nonunion sites, and were three of the more than 20 workers who died working construction in New York in 2016.

Even though the coal bosses have shuttered mines under competition with foreign employers and falling demand, miners’ deaths surged in

the U.S. in 2017. Fifteen coal miners died on the job last year, eight in West Virginia — where the number of union mines has plummeted. In 2016 there were eight U.S. coal mine deaths. West Virginia has seen the most miners’ deaths in six of the last eight years.

Oil and chemical refineries remain some of the most dangerous places for workers, who face suffocating leaks, fires, explosions and falls. And the dangers workers face also threaten those who live in surrounding communities.

More and more oil bosses are seeking to cut costs and push out union workers by calling in contract labor. A 31-year-old woman working on contract construction was killed at ExxonMobil’s Beaumont, Texas, refinery Dec. 1. The company proudly told the press that production wasn’t affected.

Another contract worker was killed when he fell while working on scaffolding at Valero Energy’s Corpus Christi refinery Oct. 4.

Truckers on strike across Russia face gov’t attacks

BY EMMA JOHNSON

Long-haul truckers in Russia conducted their third countrywide work stoppage during the holiday season Dec. 15-25. Since November 2015 they have fought the government over the Platon tax system, a per-ton toll imposed on owners of trucks weighing over 12 tons.

A government media blackout of the truckers’ fight has made news on the strike scarce. But reports from rallies, pickets and trucks camped in parking lots show actions took place across the country.

On Dec. 1 the government declared the Association of Carriers of Russia, the truckers’ union, a “foreign agent,” in an attempt to isolate the drivers and weaken participation in the walkout. On Dec. 11 national union leader Andrey Bazutin was detained and sentenced to 15 days of administrative arrest in another step aimed at undermining the protests.

Other arrests of regional and local union leaders and cop harassment of local actions supporting the truckers show Moscow’s concern about the resilience of the drivers and their refusal to be intimidated.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



January 15, 1993

NORTH BATTLEFORD, Saskatchewan — Some 3,000 farmers braved bitter cold to fill a hockey arena in this rural Canadian city December 17 in a rally to demand government action on the farm income crisis. The action followed on the heels of an outdoor rally of 500 in the neighboring town of Spiritwood a week earlier.

Depressed prices at the farm gate as a result of the international grain wars have combined with crop damage from heavy frost and a wet harvest to tighten the cost-price squeeze on farmers.

Policies by the Tories in Ottawa and the New Democrats in Regina have compounded the crisis.



January 15, 1968

A poll released Jan. 2 showed that the chauvinist, pro-[Vietnam] war, stand by bureaucratic misleaders in the AFL-CIO does not reflect the views of rank-and-file union members.

The poll found that unionists are split in about the same proportion as the rest of the population, with the large minority of 43 percent of the opinion that the whole war was a mistake. A poll among veterans came up with similar results.

The figures demonstrate the widespread opposition to the war among these sectors of the population. The antiwar movement especially should take note of this. It is clear there is already widespread disaffection within the unions.



January 16, 1943

Government officials want to suppress *The Militant* because we print the truth about the role of Big Business in the war; because we criticize the domestic and foreign policies of the administration; because we urge the workers to defend their living standards and democratic rights; because we advocate a Workers and Farmers Government and the socialist program as the only solution to the problems of war, fascism, unemployment and racial discrimination.

This move to ban our paper from the mail comes after ten weeks during which the authorities interfered with the delivery, destroying four issues and holding others up for weeks.

Chinese immigrants are not ‘passive victims of discrimination’

Conference in Nagasaki, Japan, discusses experience of Chinese workers, peasants and merchants who emigrated around the world

BY PATRICK BROWN

NAGASAKI, Japan — The experiences of Chinese workers, peasants and merchants who have emigrated in their millions to Southeast Asia and beyond, becoming part of the class struggle and political lives of working people in many nations, was a focus of the Nov. 18-19 conference here of the International Society for the Study of Chinese Overseas.

ISSCO was launched 25 years ago to redress the near-total neglect of academic studies of Chinese immigrants around the world, co-founder Wang Gungwu, a retired professor at the National University of Singapore, told the conference. Since the society was launched in San Francisco in 1992, it has organized regular conferences in the Asia-Pacific region and the Americas, as well as Africa and Europe.

“I have fought all my life [for] studies of Chinese overseas to begin with the interests and welfare and rights of overseas Chinese in whatever country they happen to be living,” said ISSCO co-founder Ling-Chi Wang, a retired professor of Asian-American Studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

The 200 people who attended the conference at Nagasaki University included sizable numbers from universities in China, Japan, the Philippines and Indonesia. Others came from elsewhere in Asia, as well as North America, Australia and Europe.

Panels of speakers made presentations at 35 different sessions.

A number of panels addressed the impact on Chinese communities overseas of Beijing’s growing economic weight and aggressive competition. As Chinese exports grow, overseas capital investments follow, often accompanied by Chinese workers. Like Chinese immigrants in previous generations, they frequently find themselves scapegoated for the ills inflicted by the propertied rulers on working people in today’s capitalist economic and social crisis.

Charlotte Setijadi of Singapore’s Institute of Southeast Asian Studies spoke about this year’s election for governor of Jakarta, Indonesia’s capital. Islamist groups organized massive mobilizations against the sitting governor, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, or “Ahok,” after cooking

up “evidence” that he had disparaged the Koran. He is Chinese in ancestry and a Christian. The campaign not only helped prevent Ahok’s re-election, but also helped lead to his conviction and jailing under blasphemy charges.

There is a long history of government and rightist scapegoating of Chinese-Indonesians, who make up 2 percent of the 250 million people in that majority-Muslim country.

Chinese wage struggles

Chinese overseas have been anything but passive victims of discrimination, historically and today. Ya-Han Chuang of the University of Strasbourg described strikes against nonpayment of wages organized by Chinese-born women working as manicurists in Parisian salons. The women joined the CGT labor federation and in their second strike last year involved African co-workers in joint action against their employers.

Yafang Shi of Loving Sister Media in Canada reported on the “outcry by the Chinese community and others” in



Photos by the Militant
The International Society for the Study of Chinese Overseas was launched 25 years ago to redress the neglect of academic studies of Chinese immigrants around the world, Wang Gungwu, inset, a co-founder, told society’s conference in Nagasaki, Japan, Nov. 18.

Toronto that put a stop to plans for release there this fall of a computer game entitled “Dirty Chinese Restaurant.” The “racist stereotypes” depicted in the game, said Shi, included “Chinese workers running from immigration officials.”

At another panel, Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press and a leader of the Socialist Workers Party in the U.S., spoke about the important

role played by Chinese-Cuban workers, peasants and youth, in the 1959 revolution that overthrew the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. The workers and farmers government that took power, headed by Fidel Castro, took decisive steps to defeat discrimination against both Afro-Cubans and Chinese (see accompanying article).

In his talk at a panel on the “Chinese



Elie Jousselein
April 20, 2014, hairdressers and manicurists celebrate strike victory in Paris. Chinese-born manicurists joined the CGT labor federation and carried out joint action against bosses with African co-workers.

Heritage,” Ling-Chi Wang took issue with historians’ description of 19th century Chinese immigrants in the United States as “sojourners.” The attitude that these immigrants were “here to make money and then go home” was used to rationalize brutal discrimination against them, he said, including “15 exclusion

laws passed by the U.S. Congress between 1882 and 1943.”

In the closing session Wang Gungwu said that ISSCO continues to draw in new contributors. They are responding to the need to understand changes in the world that impact on Chinese overseas, including the rise of Beijing as a growing power in Asia and the world. He noted that plans are also being discussed for a regional conference next year like the one in Nagasaki and urged participants to attend the group’s next international conference scheduled for Guangzhou on the Chinese mainland in 2019.

‘In Cuba there is no discrimination against Chinese’

BY PATRICK BROWN

NAGASAKI, Japan — The differing class origins and perspectives of the millions of people who made up the Chinese “diaspora” over the last 200 years, and how these differences affected their struggles against discrimination, were discussed and debated at an ISSCO session entitled “Localized Chinese.”

On the panel, Lily Rose Tope, from the University of the Philippines in Manila, spoke about the experiences of Chinese settlers in Malaysia and the Philippines, and Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press and a leader of the Socialist Workers Party, spoke on “Capitalism and Anti-Chinese Racism: Insights from the Divergent Courses of Class Struggle in Cuba and the United States.” Lindsay Herman, a graduate student at the University of Saskatchewan, spoke on how government social services are provided to retired Chinese-Canadians. Li Zong, from the same Canadian university, chaired the panel.

“In Cuba there is no discrimination or prejudice against Chinese,” Waters said. That can’t be said of any other country in the world where large numbers of Chinese have settled. “The most important measure taken against discrimination was the 1959 revolution itself,” she said, quoting Moisés Sio Wong, one of three revolutionary Cuban leaders and generals interviewed in Pathfinder’s *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three*

Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution.

Wong and the two other generals, Armando Choy and Gustavo Chui, fought in the underground struggle and revolutionary war that brought down the Batista dictatorship in 1959. Many thousands of Chinese-Cuban working people and youth joined in the revolutionary movement.

At the same time, Waters said, some capitalist-minded Chinese-Cubans sided with the U.S.-backed dictator. This wealthy layer’s long-time domination of politics in the Chinese-Cuban community was broken by the revolutionary upsurge, and particularly by the Chinese who joined the revolution’s ranks and leadership.

The first Chinese in Cuba

Such class divisions were far less of a factor 100 years earlier among the some 150,000 Chinese who landed in the Spanish colony of Cuba in the mid-19th century. In their great majority, Waters said, they were working people, just like

their contemporaries who arrived in the U.S. on a similar scale.

The social weight of these first Chinese-Cubans was much greater, however. In the U.S., Chinese were frequently isolated in the gold prospecting regions of California or in temporary labor camps as the construction of railroads spread across the West. In Cuba they served as indentured labor on the big sugar plantations, producing the country’s most important export crop.

Fighting with great distinction alongside escaped African slaves in the liberation wars of 1868-78 and 1895-98, these workers played a key part in the Cuban struggle for independence from the Spanish crown. The Chinese in the U.S. were largely isolated from the revolutionary upheaval of the 1861-65 Civil War and the Radical Reconstruction battles that followed, through which the southern slavocracy was defeated and slavery and indentured servitude outlawed. At the same time, Waters emphasized, the Chinese struggle for



Militant
From left, Mary-Alice Waters, Lily Rose Tope and Lindsay Herman during panel at Nagasaki conference.

equal rights got a big boost from these revolutionary advances.

The subsequent bloody reaction that accompanied the defeat of Radical Reconstruction and the imposition of Jim Crow segregation in the South, Waters said, in turn reinforced growing scapegoating and pogroms against Chinese immigrants in the U.S., including the blanket exclusion of Chinese immigrants that lasted from 1882 until the Second World War.

Chinese in Malaya, Philippines

Speaking next, Lily Rose Tope discussed how two novels depicted the lives of settlers from China in 19th century Malaya and 20th century Philippines.

One such account, *A Bit of Earth* by Suchen Christine Lim, shows how Chinese-born workers — the class brothers of the first Chinese in the U.S. and Cuba — pioneered Malaya’s tin mining industry in the 1820s. As British military and economic power forced Malaya into the British Empire in the late 19th century, the miners’ labor became a rich source of profits for British capitalists. By contrast, Chinese settlers in the Philippines tended to be wealthy merchants and traders — a distinction clarified in an exchange among the panelists and members of the audience.

Fearful of revolution by workers and peasants of all nationalities, the British colonial regime in Malaya pursued a cold-blooded policy of divide and rule, segregating the large indigenous Malay population from the Indian and Chinese communities, a policy that has continued to be implemented by post-independence capitalist governments in Malaysia.

Linda Harris contributed to this article.

Auckland art auction extends solidarity to Cuba



AUCKLAND, New Zealand — “Hurricane Irma devastated hundreds of families in Cuba,” Mario Alzugarary, above right, Cuba’s ambassador to New Zealand, told those attending the opening of a three-day art exhibit and auction at the George Fraser Gallery, Dec. 14. It was organized to raise funds for rebuilding in Cuba after the destruction from the huge storm. “The money raised here will rebuild a wall or help a family buy furniture,” Alzugarary said.

He described the preparations made by the Cuban government to mobilize working people to immediately begin rebuilding. “Electricity was restored in two weeks,” Alzugarary said. He contrasted the response of Cuba’s revolutionary leadership to that of the U.S. to the carnage unleashed in its colony of Puerto Rico. “People are still struggling there, and some won’t get electricity until next year,” he said.

“I had a bed made up in my house for anyone who needed it,” Cuban artist Osmeivy Ortega said in a letter sent from Havana, describing how Cuban working people and their revolutionary government made preparations to support everyone caught in the hurricane’s path.

Staff at Otahuhu College in Auckland donated prints given to them by Ortega to the exhibit. The Cuban artist came to the school in August for five weeks, working with students to make a mural for Auckland Airport. Students donated Maori carvings they had created.

Malcolm McAllister, second right, an art teacher at the school and organizer of the fundraiser, told the *New Zealand Herald* they wanted to help Cuba because “there are a number of students that come from the Pacific Islands and they’re not unfamiliar with the damage a hurricane can cause.”

Alongside Ortega’s work were prints by other Cuban artists donated by the Cuban Embassy. There were some 130 pieces contributed by artists in New Zealand, including well-known painters and printmakers Michel Tuffery, John Walsh, Stephen Ellis and Seraphine Pick.

— JANET ROTH

Nagasaki: A fitting setting for meeting on overseas Chinese

With a long history of Chinese settlement and trade, Nagasaki provided a fitting setting for this year’s ISSCO conference.

The port city of Nagasaki was established on the northwest coast of Kyushu Island in 1571 for trade with Portugal and other European powers. Southern Kyushu was close to Japan’s Ryukyu Kingdom, which “from the 7th to the 17th centuries, enjoyed a privileged relationship with China,” said professor Takeshi Hamashita at the conference’s opening session. The

kingdom was forcibly incorporated into Japan in 1609 as the Tokugawa shogunate moved to unify the country, defeating rival feudal lords.

The shogunate also imposed control over Nagasaki and Kyushu, where Catholic missionaries had accompanied European traders and converted masses of impoverished peasants and fishermen. At the high point of its brutal drive against Christianity, the Tokugawa samurai army in 1637 killed 30,000 mostly Christian peasants. The peasants had risen

up against the burden of taxation and taken up arms at Shimabara.

At the same time, the shogunate moved to shut down foreign trade and travel abroad. Traders from China and Holland continued to operate in Nagasaki, but only under strict controls.

“A huge number of Chinese merchants, Buddhist monks, artisans and literati gradually congregated in this port city,” conference organizer Wang Wei wrote in the conference booklet. As a result, it became the origin of the overseas Chinese community in Japan.

Following the appearance of U.S. warships in Tokyo’s harbor in 1853, Japan’s rulers were compelled to open up the country to foreign trade and investment. They began a forced march toward capitalist modernization. This was expanded after the fall of the shogunate and the rise of Japan’s industrial revolution in the Meiji Restoration Period (1868-1912). Nagasaki became a key mining and industrial center.

During the second imperialist world war, Nagasaki’s shipbuilding industry made the city a target for U.S. bombers. On Aug. 9, 1945, three days after Washington bombed Hiroshima, the Fat Man plutonium bomb exploded over Nagasaki, instantly killing some 75,000 people. This slaughter is memorialized in the city’s Atomic Bomb Museum.

— PATRICK BROWN

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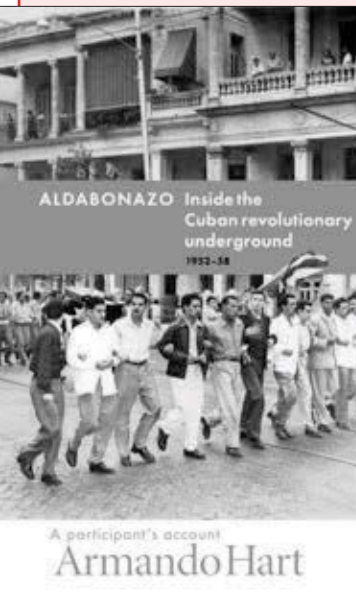
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To rule, the working class must master all past culture

Below is an excerpt from "Culture and Socialism," an essay in *Art and Revolution* by Leon Trotsky, one of *Pathfinder's Books of the Month* for January. Trotsky was one of the central leaders of the 1917 Russian Revolution. The essay is based on lectures given by Trotsky in 1926 that were originally published in *Krasnaya Nov*, number 6. Copyright © 1970 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY LEON TROTSKY

Let us recall first of all that culture meant originally a plowed, cultivated field, as distinct from virgin forest and virgin soil. Culture was contrasted with nature, that is, what was acquired by man's efforts was contrasted with what was given by nature. This antithesis fundamentally retains its value today. ...

When we speak of the culture accumulated by past generations we think first and foremost of its material achievements in the form of tools, machinery, buildings, monuments, and so on. Is this culture? Undoubtedly it is culture; the material forms in which culture is deposited — material culture. It creates, on the basis provided by nature, the fundamental setting of our lives, our everyday way of living, our creative work. But the most precious part of culture is its deposit in the consciousness of man himself — those methods, habits, skills,



"The culture of language itself is the most important condition for the growth of all branches of culture," writes Leon Trotsky. The foundation for this work is "the fight against illiteracy, semiliteracy and near-illiteracy." Above, women at literacy class in Soviet Union in early 1920s.

acquired abilities of ours which have developed out of the whole of preexisting material culture and which, while drawing on this preexisting material culture, also improve upon it. We will, then, consider it as firmly established that culture has grown out of man's struggle with nature for existence, for the improvement of his conditions of life, for the enlargement of his power. But out of this same basis classes also have grown. In the process of adapting itself to nature, in conflict with the hostile forces of nature, human society has taken shape as a complex organization of classes. The class structure of society has determined to a decisive degree the content and form of human history, that is, its material relations and their ideological reflections. This means that historical culture has possessed a class character.

Slave-owning society, feudal serf-owning society, bourgeois society, each engendered a corresponding culture, different at different stages and with a multitude of transitional forms. Historical society has been an organization for the exploitation of man by man. Culture has served the class organization of society. Exploiters' society has given rise to an exploiters' culture. But does this mean that we are against all the culture of the past?

There exists, in fact, a profound contradiction here. Everything that has been conquered, created, built by man's efforts and which serves to enhance man's power is culture. But since it is not

a matter of individual man but of social man, since culture is a social-historical phenomenon in its very essence, and since historical society has been and continues to be class society, culture is found to be the basic instrument of class oppression. Marx said: "The ruling ideas of an epoch are essentially the ideas of the ruling class of that epoch." This also applies to culture as a whole. And yet we say to the working class: master all the culture of the past, otherwise you will not build socialism. How is this to be understood?

Over this contradiction many people have stumbled, and they stumble so frequently because they approach the understanding of class society superficially, semi-idealistically, forgetting that fundamentally this is the organization of production. Every class society has been formed on the basis of definite modes of struggle with nature, and these modes have changed in accordance with the development of technique. What is the basis of bases — the class organization of society or its productive forces? Without doubt the productive forces. It is precisely upon them, at a certain level of their development, that classes are formed and re-formed. In the productive forces is expressed the materialized economic skill of mankind, his historical ability to ensure his existence. On this dynamic foundation there arise classes, which by their interrelations determine the character of culture.

And here, first and foremost, we

have to ask ourselves regarding technique: is it *only* an instrument of class oppression? It is enough to put such a question for it to be answered at once: no, technique is the fundamental conquest of mankind; although it has also served, up to the present, as an instrument of exploitation, yet it is at the same time the fundamental condition for the emancipation of the exploited. The machine strangles the wage slave in its grip. But he can free himself only through the machine. Therein is the root of the entire question. ...

Art is one of the ways in which man finds his bearings in the world; in this sense the heritage of art is not distinguished from the heritage of science and technique — and it is no less contradictory than they. Unlike science, however, art is a form of cognition of the world not as a system of laws but as a group of images, and at the same time it is a way of inspiring certain feelings and moods. The art of past centuries has made man more complex and flexible, has raised his mentality to a higher level, has enriched him in an all-round way. This enrichment is a precious achievement of culture. Mastery of the art of the past is, therefore, a necessary precondition not only for the creation of new art but also for the building of the new society, for communism needs people with highly developed minds. ...

Culture is a social phenomenon. Just because of this, language, as the organ of intercourse between men, is its most important instrument. The culture of language itself is the most important condition for the growth of all branches of culture, especially science and art. Just as technique is not satisfied with the old measuring apparatus but is creating new ones, micrometers, voltameters, and so on, striving for and attaining ever greater accuracy, so in the matter of language, of skill in choosing the appropriate words and combining them in the appropriate ways, constant, systematic, painstaking work is necessary in order to achieve the highest degree of accuracy, clarity and vividness. The foundation for this work must be the fight against illiteracy, semiliteracy and near-illiteracy. The next stage of this work is the mastering of Russian classical literature.

Yes, culture was the main instrument of class oppression. But it also, and only it, can become the instrument of socialist emancipation.β

January

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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The Militant January 15, 2018

No worker has to die on the job!

Continued from front page

control over production and job conditions. Above all this means using the collective power of the union ranks to enforce safe conditions.

In the late 1960s and 1970s coal miners organized to carry through a revolution in their union and to force the coal bosses to accept safety committees in the mines with the power to shut down production over unsafe conditions, including coal dust. Black lung declined more than 90 percent from the 1970s to the mid-1990s.

The bosses never accepted this incursion on their power to put productivity and profit before all else, and succeeded in pushing the union back. By 2015 only 21 percent of miners worked in union mines. Without union protection, black lung returned with a vengeance — the rate among miners with 25 years on the job today is double what it was in 1999.

The stronger and more militant the unions are, the safer conditions will be, not just for the workers on the job, but for society as a whole.

The bosses try to divide working people — employed against unemployed, Black against Caucasian, immigrant against native born, old against young,

women against men. The unions need to be at the forefront of fights to unify the working class and win allies among farmers, ranchers and all who face the wrath of the propertied rulers. Champion the fight for amnesty for immigrant workers, against police brutality, for women’s right to choose abortion, for a government-funded public works program to put millions to work at union wages.

Workers are willing to fight, but all too often union officials divert our struggles into support for one or the other of the capitalist rulers’ parties — the Democrats and Republicans.

Workers need our own independent working-class political party and course of action to fight the rulers’ assaults.

Through struggle, we can transform ourselves — as workers and farmers did in Cuba when they overthrew the Fulgencio Batista dictatorship in 1959 and took control of their own destiny. We can take political power and reorganize production to satisfy human needs, not capitalist profits. This is the road to a society based on human solidarity where no worker has to die on the job. This is the road of the Socialist Workers Party. Join us in this struggle!

Economic crisis behind protests in Iran

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crisis, exacerbated by years of sanctions imposed by Washington and its allies, has hit workers and farmers hard. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani negotiated a deal with Washington to slow down the development of Tehran’s nuclear program in exchange for lifting some sanctions. This raised hopes among working people of an easing of the economic crunch.

Rouhani was re-elected president last May on these hopes, on a pledge to expand Tehran’s economy and promises there would be no return to rampant inflation. In spite of some new trade — including with Boeing and Airbus — workers’ living standards have continued to decline.

These conditions have fueled discontent with both wings of the country’s ruling clerics, those led by Ayatollah Khamenei and by Rouhani. The clerics consolidated capitalist rule in a counterrevolution following the 1979 uprising by working people that overthrew the shah, a close ally of Washington.

Protests spread Dec. 29 to Kermanshah, a largely Kurdish city in western Iran. In November demonstrations there were organized to oppose the government’s paltry assistance to the victims of an earthquake that killed 436 people and destroyed 12,000 houses.

Rouhani said Dec. 31 that Iranians were “completely free” to protest. Protesters still faced cops’ tear gas, water cannons and arrests.

In Tehran and other cities, some demonstrators have reportedly raised demands for the removal of Supreme Leader Khamenei.

Tehran’s wars deepen economic crisis

In the course of wars in Syria and Iraq, Revolutionary Guard forces and Tehran-backed militias played a key role in pushing back the Syrian people’s attempts to overturn the Bashar al-Assad dictatorship, a Tehran ally, and helped expand Tehran’s sway across the region.

But Tehran’s rising regional clout — aimed at advancing the interests of the country’s counterrevolutionary leaders and its capitalist class — comes as conditions for millions of working people at home have deteriorated. Denunciation of the Iranian rulers’ foreign interventions marked a number of the protests.

‘Militant’ Prisoners’ Fund

The Prisoners’ Fund makes it possible to send prisoners reduced rate subscriptions. To donate, send a check or money order payable to the Militant and earmarked “Prisoners’ Fund” to 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

Some demonstrators chanted, “Forget about Syria, think about us” and “Forget Palestine.”

Tehran falsely claims it backs Palestinian national rights and attempts to blame all ills in Iran on conspiracies from the government in Israel. In fact, Tehran helps fund Hamas, the anti-working-class Islamist group that rules the Gaza Strip.

Tehran also extended \$4.6 billion in credit to the Assad regime between 2013 and 2015. The death toll among Iranian-backed forces operating in Syria and Iraq rose sharply after 2015 and includes at least 500 Iranians.

On Jan. 2 Khamenei accused Washington, Tel Aviv and their allies of fomenting the protests. The next day pro-Khamenei marches took place in Tehran and some other cities with participants chanting, “We will not leave our leader alone,” Reuters reported.

Major Gen. Mohammad Ali Jafari, commander of the Revolutionary Guards, announced he was deploying the force into Isfahan, Lorestan and Hamadan provinces — where some of the largest protests have occurred — to confront “the new sedition.”

At the same time, Rouhani’s government took steps to try and defuse protesters’ demands for economic concessions by backing down on moves to raise fuel prices.

US gov’t misconduct brings Bundy mistrial

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jail, refusing to sign on to any conditions in order to get out. He has been imprisoned since February 2016 because prosecutors claimed he was a “flight risk.”

The frame-up charges stem from an April 2014 protest by hundreds of Bundy supporters, including some militia members, against the Bureau of Land Management seizure of Cliven Bundy’s cattle outside his ranch in Bunkerville, Clark County, Nevada. Because of the protests, federal authorities agreed to withdraw and allow release of the cattle.

Two years later under the Barack Obama administration, the government charged and arrested 19 protesters. Twice last year Las Vegas juries acquitted or deadlocked on multiple felony charges against some of the participants. Two of the protesters, Greg Burleson and Todd Engel, were convicted in April on weapons and “obstruction” charges. When Ryan Bundy asked if Burleson and Engel’s convictions would now be overturned because of the government’s conduct, Navarro said that would be dealt with separately.

When the trial opened in mid-November, U.S. prosecutor Steven Myhre, described the Bunkerville protests as a terrifying mobilization that threatened federal employees and contractors who took Bundy’s cattle.

The Bundys and other defendants explained that

Korea gov’ts plan talks

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path leading to denuclearization.”

North Korea “now wants to talk to South Korea for the first time,” President Donald Trump tweeted Jan. 2. “Perhaps this is good news, perhaps not — we will see!”

These developments occur as Washington through the U.N. Security Council has been ramping up sanctions against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, aimed at forcing Pyongyang to the bargaining table to discuss its nuclear weapons and intercontinental missile program.

The Security Council has passed a series of measures banning the DPRK’s exports of coal, iron ore and sea products and curtailing the employment of North Korean workers in other countries. The harshest of these resolutions, adopted by unanimous vote at the end of December, also aimed at reducing exports of oil to North Korea.

Seoul recently seized two oil tankers on suspicions they were used to smuggle petroleum products to North Korea through ship-to-ship transfers in international waters. The U.S. rulers have also had some success in getting Beijing to cut back its trade with Pyongyang. These economic attacks hit working people the hardest.

In November, South Korean President Moon Jae-in proposed the postponement of joint military maneuvers with Washington until after the Olympics. These “war games” involve tens of thousands of U.S. and South Korean troops in practice assaults on the North.

“South Korea has proposed that the North Korean athletes travel through the 2.5-mile-wide Demilitarized Zone,” reported the Jan. 2 *New York Times*. “It also wants to discuss the possibility of two Korean delegations marching together in the Games’ opening ceremony” and “whether the North plans to send a cheering squad.”

Washington’s Korean War never ended

With the agreement of Moscow, Washington seized southern Korea after the second imperialist world war, aiming to take control over all of Korea, while workers and farmers in the north won independence through revolutionary mobilizations. Washington and the puppet regime of Syngman Rhee it imposed on the south crushed revolutionary struggles there. U.S. troops invaded the north in 1950, but the Korean people, backed by troops from China, fought Washington to a draw. A cease-fire was signed in 1953, but the U.S. rulers to this day refuse to sign a peace treaty with the DPRK.

Since the 1940s, the Socialist Workers Party has championed the fight of Korean workers and farmers for one, united Korea, and has demanded the withdrawal of the more than 28,000 U.S. troops stationed in South Korea. The SWP also backs the demand for a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula and Pacific and for unilateral nuclear disarmament by Washington.

their protest was part of a 20-year fight against “federal overreach” that drove dozens of Clark County ranchers out of business.

The prosecution failed to turn over six major pieces of evidence before the trial began, leading Judge Navarro to declare a mistrial. Among key evidence the prosecution withheld was proof that government agents had placed a camera to spy on the Bundy ranch and had deployed snipers there — facts the prosecution repeatedly denied.

“Failure to turn over such evidence violates due process,” Navarro stated. “A fair trial at this point is impossible.”

In 2014 hundreds of federal agents — many of them armed with long guns with telescopic sites — had confronted the pro-Bundy protesters. In his opening statement, federal prosecutor Myhre claimed the cops “were outnumbered. We were outgunned.”

The opposite was the case, Ryan Bundy, acting as his own lawyer, said in his opening statement. “You should have seen all the guns pointed at us,” he said. “Surveillance cameras on one hill. Snipers aiming at the house.”

“I do not believe there is a jury in this country that will convict us,” Ammon Bundy told the press after Navarro’s ruling.