

THE MILITANT

INSIDE
Wisconsin dairy farmers discuss ongoing crisis they face
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE VOL. 83/NO. 11 MARCH 18, 2019

‘Prisons exist in this country to take away our humanity’

BY ROY LANDERSEN

When Dennis Richter, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Los Angeles City Council, knocked on the door of Lenin Mendoza Feb. 24, and explained some of the politics and perspectives his campaign is raising, Mendoza, a hospital worker, invited Richter to join him and his two friends, a machine operator and a car salesman, in his garage. Richter and SWP campaign supporters were raising the SWP program with workers door to door in Reseda in the San Fernando Valley.

“We’ve just now been talking about this — how hard it’s getting for people to pay for basic necessities,” Mendoza said. “Sometimes I think prisoners are better off. At least they’ve got somewhere to sleep, three meals a day and medical care.”

“Under capitalism a lot more is taken from workers in prison than given. Prisons are set up to take away workers’ humanity — to brutalize and

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Celebrate US rulers’ decision to end Korea war exercises

BY TERRY EVANS

Washington announced March 1 the Pentagon is ending permanently the large-scale annual war “games” involving tens of thousands of troops it has organized in Korea for decades.

“The decision to permanently halt the Key Resolve and Foal Eagle war exercises should be celebrated by working people everywhere,” said Seth Galinsky, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New York City Public Advocate, March 6. “They carried the constant threat of war on the Korean Peninsula and were a barrier to denuclearization.”

“The SWP has campaigned for a halt to these military provocations from their start. The move to end them creates better conditions for workers and farmers in Korea, Asia and around the world to advance their interests,” Galinsky added. “Now is the time to redouble our efforts to end the punishing U.S. economic sanctions on North Korea.”

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Solidarity with workers on strike against Wabtec!

United Electrical workers fight against cuts



Militant/Chris Hoepfner

Rally at Wabtec offices in Wilmerding, Pennsylvania, March 6 in solidarity with United Electrical Workers union members on strike in Erie. Bosses imposed deep two-tier wage system.

BY MALCOLM JARRETT AND CHRIS HOEPFNER

ERIE, Pa. — “We are fighting for the next generation,” Sam Hill, a striking United Electrical Workers member who’s worked at GE Transportation here for 14 years

from layoff would take a 50 to 25 percent pay cut, many could only be hired as temps, and they’re imposing mandatory overtime. We have 500 people still laid off! No!!”

The strike came abruptly the day

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Winning access to books in NYC jails part of fight for prisoner rights



New York Public Library

Book cart at Rikers Island prison. At best, prisoners in New York City jails are only allowed access to books twice a month and can only borrow two at a time — if they’re allowed any at all.

BY SETH GALINSKY

NEW YORK — The nearly 9,000 working people imprisoned in New York City jails have little or no access to books or periodicals.

The fight to change this is part of a broader fight nationally for workers behind bars to be able to get books and periodicals of their choosing, to have access to culture and political literature.

A Feb. 26 City Council hearing brought to light some of the facts

during a debate on a bill by Councilman Daniel Dromm that would allow greater jail library services. But not one newspaper, radio or television station bothered to report on it, except for the internet-based Gothamist.

Only two of the city’s 16 jails and jail hospital wards have a permanent library — the first one opened only in 2016. They are open just one day a week and prisoners are only allowed

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Join the picket lines!
 —SWP statement p.11—

as a forklift operator, told the *Militant* March 1. “We don’t want to be known as the generation that sold the younger ones out. Under this contract new hires and our members called back

Ongoing disaster for workers from Paradise wildfire is result of capitalism

BY JEFF POWERS

CHICO, Calif. — “I went back to Paradise a month ago. I had been living in a trailer park. My home was completely destroyed,” Julie Whited said when a team of Socialist Workers Party campaigners knocked on her door here Feb. 20. “There is nothing left. I knew that before I got there but it was traumatic when I saw it.”

“You were here before and we talked,” she said. “I bought a subscription to your paper. It is a good read.”

The disastrous Camp Fire last November she was describing killed at least 86 people and destroyed some 14,000 homes in Paradise and surrounding towns. It’s become crystal clear since that Pacific Gas and Elec-

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Mexican workers get boost in fight for wage raise by strike victories

BY SETH GALINSKY

After 35,000 workers at 45 mostly foreign-owned parts factories in Matamoros, Mexico, went on strike and won a 20 percent wage increase and a \$1,700 bonus Feb. 11, new strikes have erupted pressing bosses for raises and better conditions.

Workers at three steel fabrication

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Ukraine rail workers fight dangerous work conditions

Walmart’s plan to eliminate greeters provokes outcry

Women’s right to an abortion faces gov’t attack in Missouri

BY JANET POST

After years of bitter fighting in Missouri courts over the right of Planned Parenthood clinics there to provide abortions, a Feb. 22 federal district court upheld a state law making it illegal for doctors to perform abortions unless they have admitting privileges at a hospital nearby. This decision flies in the face of a 2016 Supreme Court ruling that overturned similar restrictions in Texas.

The Planned Parenthood clinic in Columbia, Missouri, had filed a motion in December asking for an exemption from the law. This was overturned by the federal court. District Judge Brian Wimes wrote that admitting privileges do not affect enough women to constitute a “substantial obstacle,” reported the *Columbia Daily Tribune*.

In the 2016 Supreme Court ruling Justice Stephen Breyer wrote that admitting privileges provide “few, if any, health benefits for women” while posing “a substantial obstacle to women seeking abortions, and constitutes an ‘undue burden’ on their constitutional right to do so.”

In a news release, Mary Kogut, president of Reproductive Health Services of Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis region, said, “We will continue our fight to expand access to care for anyone who needs it.”

With this decision, only one clinic in Missouri meets the requirements to provide abortions — the Planned Parenthood clinic in St. Louis. Planned Parenthood Great Plains is appealing the ruling, Kate Maxcy, from the organization’s department of communica-

tions, told the *Militant*.

The ruling means a woman seeking to exercise her right to choose to have an abortion who lives in Springfield or other parts of the state face up to a 400-mile round trip to the clinic in St. Louis. Due to the 72-hour mandatory waiting period required by the state between her first appointment and the medical procedure, she either has to bear the extra expense of housing or make the trip twice. Wimes ruled that “requiring women to drive farther to obtain an abortion was not enough of a burden to rule in Planned Parenthood’s favor.”

Two other Planned Parenthood clinics had been providing abortions in Missouri until recently, in Columbia and Kansas City. The Kansas City clinic stopped performing abortions in 2018 when its license expired. In 2015, the University of Missouri Health Care hospital, facing political pressure, denied admitting privileges for doctors from the clinic in Columbia, and it had to stop providing the procedure.

Maxcy told the *Militant* the Columbia clinic was damaged on Feb. 10 by arson. Authorities said that a “Molotov cocktail-type device” was thrown through the clinic’s glass door. The clinic reopened Feb. 19.

Legislators push new restrictions

The Missouri state House of Representatives passed a new bill Feb. 27 “that would be the most restrictive abortion law in the country,” the *Washington Times* said.

The bill includes a provision barring abortions if a “fetal heartbeat” can be



Don Shrubshell/The Columbia Daily Tribune via AP

Protesters at University of Missouri demonstrate in 2015 in support of women’s right to abortion, demanding university hospital executives reverse decision to cut off admitting privileges for doctors who perform abortions at Planned Parenthood clinic in Columbia, Missouri.

detected — making most abortions illegal six weeks into a woman’s pregnancy. It also bans abortion if fetal brainwaves are detected — which is usually possible around eight weeks.

There is also a “trigger clause” in the bill that would automatically ban abortions except in medical emergencies if the Supreme Court should overturn its 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling.

A May 2018 Gallup poll showed the majority of women and of working people in general support women’s right to choose to have an abortion, a right decisive to women’s ability to make their own reproductive decisions.

Legislative-imposed restrictions, and the court battles they produce, are all tied to the argumentation the justices chose to use in Roe v. Wade.

“Roe v. Wade was based not on a woman’s right ‘to equal protection of the laws’ guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, but on medical criteria instead,” Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, wrote in *The Clintons’ Anti-Working-Class Record: Why Washington Fears Working People*. “During the first three months (‘trimester’), the court ruled, the decision to terminate a pregnancy ‘must be left to the medical judgment of a pregnant woman’s attending physician (not to the woman herself, but to a doctor!).”

“At the same time, the court allowed state governments to ban most abortions after ‘viability,’” Barnes said, “something that medical advances inevitably make earlier and earlier in pregnancy.”

Join the May Day International Volunteer Work Brigade to Cuba April 21 - May 5

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Applications due by March 15



Yellow vests find ‘fraternity’ in protests

Thousands of workers, farmers and small business people throughout France are standing up to attacks by the government. The *‘Militant’* has supported the yellow vest protesters during the 16 weeks they have taken to the streets, helping give voice to their fight.



Serge D'Ignazio
Yellow vest protesters Feb. 23 march against French government, economic crisis.

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'Prisons are set up to take away workers' humanity'

Continued from front page

intimidate you and break down all vestiges of solidarity," Richter said. "In California the state prison bosses are notorious for their use of solitary confinement. At the Terminal Island federal prison in San Pedro, over 200 prisoners were held for weeks in unheated quarters as temperatures plunged into the 40s.

"The mistreatment continues after you get out of prison. It's harder to get a job and your right to vote is often taken away. You shouldn't have to give up your right to vote if you've been sent to prison," Richter said. He pointed to the recent victory in Florida where voters overwhelmingly approved a constitutional amendment that restored the right to vote to 1.4 million former prisoners with a felony conviction.

'Education' under capitalism

Mendoza bought a copy of *In Defense of the US Working Class* by SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters, as well as an introductory subscription to the *Militant*. He gave the SWP campaigners bottles of water and a promise to get together again soon to continue the discussion.

Richter's running mate, Laura Garza, SWP candidate for Los Angeles School Board District 5, spoke out at a candidates' forum Feb. 27. It was attended by over 200 students, parents and teachers at the Alliance Margaret M. Bloomfield High School. This is a charter school in Huntington Park southeast of Los Angeles. The election is in May.

"I'm running to talk about the reality of the system we live in today, the capitalist system — with the rich at the top and working people at the bottom," said Garza. "I walked the picket lines with the teachers during their strike in L.A. The rulers of this country, whether governed by a Republican or Democratic administration, don't care whether we get an education. They only want to teach working people to be obedient. The only way this will change is when working people organize independently and take action to overthrow capitalist rule.

"My party, the Socialist Workers Party, explains that you can't pretend to reform education under this system," Garza said. "I'm for a fight to raise conditions for the whole working class. I will join those who are standing up and fighting today. We need to fight for the rights of immigrants, for amnesty for all those in the U.S. without papers, and to join in battles for unionization and for a substantial raise for workers."

"The only way working people can really learn something today is by becoming part of working-class struggles. Malcolm X never graduated from high school," she said. "He learned to read in prison as he was preparing himself to fight for Black rights when he got out. He explained you need to learn to read, to think for yourself to fight against capitalist rule. He said the key thing wasn't to learn you were oppressed, but to learn your own self-worth."

The various candidates and their supporters had literature on a table at the back of the room, where Garza and her campaign supporters had lively discussions with people both before and after the forum. They sold five books, including three copies of *Are They Rich Because They're Smart? Class, Privilege, and Learning Under Capitalism*, by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes.

Join SWP campaigning door to door

Andrea Morell and Carole Lesnick met Maria Aguilar, a supermarket worker, when they campaigned door to door in Gilroy, California, some 70 miles from Oakland. Morell explained the need for organizing solidarity with the Oakland teachers, who were on strike, and the importance of workers advancing the demand for amnesty for undocumented workers. This will strengthen the labor movement, she said.

Aguilar said she agreed all workers need a union to protect themselves in the workplace. "I'd like to get together again and discuss these ideas more," she said, taking out a six-month sub-



Militant/Bill Arth

Dennis Richter, center, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Los Angeles City Council, and campaign supporter, Barbara Bowman, speak to Lenin Mendoza in Reseda, San Fernando Valley Feb. 24. Mendoza said, "It's hard for people to pay for basic necessities now," as he bought subscription to the *Militant* and *In Defense of the US Working Class*.

scription to the *Militant*.

Socialist Workers Party branches around the country, and sister Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the U.K., take their election campaigns to workers on their doorsteps in cities large and small, and rural areas, as the heart of their political activity. Because of the ongoing capitalist economic, political and moral crisis, they find great interest in what road forward for the working class and the proposals of the SWP. They expand the reach of the party and

its publications and meet workers who want to join in their activities.

The SWP is running a national slate of candidates in 12 cities across the country and campaigning for them everywhere. They speak in the interests of all those exploited and oppressed by capitalist rule.

To join with the SWP in campaigning on doorsteps, and at union pickets and social protests, or to find out more, contact the SWP or Communist League branch nearest you. See directory on page 10.

Campaign with the Socialist Workers Party candidates!

California

Dennis Richter, Los Angeles City Council
Laura Garza, Los Angeles School Board

Florida

Anthony Dutrow, Miami City Commission

Illinois

Dan Fein, Chicago Mayor

Kentucky

Amy Husk, Governor

Minnesota

David Rosenfeld, St. Paul City Council

Nebraska

Joe Swanson, Lincoln Mayor

New Jersey

Lea Sherman, State Assembly
Candace Wagner, State Assembly

New York

Seth Galinsky, New York City Public Advocate
Samantha Hamlin, Mayor of Troy
Lawrence Quinn, Troy City Council

Pennsylvania

Osborne Hart, Philadelphia Mayor
John Staggs, Philadelphia City Council
Malcolm Jarrett, Pittsburgh City Council

Texas

Alyson Kennedy, Dallas Mayor

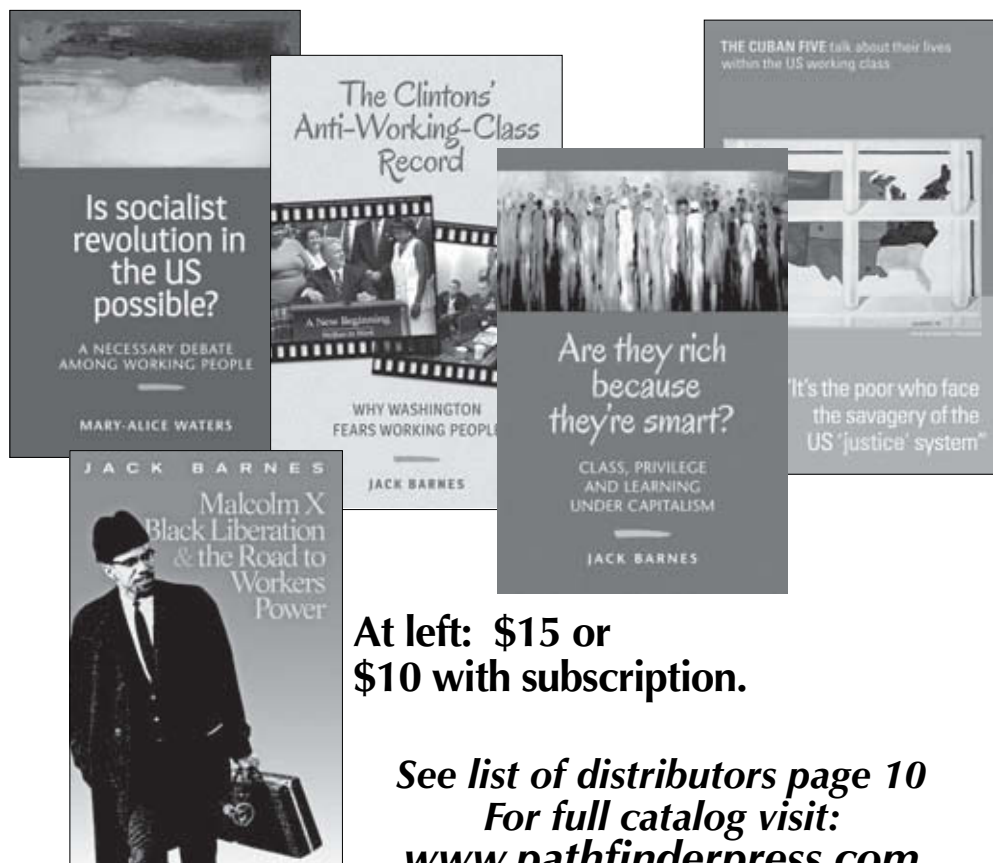
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Henry Clay Dennison, Seattle City Council

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In Defense of the US Working Class by Mary-Alice Waters

A GIANT HAS BEGUN TO STIR. Hillary Clinton calls them "deplorables" who inhabit "backward" regions. But tens of thousands of teachers and school employees from West Virginia, Oklahoma, and beyond set an example in 2018 with their victorious strikes. Working people across Florida mobilized and won restoration of voting rights to more than 1 million former prisoners.

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New tensions erupt between rulers in India and Pakistan

BY ROY LANDERSEN

A potentially serious military clash between the rival nuclear-armed capitalist governments in India and Pakistan was defused after a captured Indian pilot was returned by Islamabad March 1. His jet had been downed on Pakistani territory during retaliatory cross-border air raids Feb. 27. In seven decades, there have been four wars between the rulers in India and Pakistan, chiefly over the disputed Kashmir province. These ongoing conflicts are all directly attributable to the way the defeated British colonial rulers engineered a bloody partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947.

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan said the pilot's release was a "peace gesture," intended to "open negotiations" with his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi to reduce tensions. While no talks have been set, tensions have tempered.

This was the first aerial clash between the rival South Asian powers since 1971. Washington and Beijing, London and Moscow all applied pressure on both sides to de-escalate the conflict. The various rival capitalist rulers were all alarmed at how steps towards all-out war in South Asia would deepen the fragmentation of the imperialist world order and destabilize their place in it.

For a century prior to independence from Britain, united national struggles by workers and peasants for Indian independence had gained strength. They grew in the face of severe British repression and irrespective of different nationalities and religions. These culminated in a powerful, united anti-colonial upsurge after the second world imperialist slaughter had gravely weakened the British Empire.

British rulers divide South Asia

London's partition of the subcontinent was aimed at fanning divisions between Hindu and Muslim peoples, hoping it would lead to two hostile states in India and Pakistan and make it easier for the British rulers to continue exploiting the region. The partition led to conflict and a wave of mass emigration and religious riots as Muslims and Hindus fled across borders arbitrarily drawn by the colonial officialdom. Hundreds of thousands were killed and many millions displaced. Working people, saddled with divisions long fermented under British tutelage, were made more vulnerable to demagogic incitements by the newly created rival governments.

Pakistan was a "Muslim state" of two territories separated by 1,000 miles and different languages and cultures

— Pakistan proper and East Pakistan, which would later gain independence as Bangladesh.

The first India-Pakistan war erupted after independence in 1947 over rival claims to Kashmir. Pakistan ended up occupying one-third and India the major portion. A further war was fought over the region in 1965. In 1999, the two governments waged another short border conflict.

The other major war between Islamabad and New Delhi was in 1971. The Pakistani military dictatorship had launched a bloody attempt to suppress an upsurge of the Bangladeshi independence struggle. After nine months of carnage, the Indian rulers launched a brief war to defeat the Pakistani forces. The Indian rulers acted to ensure the creation of the new country while cutting short popular mobilizations in Bangladesh that could have developed into a social revolution.

The current confrontation over



Reuters/Danish Ismail

Indian soldiers survey wreckage of air force helicopter in Budgam, Kashmir, Feb. 27, during renewed military friction between rulers of India, Pakistan. Six airmen died in the crash.

Kashmir began after a suicide bombing by a Muslim Kashmiri rebel in the area controlled by New Delhi killed 40 Indian paramilitary personnel Feb. 14. The Indian government blamed Pakistani-backed terrorists and launched retaliatory raids.

The fact is the Indian army has car-

ried out widespread abuses against the local population in Kashmir, fueling popular opposition to New Delhi's rule there.

At different times recently, the capitalist rulers in both Islamabad and New Delhi have sought talks to ease tensions. But so far they've gone nowhere.

Solidarity with workers on strike against Wabtec!

Continued from front page

after Wabtec — Westinghouse Air Brake Technologies Corp. — took over the plant here, and the rest of General Electric's locomotive holdings Feb. 25. The company imposed deep concession cuts on the 1,700 workers at the Erie plant, including a two-tier wage scale that slashes the \$35 an hour starting wage for new hires by 38 percent. It also allows the bosses to hire temporary workers to fill 20 percent of the jobs.

While the Wabtec bosses have gone after the workers, the company rewarded CEO Raymond Betler and 19 other executives with bonuses for taking over GE Transportation. Betler gets \$16 million.

The two union locals at the plant — UE 506 and UE 618 — walked out and have been picketing 24 hours a day since.

This means that Erie has become a focal point in the defense of the U.S. working class.

Strike wins broad support

The union's fight has drawn broad support from workers in the area. While these worker-correspondents were on the line, members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Erie Education Association, Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties and others joined in the picketing.

The UE called for a solidarity rally March 6 outside Wabtec's national headquarters in Wilmerding, near Pittsburgh.

Andy Pushchak, a professor at Edinboro University, walked the line March 1, saying he was there to offer his support. He also said he'd come for a second reason, to honor the memory of his late grandfather, who walked the same picket line the last time UE went on strike in 1969.

The plant has been a mainstay of the labor movement here for decades. It was opened by GE in 1911, had its first strike in 1918, and after a series of battles was unionized in 1937 by UE.

This plant used to employ thousands more workers, but GE bosses, facing challenges in its manufacturing empire

and the strength of the union, built a new, nonunion locomotive plant in Fort Worth, Texas, and began shifting work there in 2013, laying off workers in Erie. Like the rest of GE's Transportation works, that plant is now owned by Wabtec. GE Transportation has been the largest producer of diesel-electric locomotives for freight applications in North America, as well as other parts of the world.

"This fight was imposed on us," said Radu Bogdan, an assembler at GE for 12 years. "We don't want their two-tier system and 20 percent of the workers being temporary. It's wrong." A popular sign in the union hall says, "One union, one tier."

The workers on the picket line are getting donations of food, water and other supplies. Pickup truck after pickup truck kept coming by bringing wooden pallets for the burn barrels on the line.

When asked if they would need the huge mound of wood pallets there, he said, "You kidding? We're here 24 hours, all through the night and we're not going anywhere soon. It's cold, but we plan to stay warm."

Socialist Workers Party member Malcolm Jarrett, the party's candidate for Pittsburgh City Council, came with a caravan of high school and middle school students to show solidarity from Pittsburgh, some two hours away. The students took a day off of their weekend to get a real education at the picket lines. We brought a carload of water, sodas and pizzas, middle schooler Che Castro told the picketers. "This is the kind of support everybody fighting needs."

Rob Hodgson jumped out of his station wagon with a bunch of food for the strikers' commissary tent. "My wife and I cooked some up," he said. Hodgson is a chemistry teacher

and member of the Erie Education Association.

The association organized a rally on the line March 2, where dozens of members and their families joined the picket. Groups of workers from the Machinists union, Erie Crawford Central Labor Council, electricians and others came by and joined.

You can get a sense of the widespread support for the workers here, as honking horns and waves from those driving by were constant. And people from local businesses kept coming by with contributions of pizza, donuts, sandwiches, food and coffee, in addition to plenty more pallets.

The union members have organized mass picketing outside the plant. The company sought an injunction, claiming strikers have been intimidating those trying to go in. The union denies this, but agreed to restrict the number of picketers at the gates.

"What's going on in this fight is not just here. It's the whole country, the world, things are bad," Greg August told us on the picket line. "A workers' rebellion is going to have to happen. Look at the number of shutdown plants all over Erie and everywhere."

Messages of solidarity can be sent to United Electrical Workers, 3923 Main St., Lawrence Park, Pa. 16511, or by phone at (814) 899-3108.

For further reading ...

The story of the political campaign led by Minneapolis Teamsters to organize working-class and union opposition to the US rulers' imperialist aims in World War II, following labor battles that transformed the union movement.

by Farrell Dobbs

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Ukraine rail workers fight dangerous work conditions

BY JANET POST

Rail workers on Ukrainian Railways began a work-to-rule protest last May and continue to speak out against their low wages, deteriorating working conditions and the dangerous state of the trains. The state-owned company is the 12th largest railroad system in the world, with some 263,000 workers running both freight and passenger service.

Freight traffic, which accounts for 80 percent of the company's income, has been significantly disrupted by the attacks against Ukraine by Russia's capitalist rulers since the popular Maidan mobilizations in 2014 brought down the pro-Moscow regime of Viktor Yanukovich. Freight shipments have fallen by more than 25 percent.

Mechanical breakdowns; lack of radio transmissions; no heat or air-conditioning in the cabs; broken windows, seats, and doors; and instruments that leak oil that can catch fire are just some of the problems workers face. Many repair shops have no parts, and workers on meager wages are buying parts and tools with their own money.

Ukrainian rail workers receive low wages, with the majority on minimum wage, 3,723 hryvnia per month (\$137). Many work overtime to keep up with the cost of living. Since 2014 the number of workers has fallen by 30 percent.

"A tired driver team can make mistakes which can lead to serious accidents," assistant engineer Oleksandr Skiba, head of Darnytsya depot's Free Trade Union of Rail Workers (VPZU), told opendemocracy.net reporter Alexey Arunyan. "Trains regularly carry tons of flammable freight or chemicals — nuclear fuel, petrol, gas, ammonia or chloride. An accident with this kind of freight can lead to serious environmental and human consequences."

Last May's work-to-rule action ran on and off at many depots and the union has grown. They faced threats from company bosses, cops and other government functionaries — including some workers called in by military recruiters and threatened with being sent to the war

zone. Workers refused to take out trains that were unfit to operate, bringing some depots virtually to a halt. They demanded a wage raise, a return of government-cancelled pensions and a guarantee of safe working conditions. Although they did not win their demands, the VPZU got stronger and more confident.

Vyacheslav Fedorenko, an engineer who heads up the independent union at Kryvyi Rih, a center for iron ore mining and steel production, is still following work-to-rule and refuses to handle engines that have safety violations. "You have to understand, before May 14, 2018, no one raised their heads. People were treated like cattle, and they silently agreed to it," Fedorenko told Arunyan. "And then suddenly we remembered: 'We're citizens. I believe that civil society was born in our depot on this day.'"

The action was undermined by the refusal of the successor to the old Soviet railway union, the Union of Railway and Transport Construction Workers, to which many rail workers in Ukraine still belong, to participate. It slandered the work-to-rule as a "destructive way of



Rail workers in Kryvyi Rih, Ukraine, during work-to-rule protest against low wages, poor working conditions and dangerous state of trains outside ArcelorMittal steel plant, May 16, 2018.

blocking freight transport." The VPZU is affiliated with the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine.

Three weeks after workers in Kremenchuk ended their work-to-rule protest Sept. 1, engineer Yry Kachan died when a fire broke out in the cab of his malfunctioning locomotive. "He didn't die, he didn't perish, he was killed!" Alexander Petrov, a Kremenchuk VPZU leader, said in a

message broadcast on YouTube. "They killed him with their lack of responsibility, their lack of organization."

Protests across Ukraine have taken place by shipyard workers, city transit operators, and miners in the coal, iron ore and uranium industries. These actions have wrested some concessions from the bosses and the government, and the independent trade union movement has gotten stronger.

Walmart's plan to eliminate greeters provokes outcry

BY DAN FEIN

Walmart styles itself as a philanthropic, community-minded and caring company. On occasion, the company assigns employees to staff tables in the stores collecting money for local hospitals. The bosses direct cashiers to ask customers if they want to make a donation to "fight hunger." Last year a co-worker told me, "Walmart doesn't pay us well, but at least I like the fact they hire the disabled." No more.

Walmart announced to its greeters at 1,000 stores in mid-February that their jobs would be eliminated on April 26, to be replaced by "customer hosts." In addition to saying hello to customers, they would be required to help with returns, keep the storefront clean and check receipts against the contents of bags of customers. They

would have to be able to climb ladders, lift 25-pound packages and stand for most of the day. While some greeters will be reassigned and keep their jobs, most who are elderly or have cerebral palsy, spina bifida and other physical disabilities would be gone.

Walmart greeters have been around for decades, allowing the retail giant to put a friendly face at the front of its stores. But in 2016 Walmart began replacing them with those "hosts." Walmart and other retail chains have been redefining roles and speeding up work as they move to compete with Amazon.

Workers at the Walmart store where I work, who were once assigned to just the meat department, are now required to work the bakery, the deli and fresh department, in addition to the meat department, as the bosses see fit.

Many workers were outraged at what was being done to their co-workers. "Those with handicaps need jobs too," one said. Another said, "What Walmart is doing is flat out discrimination against those with disabilities."

In Vancouver, Washington, John Combs, 42, who has cerebral palsy, was devastated and then angered by his impending job loss. It had taken his family five years to find him a job he could do, and he loved the work.

"What am I going to do, just sit here on my butt all day in this house?" Combs asked his sister and guardian, The Associated Press reported. "I do my job. I didn't do anything wrong."

Public protest begins

The bosses' heartless move has called forth a torrent of public protest from greeters' relatives, angry customers, supporters of the rights of workers with disabilities and many others. The bosses in Bentonville, Arkansas, have had to backpedal a little.

Adam Catlin has been a greeter in Selinsgrove, Pa., for nine years and has cerebral palsy. When he and his family heard his job was threatened, his mother Holly Catlin went into action. "I decided I was going to be the squeaky wheel and squeak every day," she told KTLA-TV. She wrote about her son on Facebook where more than 10,000 people have seen it. She called the company CEO every day. After a week, he was offered a job in self-checkout and took it.

People in Marion, North Carolina, started an online petition for Jay Melton, who's worked as a greeter for Walmart for 17 years. Over 14,000 people signed it. He got the same job offer as Catlin.

A lawsuit was filed against Walmart in Utah charging discrimination under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and complaints were filed at the Equal Opportunities Commission.

So Greg Foran, president of Walmart's U.S. stores, sent a memo to all store managers Feb. 28 telling them to take steps to keep greeters with disabilities on the job. Stay tuned.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



March 21, 1994

The decision to devalue the African franc brought millions of working people closer to the knife's edge of survival. The governments of the African Financial Community ostensibly made the choice. But in reality the deed was done at the urging of the former colonial master — Paris — which dominates much of the economic and political life in the 14 countries in the franc zone.

Working people throughout Africa confront calamitous social and economic conditions — from famines brought on by imperialist oppression, to the deaths of half a million people annually from tuberculosis.

The debt is a vehicle for the transfer of wealth created by the labor of workers and peasants into the coffers of the bosses in North America, Europe, and Japan. Working people have an obligation to demand that this burden be lifted and that the debt be completely cancelled.



March 21, 1969

Current revelations about why the Johnson administration switched on Vietnam provide a powerful confirmation of the tremendous effect of the organized antiwar movement and the massive demonstrations it has staged. The antiwar movement was a major factor in compelling Johnson to decide to negotiate with Hanoi, give up the presidency and halt the bombing of North Vietnam.

Gen. Westmoreland had requested 206,000 reinforcements in March to make up for ground lost to the Vietnamese during the Tet offensive.

But "it would tear the country apart, Defense Secretary [Clark Clifford] argued," the *New York Times* revealed. Continuing the escalation policy, he warned, could bring "civil war."

Johnson's March 31 speech, instead of a promise of more troops, was an abdication and an announcement of the intention to begin negotiations.



March 18, 1944

Britain's ruling class stands panic-stricken as over 100,000 striking coal miners enter the second week of their militant struggle, the greatest demonstration of British working class power since the 1926 General Strike. The majority of the South Wales miners, who represent the heart of the strike movement, at rank and file pit head meetings rejected the demands of their treacherous leaders that they resume work.

These leaders over the week-end sought to drum up a back-to-work vote with frantic patriotic appeals and glib promises that all the miners' demands will be granted after they return to work. But the labor bureaucrats have, for the time being, lost all control of the situation. The rank and file members are fighting mad.

The miners are fighting out of fear for their future under continued capitalist control of the mines.

Despite ‘state of emergency’ thousands protest in Sudan

BY TERRY EVANS

Thousands took to the streets of Khartoum and other Sudanese cities to protest the rule of President Omar Hassan al-Bashir Feb. 28, defying the government’s declaration of a state of emergency. The actions are fueled by years of hardship confronting millions of working people across the war-ravaged country.

The protests began in opposition to Bashir’s decision to triple bread prices in mid-December and have since spread to some 35 cities. Inflation, felt most sharply by working people, hit 70 percent at the end of last year. One of the popular chants at the protests calls on Bashir to “fall, that is all!”

“Tomorrow is the day we deliver our voice clearly to the regime of corruption and tyranny, that the will of the people will not break before any measures,” stated the Sudanese Professionals Association, one of the organizers of the protests.

Bashir decreed a yearlong state of emergency Feb. 22, disbanding the federal government and banning public protests and strikes. It gives security forces more powers to search properties, detain people and prevent those arrested from having access to a lawyer. Emergency courts and prosecutors established by the decree can sentence people to 10 years in prison. But the sweeping measures to repress the movement against Bashir’s rule have failed to crush the unrest.

Bashir sacked the country’s 18 provincial governors, appointing officers from the army and the hated National Intelligence and Security Service to act in their place. His restrictions include tighter press censorship and constraints on political parties.

Some 1,000 students at the Ahfad University for Women in Omdurman faced a cop assault on a campus-organized anti-government protest Feb. 25.

Decades of wars, poverty

Bashir seized power in a coup in 1989, backed by the military and Islamist forces. In office he has defended the flogging of women accused of breaching sharia law and shut down most of the country’s cinemas.

Sustained opposition to Bashir’s rule follows the deadly effects on working people of the Sudanese rulers’ years of wars. A decadeslong civil

war ended with the independence of South Sudan in 2011.

Bashir has also used his troops, as well as bloodthirsty paramilitary gangs, to repress rebel groups in the South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Darfur regions. Tens of thousands have been killed in the three conflicts and millions forced from their homes.

Before Sudanese independence, the former British colonial rulers solidified their power by fostering divisions among the Sudanese people based on language, religion and national origin — divisions that every government since has perpetuated to bolster its own rule. In Darfur, Bashir’s repression targeted non-Arabic peoples and non-Muslims among the population there.

Many of the current generation of young protesters say they will no longer be divided and defeated by appeals to national and racial differences. Residents of the ZamZam refugee camp who have fled the fighting in Darfur organized an anti-government protest Feb. 28. “We want to build a new Sudan that does not differentiate between a Zurga (black African) and an Arab,” Hassan Adam, a resident of the camp, told the press.

Bashir claims the widespread protests are incited by people from Darfur. In response, demonstrators have chanted, “You arrogant racists, we are all Darfuris.”

Algeria rallies: ‘Get rid of president, the entire regime’



AP Photo/Anis Belghoul

Demonstrators have taken to the streets in cities and towns across Algeria in opposition to the announced re-election bid by the country’s president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, 82, and to protest the dire economic conditions they face. Bouteflika, who has ruled the country for the past 20 years, has rarely been seen in public since suffering a serious stroke in 2013. He was too enfeebled to announce his own candidacy for the April 18 election. He left the country Feb. 24 to seek medical tests in Geneva.

Unable to agree on another candidate, Algeria’s capitalist rulers determined that Bouteflika had to run again in order to maintain the regime’s “stability.”

In Algiers, the capital, tens of thousands demonstrated in the largest protest to date March 1, defying a government protest ban. One person was killed and 183 injured in protests across Algeria that day. “What Algerians want is to get rid of not just the president, but the entire regime,” Soufiane Djilali, a leader of the Mouwatana (Democracy and Citizenship) movement, which had organized some of the protests, told the *Guardian* Feb. 28.

Actions have taken place in more than 30 of the country’s cities. Thousands of students staged demonstrations Feb. 26 across the country that also protested rising joblessness — over a quarter of those under age 30, Algeria’s median age, are unemployed. Journalists joined the actions Feb. 28 in Algiers demanding the right to report on these protests and for an end to government censorship.

— BRIAN WILLIAMS

Workers in Mexico get boost from strike victories

Continued from front page

plants, the Coca-Cola bottling plant and other maquiladoras in the area have since walked off the job with similar demands. One sign at the Coca-Cola picket line said, “Now is the time.”

The maquiladora strikes, just across the border from Brownsville, Texas, began Jan. 25, a few weeks after Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador raised the minimum wage by 15 percent and doubled it in areas along the U.S. border to about \$9 a day.

When maquiladora workers insisted that the owners raise their wages by at least 20 percent because of the minimum wage increase — as required by their contracts with the Union of Day Laborers and Industrial Workers of the Maquiladora Industry — the bosses re-

fused and the workers walked out.

After the strikers won their demands, bosses retaliated, firing some 1,500 workers. But that hasn’t stopped new strikes from breaking out.

“Our wages have always been the highest in the region, an average of \$12.75 a day,” Javier Zúñiga, an official of the National Mine Workers Union, which organizes the steel fabrication plants, told the *Militant* by phone from Matamoros March 1. But the workers there demanded a pay raise too and went on strike Feb. 25. “Yesterday we had an offer from the companies,” Zúñiga said. “But the workers didn’t agree.”

José Juan Deobal Santos, a mechanic at Siderúrgica del Golfo, a plant on strike, said, “We have been in solidarity with the maquiladora workers. The firings there are unjust. Everyone has the right to demonstrate and to go on strike.”

The bosses don’t think so. The Employers’ Confederation of the Mexican Republic and the National Association of Self-Service and Department Stores called on the government to step in and ensure “labor peace.”

The Mexican president said Feb. 28 that wages should rise, “but we shouldn’t create an atmosphere of labor instability.”

“People should consider the companies’ situation, there should be balance,” he added. “We have to preserve jobs.”

Strikebreaking attempt fails

The bosses have tried to take advantage of divisions and competing unions among the maquiladora workers and widespread anger with union officials seen as corrupt, to hold workers back.

The Matamoros Index Association called on workers to drop out of the

unions before the start of the strike. On Jan. 18 they offered a small wage increase and issued a statement saying, “Like thousands of workers we feel we have been deceived and betrayed by those who portray themselves as union leaders.” They urged workers to negotiate directly with the bosses.

But the bosses underestimated the anger brewing among the workers over conditions in the plants and abusive treatment by management. Many workers have carpal tunnel and other repetitive stress injuries from speedup. Workers are docked pay for arriving 10 minutes late to work. Even before the strike, workers had been holding assemblies and putting pressure on union officials to stand up to the bosses.

The bosses’ attempts at union busting failed. Workers on strike at the few maquiladoras where the bosses have not yet agreed to the 20 percent wage raise and the bonus have surrounded the plants.

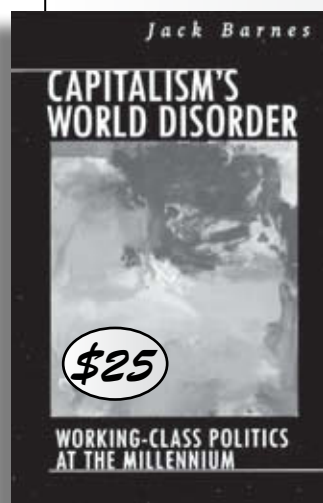
According to La Silla Rota news website, workers at Mecalux, joined by workers from other factories, formed a “human chain” Feb. 26, preventing bosses and government officials who claimed the strike was illegal from entering the plant.

“Coca-Cola tried to bring in trucks from other cities to fill their orders here,” mechanic Deobal said. “But the strikers blocked the trucks from making deliveries.”

The Coca-Cola workers have been winning support. Cars lined up for blocks for a car wash and tamale sale to raise funds for the strike.

The union at Walmart México, which represents 8,000 workers in 10 states, is also threatening to go on strike if they don’t get an adequate pay hike.

For further reading ...



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“And with revolutionary leadership, forged and tested in coming struggles, the international working class has the numbers, the social power, the culture, the values and the program to defeat the reactionary forces loosened by finance capital.”

— Jack Barnes
in *Capitalism’s World Disorder*

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Ongoing disaster from Paradise fire is result of capitalism

Continued from front page

tric Company bosses are responsible, as they have been for thousands of other fires in recent years. State authorities say PG&E equipment was the cause of 1,550 fires in 2017 — that's an average of more than four a day. The company president quit and the remaining bosses declared bankruptcy Jan. 29.

"I think the only thing PG&E cares about is getting out of paying for the damages," Whited said. "They're responsible but they don't care. They're protecting the shareholders. They say they do not have enough money to pay the claims against them and will have to raise utility rates to cover their losses."

The bosses knew they had a problem with the Caribou-Palermo power line that ran near Paradise. They proposed to fix it in 2013, then postponed implementation every year since. It never began. So on Nov. 8, 2018, they now admit, a wire snapped free from the line, creating an electric arc that scorched the metal tower supporting it. A few minutes later one of the utility company's workers reported seeing a quarter-acre fire burning under the line. Within hours, the Camp Fire had destroyed Paradise and the surrounding area.

When they restarted the line afterwards, and inspected it, the company found a host of other problems. The line has since been shut down with no estimated restart date.

PG&E executives were previously convicted on felony charges for the 2010 San Bruno natural gas explosion that killed eight people.

Capitalist social catastrophe

There are fewer examples of the murderous consequences of the dog-eat-dog capitalist profit system. Their efforts to prevent disasters like these were a joke. Xela Young, who lives in the area, told the *Wall Street Journal* that she saw PG&E crews there before the fire. "The same frickin' tree got marked three times, but was never cleared," she said.

"Escaping the fire was so danger-

ous with flames all around us. You weren't sure you would be able to make it," Whited said. "When I first got to this house, I had a hard time sleeping through the night. I would wake up with every little noise."

After we showed her some of the literature we had brought, Whited got a copy of *In Defense of the US Working Class*, a book featuring a talk given in Cuba by SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters.

Another worker we met was Stephen Eddy, a member of the stage hands' union who lives in Chico and works in San Francisco. He described how many people from Paradise are getting by with help and solidarity from workers here.

"If you drive through Chico you can see RVs and mobile homes parked next to houses," he said. "People who live here have let others they never knew stay with them and they have let people park in front of their house and plug into their electricity."

"My landlord told me he is going to sell this house. I have lived here six years and pay the rent ahead," Eddy said. "My landlord told me the demand for housing is so high he could get \$250,000 for this small place. That's Bay Area prices."

Eddy bought an introductory subscription to the *Militant* and his friend, Randy Turley, who joined in the conversation, got a copy of *Are They Rich Because They're Smart?* by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes.

Paradise housing destroyed

While we were in the area, we drove into Paradise, which reminded me of photos I've seen of the devastation of towns in Europe that had been bombed during the second imperialist world war. Ninety percent of the buildings in the city that once housed 26,000 people were destroyed.

The signs for both the Burger King and McDonald's are still standing, but there's nothing else there but ruins.



Militant photos: Eric Simpson

Above, rubble of Paradise building burned by wildfire four months ago sits untouched. Residents are still denied right to return to any properties with burn damage. Bottom, Bianca Alvarado told Socialist Workers Party campaigner Jeff Powers in nearby Chico Feb. 20 that she had to warn her relatives in Paradise they had to get out. They hadn't received any official alert.

Scores of completely burned-out cars remain on the side of the roads where people left them as they fled the fire.

A few hundred former town residents have begun to return to Paradise. Most who have come back have an RV or a camper. Residents aren't allowed to live in any house where there's any fire dam-

age. This means there are virtually no homes here legally habitable.

Assuming the company survives the bankruptcy, scads of lawsuits from victims of the fire, and avoids new criminal charges, PG&E bosses say they intend to pass all costs they incur onto their customers.

Books for NYC jails part of fight for prisoner rights

Continued from front page

in once every two weeks.

They're the lucky ones. For the rest, New York Public Library staff in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens collaborate to send around book carts, often worked by volunteers. Prisoners are only allowed to check out two books at a time.

It's worse for those in solitary confinement. Depending on the whim of jail officials, some in the so-called Special Housing Units are allowed to put in a written request for reading. Even then they can't request a specific book, just the genre they would like. Then they may or may not get something.

When asked about this, one prison official callously replied that the prisoners could get books if family members buy and send them. "And if they don't have family members?" a council member asked. The official just shrugged her shoulders.

There are still more restrictions. Books must not take up more than 1 cubic foot in inmate's cells.

Dromm's bill would require that corrections' officials grant inmates daily access to a library from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., except when they're on "lockdown." But it includes no funding for books or librarians and no penalties if jail officials don't comply.

Even this is too much for jail officials. A statement from Department of Correction officials Becky Scott and L. Patrick Dail read at the hearing cynically claimed that the jailers are "open to expanding current efforts," but oppose the bill.

Books Through Bars, New York Public Library representatives and other groups testified in favor of the bill, arguing any broader access to books would be a step forward.

Beena Ahmad from Books Through Bars said the bill allows jail authorities to censor any publications they claim "may compromise the safety and security of the facility." This "can be a catchall that can be applied arbitrarily," Amhad said, and be "used to bar political books from entering prisons, such as those discussing civil rights or critiquing the government."

The Gothamist interviewed a former Rikers prisoner, Camilla, who didn't want her last named used. Since she was only allowed two books every two weeks, "I went through those books pretty quickly," she said.

Camilla's family sent her books. But when guards found her mini-library, they said it was too big and made her mail the books home.

And newspapers? Camilla said

staff allowed the women in her building just one newspaper. "It was often nearly shredded with news about arrests, charges and Rikers Island literally cut out," the Gothamist said.

Nili Ness, the Queens Library's first and only correctional services librarian, was one of those who spoke in favor of the bill during the hearing. Three times a week she brings books to the 10-jail Rikers Island complex.

"When you work at Rikers Island, you realize how large the need is," she told the media last year. "There are still large areas of the jail complex that don't receive any type of library service, outside of perhaps, access to the law library."

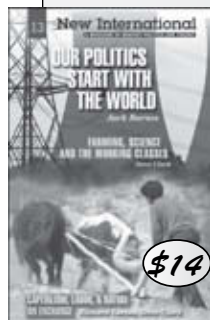
New International #14 The Stewardship of Nature Also Falls to the Working Class: In Defense of Land and Labor



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Volunteers rebuild homes after tornado hit Havana

BY RÓGER CALERO

HAVANA — A tornado ripped through five city districts here Jan. 27, wrecking hundreds of homes and buildings. Today new apartments are being turned over to residents who lost their homes, and repairs are underway for hundreds of others.

A week after the storm, *Militant* reporters who were in Cuba joined Cuban volunteers in the Luyanó neighborhood in the Diez de Octubre district for a day of reconstruction labor. (See *Militant* article in Feb. 18 issue.) We went back Feb. 23 to talk with workers we met during our first visit about how things were going.

We walked up and down the block looking for the house of Barbara Borrego, a retired hospital worker whose home was destroyed by the tornado. She had showed us the destruction during our first visit.

Now in place of the three unsteady walls of wood barely standing with no roof, a brigade of construction workers has already built her a new house out of concrete blocks and were finishing up the plumbing and flooring. Along her street other brigades were working intensely on other damaged homes.

The tornado damaged some 3,500 homes, along with hospitals, clinics, schools and other facilities. Cuba's mass organizations, supported by the government, guided the work of hundreds of residents and other volunteers who went into action immediately. They cleared the debris, preparing the way for specialized brigades that restored electricity, telephone lines and the water supply and then began reconstruction.

We asked Borrego how the construction was being paid for. "No one has said anything to me about that," she said. "They just came and began building."

Ongoing reconstruction

"It's a beehive!" Carlos Antonio de Dios Oquendo, general secretary of the National Construction Workers Union (SNTC), told *Trabajadores*, referring to the construction workers and residents involved in reconstruction. Crews start very early and work until late into the night.

In addition to the work of the construction brigades, residents are doing their own repairs using materials purchased at steeply discounted prices through low-interest government loans and grants. To respond to the dire need for housing — both as a result of the tornado and of a chronic shortage in Havana — government departments have been asked to turn over unused or little-used facilities to be rebuilt into housing.

"We have a big housing problem," said Alexander Ochoa, 40, a physical therapist at the Luyanó Polyclinic. The clinic suffered major damage from the

tornado and is being rebuilt virtually from the ground up. Ochoa was helping load removed roofing panels onto a truck. The panels were headed for use at a housing project in Arroyo Naranjo, another Havana district, one that wasn't hit by the tornado.

Many of the residents we spoke to were aware of the social disaster faced by working people in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria devastated the island a year and a half ago. In contrast to the reaction of Cuba's revolutionary government to the tornado, Washington and the colonial government in Puerto Rico left working people there without electricity and water for months and thousands are unable to rebuild their homes.

They were shocked to hear about the scores of people — ill, elderly, and disabled, as well as the homeless — who have died in the U.S. from the cold this winter because of government neglect. This is simply the way the capitalist system functions, we explained. If something doesn't generate a profit for the capitalist rulers, those in power just turn their backs. Such immorality is extremely difficult for workers and farmers raised in revolutionary Cuba to grasp.

US gov't to allow lawsuits over Cuba nationalizations

BY SETH GALINSKY

The U.S. government March 4 opened the door to lawsuits against a restricted list of Cuban companies using land or properties that were nationalized under workers control in Cuba in the early years of the revolution.

The *Washington Post* notes that the measure, which takes effect March 19, for the time being is limited. The State Department announcement confines the companies that can be sued to those on the State Department's "List of Restricted Entities and Subentities Associated with Cuba."

The lawsuits are allowed under "Title III" of the so-called Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act, also known as the Helms-Burton Act, signed into law by President Bill Clinton in 1996.

Since the law was passed, every president — Democrat or Republican — has repeatedly suspended Title III, usually for six months at a time, because of the economic chaos it could produce. But

Protest after Sacramento cops who killed Stephon Clark let off



BlackLivesMatter Sac

Over 100 protesters took to the streets in Sacramento, California, March 4 to protest Sacramento County District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert's decision not to file charges against the two cops who shot and killed Stephon Clark in his grandparents' backyard a year ago. Clark, a 22-year-old African-American, had been holding a cellphone that officers Terrence Mercadal and Jared Robinet claimed they thought was a gun. They said the youth was coming at them, but a pathologist's autopsy report shows Clark was hit by eight bullets, seven in the back.

After marching through the city, the protesters were surrounded by over 100 riot police on a highway overpass. The cops carried out what they called a "mass detention," arresting 84 protesters, including a reporter from the *Sacramento Bee* covering the march. Even Sacramento Mayor Darrel Steinberg had to say he had "questions" about the cops' actions and the arrests.

— CAROLE LESNICK

Cuba and the Coming American Revolution

by Jack Barnes



The 1959 Cuban Revolution had a worldwide impact. As the proletarian-based struggle for Black rights was advancing in the U.S., the social transformation

fought for and won by Cuban toilers set an example that socialist revolution is not only necessary — it can be made and defended. \$10

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the March 5 announcement renewed it for just 30 more days, while lifting it for the companies on the restricted list.

Few, if any, of the 200 or so hotels, stores, tourist companies and other entities on the list have any links to the U.S. legal or financial system.

The U.S. government already "forbids U.S. citizens from engaging in direct financial transactions" with the companies on "this arbitrary and illegitimate list," said a March 4 statement by Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The move is part of broader threats by the Donald Trump administration to tighten the nearly 60-year embargo of Cuba, including false claims that Cuba is responsible for the economic and social crisis in Venezuela today.

The State Department announcement claims that the "entities" on the list are "under the control of Cuban military, intelligence, or security services" and repeats the slander that these are "directly responsible for the repression of the Cuban people."

The Cuban people's real crime is their revolution itself.

The nationalizations of U.S.-owned

oil refineries, the electric and telephone companies, and large agricultural estates in 1959 and 1960 were part of mobilizations of working people in Cuba to gain ever greater control over conditions on the job and the management and priorities of production. This was a central part of deepening their social revolution.

These moves were backed up by the new revolutionary workers and farmers government led by Fidel Castro.

The nationalizations "were not confiscating land," Castro explained in a Sept. 26, 1960, speech to the U.N. General Assembly. "We simply propose to pay for it ... in the only way we could — by bonds that would mature in 20 years."

Washington refused. Instead, it launched the economic, financial and commercial blockade against Cuba, which it has maintained — at times tighter, at times looser — to this day.

"The United States will keep on failing to achieve its main purpose of submitting by force the sovereign will of Cubans and our determination to build socialism," the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs said March 4.

New York citywide public meeting Hear delegation from

Federation of Cuban Women

Speakers: Teresa Amarelle, FMC general secretary and member of Cuba's Council of State; Yanira Kuper, FMC international relations director; Gretel Marante, FMC; and Alicia Campos, coordinator for Latin America of the Women's International Democratic Federation.

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Wisconsin dairy farmers discuss ongoing crisis they face

BY ILONA GERSH

MUSCODA, Wis. — In the past year dairy farmers in Wisconsin have had to shut down 714 farms. That's 8.2 percent, dropping the total number of dairy farms here to 8,046. That is roughly half the number of 16 years ago.

It's the smaller, family farms, that are being forced out. While the number of dairy cows has remained the same, the average number of cows per farm has doubled. The number of larger farms, known as CAFOs — Concentrated Feeding Operations, farms with over 700 cows — has risen to 272, an increase of almost 550 percent since 2000. The average farm has 155.

I visited four dairy farmers in the Muscoda-Richland area of Wisconsin at their farms Feb. 21 with Randy Jasper, a former dairy farmer who now runs a farm equipment repair shop there, and Dean Hazlewood, another Socialist Workers Party member from Chicago. The farmers all said they're caught between rising production costs and lower prices for their milk today.

Kenneth and Starlyn Miller, who own a dairy with 133 milking cows, invited us into their kitchen for a discussion. "We paid off our debt a few years ago. But now we have debt again," Kenneth Miller said. "Everyone tells us that we have to produce more milk to stay in business. But the government says there's too much milk on the market. How can there be too much milk? There are millions of people who go hungry."

In 1933, the average Wisconsin cow produced 5,140 pounds of milk per year, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. By 1978, that had more than doubled to 11,735 pounds. And in 2017, it had doubled again to 23,725 pounds — soaring nearly 23 percent in just the last decade.

Is there too much milk?

The so-called glut of milk on the U.S. market — milk working people worldwide would love to get their hands on — drives down the price dairy farmers receive on the market. "I get \$13.75 per hundredweight," Kenneth Miller said. U.S. government agencies report that for the past four years the price farmers have gotten has been below \$21, which was the average break-even price in 2017.

"To help make ends meet, I used to sell 12 to 15 cows for meat at \$1 a pound around harvest time. Now I don't get enough to make it worthwhile because of cow auctions, where



Workers milking cows on Steve Schmitz's dairy farm in Richland Center, Wisconsin, in 2015. "It seems like workers and farmers are facing more problems surviving today," Schmitz said.

the packing companies buy up cows sold by farmers who are shutting down," he said. "I just sold an older cow for 20 cents a pound. If you go to the store you pay \$3 a pound for ground beef!"

Farmers' costs are up. "It costs \$150 for a vet just to come to your door," said Starlyn Miller. The price of hay has gone up since the drought of 2012.

They used to rent additional farmland to grow crops for feed and for sale. "But land rents are just too high," Kenneth Miller said.

And dairy farmers don't get any help from government payouts to provide relief from the effects of international tariff battles today. We asked about the impact of the tariffs on exports of farm products. "It doesn't pay to apply for government relief for tariff losses," he said. "We get only one penny a bushel for corn

losses." The market price for corn is \$3.66 per bushel.

The Wisconsin Farmers Union reports that a 55-cow dairy farm would receive a one-time government payment of \$725 from the bailout, but stood to lose between \$36,000 and \$48,000 in income last year from low milk prices.

"I think about selling out," said Kenneth Miller with a smile. "There are only two reasons to keep going. First, I don't know if I would like factory work. And second, I'm hoping for a miracle."

"It used to be that after a couple of bad years, we'd have a good one that made up the difference, and then a few years when we could do OK. Where are the good years now?" he asked.

After our discussion, the Millers signed up for a 12-week introductory subscription to the *Militant* and

bought a copy of *In Defense of the US Working Class*, by Mary-Alice Waters.

'I love milking'

"We're surviving, but it's hard work," said Steve Armbruster, who runs a 300-cow dairy with his two brothers. "It takes me six to seven hours to milk the herd," he said. "I get up, milk them, try to get three hours of sleep, and then milk them again."

"We watch where every dollar goes," Armbruster said. "I can't imagine doing anything else. I love milking."

"There's a lot of hidden expenses most people don't think about," he said. "For instance, it takes two years for a heifer to grow into a milking cow. All that time, you have to feed them, take care of their health and medical expenses, and pay for their overhead expenses."

Steve Schmitz, who has been dairying since 1974, has a herd of 135 cows.

"Nobody in the government looks out for farmers. All they care about is how the big corporations are doing," Schmitz told us. He has had success crossbreeding Holsteins, the traditional milking cow in Wisconsin, with Montbeliarde cattle. The milk fetches a higher price because it is higher in milk fats.

"It seems like workers and farmers are facing more and more problems surviving," he said. Schmitz signed up for a subscription to the *Militant* and bought a copy of *In Defense of the US Working Class* for his wife, who used to be a teacher and has been following the teachers strikes that began in West Virginia a year ago.

Workers and family farmers both face exploitation by capital and the social class that wields it. Building an alliance between workers and farmers to fight that exploitation is crucial.

What faces farmers today is result of workings of capitalism

Below is an excerpt from "The Crisis Facing Working Farmers" by Doug Jenness. It helps shine a light on how the workings of capitalism weigh on the ability of farmers and their families to get by today. It appears in New International no. 4. Copyright © 1985 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

Working farmers are victims of conditions over which they have no control. But these are not primarily natural conditions — bad weather, insect infestations, and so on. They are social conditions, the results of the workings of capitalism — exorbitant interest rates;

monopoly control over marketing; and monopoly-rigged pricing of farm machinery, fertilizer, seeds, and fuel.

Working farmers have never faced easy conditions. Their situation took a major new turn for the worse in the mid-1970s. Farmers who borrowed heavily to purchase land as prices were rising in the 1960s and 1970s have seen the market price of their land — and thus their equity and collateral — plummet over the past five years. With production costs closing in on farm incomes throughout the past decade, farmers have fallen deeper and deeper into debt to finance more modern equipment needed to produce ever more commodities. ...

One of the biggest costs to farmers goes to cover use of the land. As a result of the system of rents and mortgages that prevails in U.S. agriculture, the overwhelming majority of independent commodity producers must pay rent or make mortgage payments to use the land they work. Elimination of these payments would mean an immediate and substantial reduction in their production costs. ...

Farmers are painfully learning that holding an ownership deed to the land where they raise their crops and livestock is no guarantee whatsoever of the

use of that land. Under intense financial pressure farmers are often forced to sell at the first offer, which is frequently much lower than they could have received had they had more time. Other farmers are expropriated outright by the parasites who collect the interest on their mortgages.

Whether or not farm families hold on to their land, livestock, and machinery has nothing to do with how much they produce or how well they maintain their land. In fact, working farmers frequently end up in worse condition when they and other farmers bring in a large crop, since their prices and income plummet. There are few more powerful indictments of the capitalist system than what Marx called "the disastrous effect of good seasons for this mode of production."

"Private" ownership of farm and ranch land, despite the capitalist-propagated mythology, does not go hand in hand with financial independence, self-reliance, and security. It is, to the contrary, the noose by which working farmers can be hanged. ...

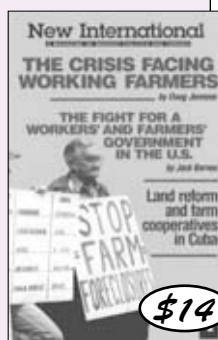
The necessary foundation for the lasting abolition of the current exploitative rents and mortgages system is the nationalization of the land.

The Fight for a Workers and Farmers Government in the U.S.

In New International no. 4

In the past few years farmers' real income has plummeted and their debts have skyrocketed as they are squeezed between high production costs and the low prices they receive for their products. The working class has a direct stake in the resistance of exploited farmers against ruin under the capitalist rents and mortgages system.

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FBI is capitalist rulers' political police against the working class

The excerpt below is from the chapter "Origins of FBI Assault on Socialist Workers Party" by Larry Seigle in 50 Years of Covert Operations in the US: Washington's Political Police and the American Working Class, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for March. It traces the decadeslong fight to resist the capitalist rulers' use of Washington's secret police against the unions and other working-class organizations, the fight to overthrow Jim Crow segregation and the anti-Vietnam War movement. This extract underlines the new dangers for the working class posed by the way Democrats and other liberals are using the FBI today as a weapon to settle their political disputes, especially against President Donald Trump. Copyright © 2014 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY LARRY SEIGLE

For several years after the First World War, the FBI had functioned as a political police force, carrying out the arrest or deportation of some 3,000 unionists and political activists in 1919 and 1920 (the infamous "Palmer Raids"). But following widespread protests over these and other FBI actions, and with the decline of the postwar labor radicalization, the capitalist rulers decided against a federal secret police agency. They relied instead on city

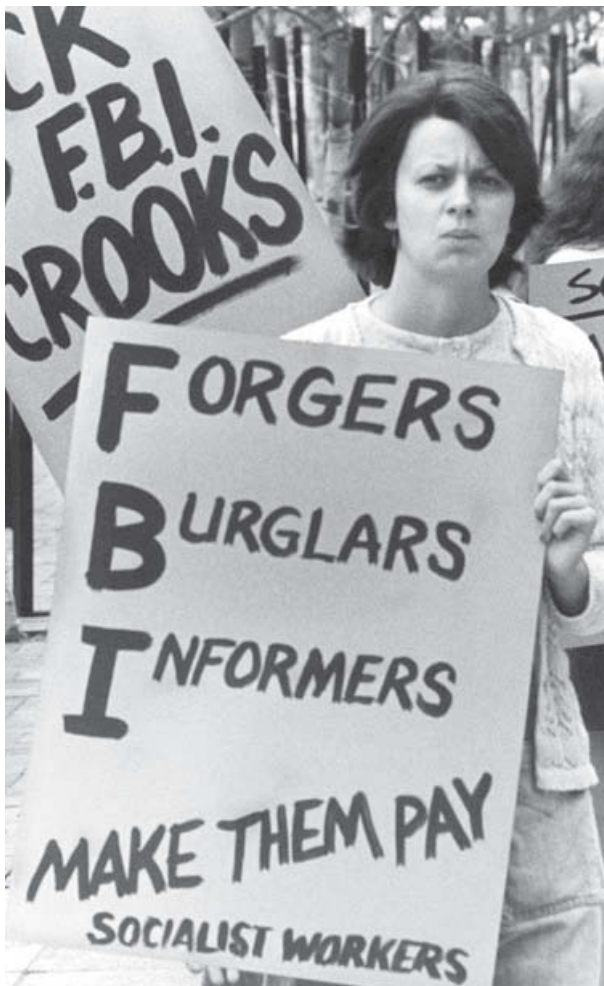
and state cops with well-established "bomb squads" and "radical units" and on state national guard units in cases of extreme necessity. These local and state agencies had intimate connections with antilabor "citizens" organizations organized by the employers and with hated private detective agencies, such as the Pinkertons, with long experience in union busting.

By the mid-1930s, however, a vast social movement was on the rise, with the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) at the forefront. The relationship of forces was shifting in favor of working-class organizations. The bosses' old methods could no longer always be counted on. Communist perspectives did not come close to commanding majority support among working people, and in fact remained the views of a small minority, but the bosses were nonetheless concerned that progressive anticapitalist and anti-imperialist political positions advanced by class-struggle-minded union leaders were winning a hearing among a substantial section of the ranks of labor. Especially in times of crisis, such as war, minority points of view defended by established and respected working-class fighters could rapidly gain support.

With this in mind, the administration of President Franklin Roosevelt expanded and centralized federal police power.

During and after the Watergate scandals of the mid-1970s, the immense scope of FBI disruption, spying, and provocations against the people of the United States came to light in an unprecedented way. But the origins of these operations are not — as most commentators place them — in the spread of McCarthyism in the 1950s or in Washington's attempts to disrupt the anti-Vietnam War movement and social protests of the 1960s.

The fact is that these FBI operations began on the eve of the Second World War. They were central to preparations by the US capitalist rulers to lead the nation into another carnage to promote their interests against their im-



Militant/Glen Campbell

Protest in 1976 by supporters of Socialist Workers Party's legal, political challenge to FBI spying and disruption.

perialist rivals and against the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America struggling for liberation from colonial domination. These operations were directed against the leadership — and potential leadership — of the two major social forces in the United States that threatened to interfere with the ability of the US ruling families to accomplish their objectives: the labor unions and the Black movement. The government's aim was to isolate class-struggle leaders who could provide guidance to a broader movement that might develop. ...

The drive toward war necessitated an assault on working people at home and against democratic rights in general. Roosevelt gave FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover free rein to use the FBI against the labor movement and Black organizations. The White House and Justice Department secretly authorized many of the illegal methods used by the FBI and turned a blind eye toward others.

This authorization for the FBI to assume the functions of a political police

force was done without legislation, which would have had to be proposed and debated in Congress. It was accomplished instead by "executive order," a device that was rapidly assuming a major place in the operations of the government and would increasingly become a major mode of governing in the decades to come.

On September 6, 1939, Roosevelt issued an executive order directing the FBI "to take charge of investigative work" in matters relating to "espionage, counter-espionage, sabotage, subversive activities and violations of the neutrality laws." The key phrase was "subversive activities," and the most important decision was to include this slippery concept in the list of responsibilities given the FBI. While there were federal laws against espionage, sabotage, and violation of US "neutrality," no law explained what "subversive activity" might consist of.

Two days later Roosevelt — again by executive decree — made a "finding" of the existence of a "national emergency." This allowed an increase in military spending without having to ask

Congress for additional appropriations, thereby avoiding a sharpening public debate over the US government's march toward war. Simultaneously, the president ordered an expansion of the FBI's forces. His objective, Roosevelt told a news conference, was to avoid a repetition of "some of the things that happened" during World War I: ...

It is to guard against that, and against the spread by any foreign nation of propaganda in this country which would tend to be subversive — I believe that is the word — of our form of government. ...

The historical evolution of the FBI is part of a broader phenomenon in the United States. Underlying the threat today to the rights of privacy and freedom of association is the arbitrary rule by an expanding federal executive power. This power carries out policies at home and abroad that it is less and less able to openly proclaim or mobilize majority support for. It relies increasingly on covert methods to accomplish hidden or half-hidden objectives.

March **BOOKS OF THE MONTH**

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War games end

Continued from front page

The cancellation of the inflammatory exercises follows the North Korean government’s suspension of nuclear and ballistic weapons tests.

The U.S. government says it also plans to scale back or cancel smaller military exercises it holds in Korea. President Donald Trump has admitted that the military exercises were “provocative.”

The announcement came just days after a two-day summit between President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Hanoi, Vietnam. The meeting ended Feb. 28 without an agreement.

Negotiations are continuing. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo told the press March 4 that he hoped Washington would send another delegation to Pyongyang in the next few weeks.

North Korean officials said that they offered to destroy the Yongbyon nuclear weapons facility in exchange for lifting some of the sanctions, but that Washington expected more.

‘End all U.S. sanctions!’

The ending of the war exercises can be used to strengthen the fight against the U.S. economic, financial and commercial sanctions on North Korea. The sanctions have accelerated a decline in the country’s exports, increasing shortages and worsening the conditions facing millions of working people there.

The U.S. rulers have based tens of thousands of troops in South Korea since first dividing the country in two

after World War II. They installed the Syngman Rhee dictatorship there and drowned a series of uprisings by workers and farmers in blood. During the 1950-53 Korean War, U.S.-led forces used carpet bombing and napalm, and over 4 million people were killed. Entire cities were leveled. It was the first time the U.S. rulers lost a war, and they have refused ever since to sign a treaty ending it. There are still some 28,500 U.S. troops in South Korea today.

US war exercises: A provocation aimed at Korean people

The announcement by Washington that it has decided to permanently cease the Pentagon’s massive annual war “games” in Korea is welcome news for working people everywhere. The Foal Eagle and Key Resolve spring maneuvers are a reminder of the scale of the devastating military power U.S. imperialism brandishes in its intervention there.

In 2018, Foal Eagle alone mobilized some 11,500 U.S. soldiers and 290,000 South Korean troops. The exercises included flights of fighter-bombers, practice amphibious landings and assaults on North Korean nuclear missile facilities, and the mock seizure and execution of North Korean leaders by special operations forces.

The war exercises have included practice for battles near the Demilitarized Zone that divides the Korean Peninsula. The Pentagon called the simulated raids its “Korea Massive Punishment and Retaliation” plan.

The maneuvers are billed as “joint” exercises. And on paper Seoul has day-to-day control of its own military. But since the 1950-53 Korean War, Washington has had formal control over the South Korean army in any conflict. The U.S. military brass calls the shots.

Since 1992 the war drills have aimed to prepare U.S.-led forces to attack long-range artillery the North Korean government deploys near the border, which is capable of destroying much of the South Korean capital, Seoul.

— TERRY EVANS

LETTERS

Prisoners need right to vote

Create a movement that will push for a bill in Congress that will allow all state and federal inmates the right to vote. This will change the paradigm on all elections for all the people.

A prisoner
Pennsylvania

Capitalism not the problem

You are doing the social evolution movement and your readers a disservice by painting the enemy as “capitalism.” The real enemy is a government-created distortion of capitalism called monopolism. History is full of examples of the failure of economic plans which restrict or eliminate private property rights of individuals. When governments use the color of law and brute force to limit the little guy from making a living by pre-

venting his/her access to financing and markets and reserving that “privilege” to the wealthy insiders, this is “monopoly” not “level playing field” of competition. The wealthy hate capitalism; and love monopolism.

Pat Palmer
via email

Editor’s note: What you call “monopolism” is an inextricable consequence of capitalism. One can’t exist without the other. We hope you are following our coverage of Ocasio-Cortez and the “socialist” wing of the Democratic Party. They have nothing to do with socialism. Socialism is not big government, or a bunch of welfare programs. And it’s not an ideology, schema or doctrine. When we speak of socialism we mean the movement of the working

SWP STATEMENT

Join the pickets, build solidarity with striking Wabtec workers!

The following statement was released March 6 by Osborne Hart, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Philadelphia, and Malcolm Jarrett, SWP candidate for Pittsburgh City Council, as they joined solidarity actions with members of the United Electrical Workers union on strike at Wabtec in Erie, Pennsylvania.

Working people everywhere should come to the aid of the 1,700 workers on strike at Westinghouse Air Brake Technologies in Erie, Pennsylvania. The members of United Electrical Workers Locals 506 and 618 aren’t fighting just for themselves. Their fight to defend their jobs, wages and working conditions — especially against Wabtec’s efforts to impose a deep and divisive two-tier wage — is a battle for all of us.

Working people have been taking it on the chin for decades as the bosses press to make workers and farmers pay for the crisis of their capitalist system.

Wabtec boasts that it has a “proven track record” of implementing “market-based wage structures.” These are code words for slashing wages and speedup to boost their profits on the back of workers.

Other working people can see what’s at stake because we are all confronted by the capitalist crisis. That’s why teachers, students and workers — those who are in unions and those who aren’t — have been bringing food, wood for fires to keep the picketers warm, and other solidarity to the picket lines.

The capitalist media is full of blather about how strikes in industry are an aberration today, that no strike in private industry can win today. They’re wrong! Workers’ unity in action, and the broad solidarity it inspires, means we can win. That is the lesson of working-class history.

What we do today can make a difference. As Socialist Workers Party candidates and our supporters campaign door to door, at factory gates and social protests we are encouraging everyone we meet to join in solidarity with this fight. Use the *Militant* to get out the workers’ side of the story.

Go to Erie! Get your union, your church group, your community organization, your co-workers to join you on the picket lines. Send letters of support, collect aid for the strike.

With solidarity we can win!

Successive U.S. administrations, Democratic and Republican, have maintained Washington’s political and military domination of South Korea. They’ve deployed nuclear weapons in South Korea for 33 years, from 1958 until 1991, and deploy nuclear-capable ships and planes in the region.

Since 2006, when Pyongyang tested its first nuclear weapon, Washington has orchestrated 11 rounds of sanctions on North Korea, including through the United Nations.

After the Hanoi summit the South Korean government said it would take up Trump’s request to continue talks with DPRK officials. They are on board with Washington’s decision to end the massive annual war exercises.

Three-part series on Korea



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classes to take political and economic power into our own hands.

Algeria, Che and Fidel

The *Militant*’s articles on the collaboration between the Cuban and Algerian revolutions in the early 1960s reminded me of a comment my landlord made when he noticed a book about Cuba on my kitchen table. He said that when he was growing up in Algeria, it was rare to visit a home in his neighborhood and not see a photo of either Fidel or Che on the wall.

Jim Upton
Montreal, Quebec

The letters column is for all viewpoints of interest to working people. If necessary letters will be abridged. Indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

To advance their discussions with the DPRK, the South Korean government looks to initiate joint economic projects with North Korea with Washington’s approval, despite continuing U.S. sanctions. Seoul has discussed a common rail network with the North and would like to reopen a joint industrial park in Kaesong, North Korea.

Ending the sanctions would accelerate this process further and open more opportunities for workers and farmers to fight to end the division of Korea.

Liberal opponents of President Trump screamed that the latest summit was a disaster. In its Feb. 28 issue, the *New York Times* editors charged that Trump’s “fawning

over dictators like Mr. Kim continues to erode the moral foundation that for generations has supported American diplomacy.” They quote unnamed CIA sources prophesizing that North Korea will never give up its nuclear weapons.

But the momentum from the Pentagon announcement presages further progress. An agreement that rids the entire Korean Peninsula

of nuclear weapons would be welcomed by working people there and around the world.

The U.S. propertied rulers maintain a massive nuclear arsenal of some 6,450 warheads. The only time nuclear weapons have ever been used is when Washington bombed the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, annihilating some 100,000 people in Hiroshima alone. Steps to eradicate these weapons are in the interests of all working people.

Trump has told Kim he supports making an end-of-war declaration, which could lead to formally announcing the end of the Korean War — a key demand of Pyongyang — but has not yet done so.

“We should demand the U.S. government immediately sign a peace treaty ending the war against the Korean people,” Galinsky said, “on top of ending their sanctions.”