US flu outbreak toll caused by for-profit ‘care’ system

Cuba’s revolution shows different road possible

Crisis deepens in Democratic party in fight over nominee

BY TERRY EVANS

The crisis wrecking the Democratic Party is escalating amid debate over selecting a candidate capable of preventing what the party considers “unthinkable” — President Donald Trump winning reelection in November. And their debate over what kind of ideology to run on is getting sharper. None of this presents a way forward for working people.

Only the Socialist Workers Party ticket, Alyson Kennedy for president and Malcolm Jarrett for vice president, and the over 20 SWP candidates backing it across the country, present a course forward based on a working-class line of march.

Democrats supporting Bernie Sanders want to make the party — that acts to defend the interests of the U.S. imperialist rulers — more explicitly socialist in name. And he has been winning a plurality in the party’s 2020 caucuses and primaries so far.

Centrists are stepping up efforts to stop him. Some hope Michael Bloomberg can use his billions to buy the party in fight

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Assad regime offensive in Syria brings devastation

BY TERRY EVANS

The offensive against rebel forces and civilians in Syria’s Idlib province carried out by the Bashar al-Assad regime and its backers in Moscow and Tehran has intensified since December. The assaults have forced 800,000 people to flee their homes, the biggest single displacement of people in Syria’s civil war.

Some 80% of those fleeing are women and children. The regime’s coalition forces have retaken a third of the province, as well as most of the remaining pockets of rebel forces in adjacent Aleppo.

Assad and his supporters have also clashed with Turkish troops in Syria, who back many of the rebels in Idlib and have engaged in clashes with U.S.-backed Kurdish forces elsewhere. Turkish troops based in a series of observation posts have also come under fire. And Washington unleashed an airstrike on Assad’s forces

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Sign up to go on May Day Brigade to bring solidarity, learn about Cuba

BY JANET POST

The deadline for working people and youth from around the world to sign up for the upcoming May Day brigade to Cuba is set for March 27. The 15th May Day International Brigade of Voluntary Work and Solidarity with Cuba, sponsored by Cuba’s Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), will run from April 26 to May 10.

A highlight of the brigade will be

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Editorial: Join Asarco strikers at Feb. 24 rally

A debate: Marxism and the fight against Jew-hatred

Eyewitness to Iran protests: ‘They lie, trample our rights’

—On the picket line, p. 7—

For second time in 2 months CP oil train derails and burns

Airline catering workers stage nationwide protests

Above, figures as of Feb. 19 in flu health crisis. So far this year alone 31 million U.S. have caught the flu. Inset, Palomar Medical Center triage tent in Escondido, California, Jan. 3, set up because of growing influx of flu patients. Under capital’s health care is a commodity.

FLU IMPACT IN US

250,000 HOSPITALIZATIONS

12,000 DEATHS

US flu outbreak toll caused by for-profit ‘care’ system

Cuba’s revolution shows different road possible

By Roy Landersen

The public health crisis caused by the coronavirus outbreak in China threatens — if it becomes an international pandemic — to overwhelm the profit-driven system of “health care” of the U.S. and other capitalist rulers. For the greater part of humanity in countries kept underdeveloped by imperialism, like in Africa, the result would be far worse still.

“In the capitalist world, medical care is a commodity to be bought and sold for profit. If you have to see a doctor or go to a hospital, the first question you’re asked is: How will you pay?” said Martin Koppell, of the Socialist Workers Party and a Pathfinder editor, at a Feb. 10 event launching the new book, Red Zone: Cuba and the Battle Against Ebola in West Africa, at the Havana International Book Fair. “In the U.S. we don’t have a system of medical care. There is a system of medical insurance, for the profit of the wealthy owners.”

As of Feb. 19, Covid-19, as this strain of coronavirus is called, has

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‘Asarco wants to take everything away,’ strikers say, build Feb. 24 rally

By Deborah Liatos

Strikers at the Asarco mining complexes in Arizona and Texas are gearing up for a Feb. 24 solidarity rally at the Phoenix Convention Center outside the Society for Mining, Metallurgy and Exploration National Conference. The labor movement in the area is building the action.

“We’re taking on the company that wants to take everything away from us. They want us to go four more years without a raise,” Lyle Murphy, president of United Steelworkers Local 5252 and a striking worker at the Ray Mine in Kearny, Arizona, says on a union-made video. “We’re not

Continued on page 3

SWP campaign: Back workers’ fights for better wages, working conditions

Dennis Richter, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress in California, discusses party’s working-class program with dental assistant Mayra Mejía in Lathrop Feb. 16.

By Bettyse Stone

LATHROP, Calif. — Socialist Workers Party candidates campaigning for the party’s national ticket headed by Alyson Kennedy for U.S. president and Malcolm Jarrett for vice president are talking with workers about the party’s platform to confront the economic, social and moral crisis caused by capitalism.

Dennis Richter, the party’s candidate for Congress in the 57th District in California, and campaign supporters spent the day in this town of 22,000 people a couple hours east of

Continued on page 3

By Terry Evans

The crisis wrecking the Democratic Party is escalating amid debate over selecting a candidate capable of preventing what the party considers “unthinkable”—President Donald Trump winning reelection in November. And their debate over what kind of ideology to run on is getting sharper. None of this presents a way forward for working people.

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Continued on page 12
A debate: Marxism and the fight against Jew-hatred

A debate has unfolded in the Jewish Press, the largest Jewish weekly in the U.S., over the origins of Jew-hatred and how to fight it. The Dec. 27 issue reprinted a Dec. 17 statement by Seth Galinsky for the Socialist Workers Party. Two weeks later it printed a letter to the editor attacking the party's views, as well as the book promoted by Galinsky, The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation, by Belgian revolutionary Abram Leon.

The SWP statement points out that “the scapegoating of Jews for economic and social problems and the violence it breeds is a deadly threat to all Jews, religious and secular, in allwalks of life and of all viewpoints.”

The statement was issued in response to the murder of three people at a kosher market in Jersey City, New Jersey, Dec. 10 in an anti-Semitic attack. It called on “working people, their unions and other working-class organizations to join us in speaking out against Jew-hatred and all acts of anti-Semitism violence.” (See Dec. 30 issue of the Militant.)

The statement noted that “Jew-hatred plays a unique role under capitalism. When capitalist rulers’ hold on power is threatened by a rising working-class movement, the bourgeoisie will fund and build up rightist forces and try to convince small-business people facing disaster, demoralized workers and others that their problems are caused by rabacious Jewish capitalists. Their goal is to provide a scapegoat to divert us from seeing the real enemy — the capitalist system itself.”

The SWP statement also took on the anti-Semitism that is rampant in the left, including under the banner of “Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions against Israel.” And it encouraged all those who oppose Jew-hatred to read The Jewish Question, where Leon wrote that “there is no solution to the Jewish question under capitalism, just as there is no solution to the other problems posed before humanity — without profound social upheavals.”

The editor of the Jewish Press wrote that “since socialist literature — especially in light of 20th century history — is often tragically comic to read (and since socialists have on occasion actually helped people), we thought it worth-while to share Galinsky’s statement.”

One reader of the Jewish Press, Stephen Norwood, a professor at the University of Oklahoma, wrote to attack the SWP statement. His letter to the editor was printed in the paper’s Jan. 29 issue.

In the interest of furthering the neces- sary debate on where Jew-hatred comes from and how to combat it, we reprint Norwood’s letter below and Galinsky’s response.

‘Pernicious anti-Semitic tract’

Last month, the Jewish Press published a statement by Socialist Workers Party candidate Seth Galinsky, in which he promotes Abram Leon’s The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation. That work is actually one of the most pernicious anti-Semitic tracts the Left has ever produced. Ignoring the Chris- tian (and Islamic) theological roots of anti-Semitism, Leon identifies Jewish “usury” as the cause of pogroms from the Middle Ages to modern times.

As I explained in my book Antisemi- "tism and the American Far Left (2019), Leon went beyond previous Marxist writers in declaring that medieval pro- hibitions against Jews owning land or working as artisans were “a fable.” He claimed that Jews were psychologi- cally driven to moneylending. Guilds that excluded Jews were not motivated by “religious animosity or racial hatred,” according to Leon. They didn’t want Jews because they considered usury and moneylending “abhorrent.”

A militant anti-Zionist, Leon insisted that the Jewish population had been widely dispersed across the Middle East, North Africa, and the Mediterranean long before 70 CE, with Judea containing only its “smallest” and “least vital” part. It is deeply disturbing that many contemporary far leftists and black mili- tants have been attracted to Leon’s combi- nation of anti-Zionist invective and crude economic stereotyping of Jews.

Stephen H. Norwood

Professor of History and Judaic Studies University of Oklahoma

Fight against Jew-hatred

Professor Stephen H. Norwood, in his Jan. 29 letter, tries to discredit the Socialist Workers Party’s uncompromising opposition to Jew-hatred in the statement in my name printed in the Dec. 27 Jewish Press. The SWP has combated anti-Semitic persecu- tion and violence from our origins. By falsely claiming the party’s views are anti-Semitic, he sets back the fight against such heinous acts.

Norwood does no favors to the book the SWP statement points to as an essential account of the causes of Jew- hatred in the imperialist epoch: The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation by Abram Leon. Leon, a fighter in underground workers committees in Belgium during the Nazi occupation, wrote the book under those long- derous conditions. He was arrested in 1944, sent to Auschwitz, and executed in the gas chambers at age 26.

Professor Norwood’s letter makes it clear how Leon’s explanation that Jew-hatred is rooted in class society and, as the past century proves, has reached its peak at times of savagery under capitalism and im- peace, is denied as a “pernicious anti-Semitic tract” is dem- agogy pure and simple.

By distorting Leon’s views, Norwood distorts the movements of Jewish anti-Zionists. He aims to discourage them from reading how the rulers use anti-Semitism at times of deep social crisis to scapegoat Jews, and to divert attention from the real cause of misery and war for hun- dreds of millions — capitalism’s dog-eat-dog operations and values.

When Norwood writes off the his- toric place of the working class in the battle to end Jew-hatred of all kinds. It is the class that can and will lead broad layers of the population to fight along side Jews against anti-Semitic acts and put an end to capitalism, the source of outrages against Jews, once and for all. Read the book and make up your own mind! It’s available to order at pathfinderpress.com.

Seth Galinsky

Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress, 10th District, New York
Continued from front page

Oakland Feb. 15. When Richter met dental assistant Mayra Mejía at her home, he pointed to the campaign button he was wearing for Kennedy and Jarrett, which includes the call “For Workers Control of Production” and “Build a Labor Party.”

Mejía said she is well aware of the struggle workers are having just to survive, but is unsure what can be done about it.

“What’s key is what we as workers can do together,” Richter said. “A tiny group of billionaires rule this country. Workers need to strengthen our unions, defend our wages and working conditions, and build a labor party that can move toward taking power away from the exploiting class.”

Homelessness and rising rents

Mejía said there are a lot of homeless people in the nearby town of Manteca. “They have been dumped there by the government in San Francisco,” she said. “That’s really wrong don’t you think?”

“They need jobs that pay enough to have a home and support a family,” Richter said.

The Socialist Workers Party 2020 campaign platform, Richter said, calls for solidarity with workers fighting for higher wages and urges a fight “for a federal government-financed public works program to put millions to work at union-scale wages building roads, bridges, hospitals, child care centers, mass transportation and quality affordable housing workers need.”

“Even out here away from the city rents are rising,” Mejía said, pointing out what is the most basic across the street is renting for $2,000 a month.

“The problem of homelessness among working people will not be solved without a revolution,” Richter explained. With a workers and farm-ers government in power, he said, “we could solve these problems quickly. We would see the homelessness as part of us, the working class.”

Richter and campaign supporter Libby Kiser said that Cuba is an example of what is possible when working people carry out a revolution and take power away from the capitalist class. Kiser was part of the International May Day Brigade to Cuba last year. (See article on front page on this year’s brigade.)

“Cuba is famous for medical care that is not bought and sold as a commodity, but is a right,” Richter said. “They sent doctors to Africa to fight Ebola. It wasn’t charity.” They con-sidered the people in those countries as “part of the solution, treating them with respect.”

“If you go to Cuba, you will see this kind of solidarity,” added Kiser. “You see people on an everyday level helping each other.”

Richter and Kiser encouraged Me-jía to consider going on the May Day brigade, where she could learn about how workers who made a revolution have changed their conditions and their lives themselves. Mejía subscribed to the Militant and bought a copy of The Clintons’ Anti-Working-Class Rec-ord: Why Washington Fears Work-ing People and said she wanted to learn more about the brigade. Richter and Kiser promised to keep in touch.

BY GEORGE CHALMERS

GRAND SALINE, Texas — This Militant worker correspondent joined Socialists Party Workers 2020 campaign platform for a federal government-financed public works program to put millions to work at union-scale wages building roads, bridges, hospitals, child care centers, mass transportation and quality affordable housing workers need.

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BY GEORGE CHALMERS

GRAND SALINE, Texas — This Militant worker correspondent joined the Socialist Workers Party 2020 campaign platform

This is the SWP’s fighting campaign platform to confront the economic, social and moral crisis caused by capitalism.

UNIONS/FOR A LABOR PARTY Support workers’ struggles to organize to defend themselves, to use union power on behalf of ourselves and all working people. Workers need their own party, a labor party. One union for all drivers — taxi, Uber, Lyft, other app-based and car service drivers! Support farmwork-ers’ fight to organize unions and for safe working conditions.

AMNESTY FOR ALL UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS in the US, a life-and-death question for the unions to unite workers and cut across divisions the bosses use to drive down wages, for ac-cess to driver’s licenses for all.

JOBS Fight for a federal government-financed public works program to put millions to work at union-scale wages building roads, bridges, hospi-tals, child care centers, mass transpor-tation and quality affordable housing workers need. Set the minimum wage to allow workers to have a home and support a family.

OPPOSE WASHINGTON’S WARS US hands off Iran, Venezuela and Cuba.

US troops out of Afghanistan, Korea, the Middle East. End US colonial rule in Puerto Rico.

CUBA’S REVOLUTION — AN EXAMPLE End the US rules’ economic war against Cuba; US out of Guantánamo. The Cuban Revolution in 1959 showed it is possible for workers and farmers to transform themselves in struggle, to take political power and upset capi-talist exploitation.

HEALTH CARE FOR ALL Fight for universal, government-guaranteed cradle-to-grave health care, and re-tirement income for all.

ABORTION Defend women’s right to unrestricted access to family planning services, including the right to safe, se-cure abortions.

ISRAEL & PALESTINE For the rec-ognition of Israel and of a contiguous Palestinian state. For the right of Jews to return to Israel as a refuge in the face of capitalist crisis, Jewish hatred and murderous violence.

WORKERS CONTROL OVER PRO-DUCTION The bosses and their gov-ernment lie to working people about their production costs and profits, while they insist they can’t afford to pay higher wages. Demand they open their books for inspection by workers and consumers. To prevent capital-ist collusion and thievery — and their production of shoddy and dangerous goods like the Boeing 737 MAX workers in their millions will need to fight for control of production, a step towards taking political power and a school for running the economy for ourselves in the interests of all.

JUSTICE SYSTEM Fight against po-lice brutality, racist discrimination and the entire capitalist injustice system with its frame-ups, “plea bargains,” outrageous bail and outrageous prison sentences, all of which disproportion-ately hit workers who are Black. For the right to vote for ex-offenders and all workers behind bars.

POLITICAL RIGHTS Defend demo-cratic rights — the right to vote, to free speech and assembly and to bear arms, under attack from Democrats and Republicans alike. Stop FBI and other government spying, harassment and disruption.

PRISONER RIGHTS End solitary con-finement. End suppression of the Mili-tant, books and newspapers by prison authorities. Abolish the death penalty, an anti-working-class weapon in the hands of the rulers.

FARMERS — WORKERS ALLIES ON THE LAND To put a halt to farm fore-closures, bankruptcies and skyrocket-ing rural debt, we demand nationaliza-tion of the land. This puts the soil at the service of the farmers who till it, as opposed to controlled by the banks and landlords. We demand the government fund and sustain farmers’ costs of produc-tion, including their living expenses.

Working people must organize and act independent of the ruling capital-ists and break from their political par-ties — the Democrats and Republicans.

For a labor party and a movement of millions to fight for these demands along a course to replace the rule of the exploitative capitalist class with a workers and farmers government.

Join the Socialist Workers Party campaign!

Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for president, told Miguel Martinez that SWP calls for amnesty for all undocumented workers in U.S. on Feb. 18 in Grand Saline, Texas.

Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy to cam-paign Feb. 18 in this town of 3,000 surrounded by cattle ranches in east Texas.

“The Socialist Workers Party can-didates speak for the interests of the working-class,” Kennedy told Miguel Martinez, who has worked for 21 years for a veterinarian, treating farm animals. “We need to stand up and fight for better conditions. Through this we build up self-confidence that can lead to building a much more powerful movement. That’s what will
SWP candidate talks program with Black farmers in Georgia

BY SAM MANUEL

ALBANY, Ga. — One of the largest workshops at the Federation of Southern Cooperatives 37th annual conference on Feb. 13-14 discussed the challenges Black farmers face in keeping land they inherited from parents or grandparents who had not left wills deeding the farms to their children. Under the Jim Crow racial segregation of those times, Black farmers faced serious difficulties getting trusted attorneys to draft wills or just didn’t see any compelling need for it.

Rachelle Fruit, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate from Georgia, attended the conference to learn more about what working farmers face and to introduce them to her campaign. The federation was formed in a half-dozen southern states by African American farmers. It assists them in getting credit, legal help to retain ownership of their farms, technical training and other services. Many of the more than 200 conference participants — including both farmers, others who work with them or who want to become farmers — were attracted to the SWP platform, which calls for an alliance of farmers — were attracted to the SWP platform, which calls for an alliance of workers and farmers in the face of today’s capitalist economic crisis.

“I’m glad I found you,” Ken Webb, 27, who grew up on a farm in Chocowinna, Mississippi, told this worker-correspondent, who accompanied Fruit to the conference. Webb currently works on soil and water conservation projects. “My family has three farms growing soybeans, cotton and other crops. “Many Black farmers are getting old and a lot of farms and land are being lost. We need to get more young people farming,” he said.

Manuel told Webb that the party is running Alyson Kennedy and Malcolm Jarrett for U.S. president and vice president. The party’s 2020 platform calls for amnesty for all undocumented immigrants in the U.S., Kennedy said.

Martinez bought a subscription to the Militant and a campaign button. Kennedy spoke with 85-year-old D. Mango who told her, “I get no pension from the church,” where she worked as a secretary for 43 years. “I live on Social Security.”

“We’ve always been Democrats. But I did vote for Trump because I didn’t like Hillary Clinton and couldn’t bring myself to vote for her,” she said. “I’ll probably vote for Trump again because the Democrats are just what he has done in building the wall,” Means said. “They’re blaming Trump for kids being left, but the parents should stop bringing kids illegally.”

Rachelle Fruit, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate from Georgia, talks to Kevin Stanley, a U.S. Army veteran and peanut farmer. Stanley agreed with Fruit that what matters in the elections is which class interests a party represents and which class holds political power. Kennedy explained why her campaign supports the fight for amnesty for undocumented immigrants. The U.S. capitalist class depends on immigrant labor, including those who are undocumented and live in fear of deportation, to better compete against its rivals around the world. By paying immigrants less they push down the wages of all workers and increase capitalist profits.

That’s why the 2020 campaign platform says that amnesty for all undocumented immigrants is “a life-and-death question for the unions to unite workers and cut across divisions” fostered by the bosses, she said.

Kennedy will be campaigning in Kentucky next and then heads to Arizona where she will join a Feb. 24 protest rally by copper miners on strike against Asarco.

Three books to be read as one...

...about building the only kind of party worthy of the name “revolutionary” in the imperial epoch.

See distributors page 10 or visit pathfinderpress.com

SWP: Back workers’ fights for better wages, conditions

Continued from page 3

change our conditions, not the elections.”

“I have been involved in several strikes myself in Mexico when I worked at PEMEX oil company in the 1980s and ’90s,” Martinez said. “There are not many jobs here. Some people work in the agricultural nurseries that grow tomatoes and sweet potatoes getting just $5 an hour.”

Kennedy pointed out that the party’s 2020 platform calls for a fight for a federal government-financed public works program to put millions to work at union-scale wages.

Martinez also raised the problems faced by immigrant workers who don’t have U.S.-authorized documents. Many can’t return to visit their home countries, even for funerals of parents and other close relatives. The SWP calls for amnesty for all 11 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S., Kennedy said.

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MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—NEW JERSEY

Union City: Coronavirus and the Health Care Crisis — female workers, health service professionals.

RS: 801 Palisade Ave., 2nd floor. Tel. (551) 257-5773.

Join the Socialist Workers Party campaign in 2020! Campaign for what you are for, not who you are against!

☐ I want to endorse the Socialist Workers Party ticket of Alyson Kennedy for president and Malcolm Jarrett for vice president.

☐ Here is my contribution of $___________ to help spread the word. (Make checks to Socialist Workers National Campaign)

☐ I would like a 12-week subscription to the Militant, the campaign newspaper. ($5 enclosed, checks payable to the Militant.)

Socialist Workers Party 2020 Campaign, 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, NY, NY 10018. Tel. 347-871-0282 Email: socialistsworkers2020@gmail.com
Eyewitness to Iran protests: ‘They lie, trample our rights’

The Militant

March 2, 2020

The following interview was conducted in December 2019 with a participant in one of the protests by workers and youth that spread across Iran’s cities, working-class suburbs and rural towns in mid-November. It was received by the Militant in the mail early this year.

The demonstrations in response to a Nov. 15 hike in gasoline prices announced by the government. As described below, those who took to the streets were propelled by mounting opposition to Tehran’s military actions and political interference across the Gulf region, from Iraq and Syria to Lebanon and Yemen. With their living and job conditions squeezed by tightening imperialist economic sanctions, more and more working people in Iran are fed up with the bourgeois clerical regime’s fmshing funds — and forfeiting the lives of young soldiers and militia fighters — to serve the expansionist aims of these privileged classes, rather than meeting economic and social needs of the population.

The November demonstrations were a continuation of Iran-wide mobilization in December 2017 and 2018, also based among poorer working people in cities and rural areas. (See “Revolution, Counterrevolution and War in Iran: Social and Political Roots of Workers’ Protests that Swept 90 Cities and Small Towns,” by Steve Clark, in New International No. 7 — $14 earlier this year.)

Moreover, despite bombast from Iran’s counterrevolutionary rulers that regime-staged public lamentations for Gen. Qassem Soleimani in January were not included.

Due to political conditions in Iran, names of individuals and places below are not included.

Q: Question: Where do you work?

A: Answer: I’m a bus driver. I moved here a number of years ago, after I was fired from a factory job in the province where I was born and raised. I couldn’t find work there to support my family.

Q: Tell us a little about the protests in November.

A: On the first morning of the protests I was on my bus route in a nearby town. A lot of workers live there and travel back and forth to work in factories and other jobs in the city. In one of the town squares protesters blocked my bus. They parked a car in front of me, another behind me. So I got off the bus and joined in.

The protesters told me they knew it would be too risky for me to simply stop driving the bus and join them on my own. So they made sure I’d be stuck there. It was about 10 in the morning on Saturday [Nov. 16]. There were also other buses that had been passing by and were stopped, closing off the road.

The people in cars had been blocked too. A lot of them were on their way to work or had other plans for the day. But most didn’t complain. They just turned off their engines and joined the demonstration.

The protesters let ambulances and others carrying on urgent business get through. An Afghan family, all women, were on their way to Qom, a holy city here in Iran, as you know. They told only did the protesters let the women through but also gave them directions to the byway to bypass the city. The protesters helped out travelers with special problems. People on the streets also served food and water. Everyone helped out in their own way, from their own pockets and their cars. One person bought a big box of ice cream. Others brought biscuits, bread, cheese. It was spontaneous. Participants wanted to make sure no one was hungry.

On one corner demonstrators kept a fire going. They baked potatoes so anyone who wanted to could get one. The weather was cold. I had a flask of tea in my bus so I offered it to someone, then he shared it with several women in the crowd.

‘Just regular people’

Q: How many and what kinds of people were there? Why did they say they were protesting?

A: There were people of all ages — young and old, men and women, children with their parents. I talked with workers, drivers, employees, small workshops, street vendors, gardeners, farmers — people from all walks of life.

A number of women had brought large mats with them. When the yegan-e vezhe showed up [special police units established by the government after protests in 2007], the women pulled their mats in front of the police vehicles, very neatly, and sat down to prevent the road from being reopened. Although the ground was frozen and cold, the women just talked among themselves nonchalantly, not paying any attention to the yegan-e vezhe. It was quite a sight.

If the police tried to open another road, these ladies would move some of their mats and sit there too. They weren’t being controlled by anyone. There’d been no preparations. They were just regular people.

The turnout that day was big, even where I was, near the entrance to the town. But people told us the main street and central square were much more crowded, stretching all the way to where we were. They said women had come out wearing kafan [shrouds, a symbol of being ready for martyrdom].

A bus marked with yegan-e vezhe insignia came by and pleaded with us to let them through. They said they were carrying people who were sick. But when the passengers got off the bus, we saw they were soldiers. One woman went over and took a selfie with the soldiers, while other protesters took movies of the scene. The soldiers were shifting from one part of the square to the other, attempting to reopen a road. But the women followed them and tried to keep them from attacking anyone.

At one point, as the women opened the road for an ambulance, the driver of a pickup truck suddenly grinned his engine and tried to force his way through. One of the women, someplace between 50 and 60 years old, I’d say, stood in front of the truck to stop it. The driver let her and went on. People followed the driver and caught up with him, since the roads were very clogged. They gave him a good lesson.

People tried to take the woman who’d been hit to hospital, but she said no. “Even if I broke a hand or foot,” she said, “I want to stay and protest.” Another woman, who lived nearby, got some medical gear and treated her. When an ambulance showed up to transport the injured woman to a hospital, she still wouldn’t let the emergency care workers take her away. So they treated her in the square. “I’m sitting right here until we get some results,” she said.

Q: Was the pickup truck driver alone?

A: Yes, he was alone. I saw it happen. That’s all I know.

When the government announced the gasoline price increases, protests began right away, all over the country. When my bus was blocked there weren’t yet any army or yegan-e vezhe units. The troops came later, around noon. They didn’t use any violence that day, at least not where I was. They didn’t shoot at anyone, nothing like that.

The people kept walking alongside them, not even saying slurs, just silently protesting.

Q: So why were some women in the main square wearing kafan?

A: There had been sharp clashes with the government in this region in the late 1980s. Troops shot demonstrators, and there had been casualties.

What were people saying?

Q: What kind of discussions did you have?

A: People said it was a mistake for the government to increase gasoline prices. That affects the price of everything, they said.

The government denied this, of course. “Other prices won’t go up,” the authorities announced. “We won’t let that happen.”

But prices did go up, right from day one. Farmers who wanted to transport a load of fruit or vegetables, for example, had to pay more, since gasoline prices were higher. So producers became more expensive at the market, as did other things. Everyone was unhappy about this.

Even a few days later, after the govern-ment announced it would subsidize

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The Militant March 2, 2020 5
Eyewitness to Iran protests

Continued from page 5

people to compensate for the price hikes, everyone thought it was a lie. “They only want to stop us from protest- ing,” people said.

Q: The women who joined the pro- tests, including those who sat down on the mats to block the police, were most of them wearing the traditional veil, the chador.

A: Some did, and others wore mantos [a long coat with a head scarf]. All of them — both those in more traditional dress, and those wearing what the regime calls “bad hijab,” that is, not fully veiled — sat on the same mats together in front of the yeşen-e vizhe cars.

In the areas where I was, both on Saturday and later in the week, the proportion of women to men was almost 50-50. The women shouted and chanted more, since men knew they were more likely to be targeted.

Most cars at the protests had both men and women in them. Sometimes only the driver was a man, but there were women drivers too. It’s not like before. Women drive a lot more these days.

Q: What were some of your other discussions?

A: One person said protests like these don’t get anywhere in Iran, since they don’t lead to change. I replied that many revolutions initially don’t have a lead- ership. Leaders emerge in the course of the struggle. Meanwhile, if there’s no leader right now, people themselves gather and decide what to do tomorrow, the next day and so on. They take action.

I also mentioned some books to read about lessons learned during revolu- tions elsewhere. We can bring these experiences to bear in our own coun- try, I said. We need to know which po- litical lessons fit the conditions of this country, of course. Then we can use them to get some results.

I pointed out that certain provocative actions by individuals and small groups in protests over the past year or so are not in the interests of working people. Maybe agents of the government itself encourage some of these acts, in order to create chaos as a pretext for repres- sion. But I didn’t see anything like that to create chaos as a pretext for repres- sion. But I didn’t see anything like that.

The town where my bus was blocked, on the other hand, is semi-industrial as well as agricultural. There are many farmworkers, and other working people too — quite poor, semi-employed, or who haven’t been able to find jobs. In a few neighboring towns there are steel mills or other factories, but many people in the belt surrounding the city are agri- cultural workers who also find industrial jobs when they can.

Q: What happened as you drove home in your bus later?

A: I was stuck for about an hour on the highway, which had been blocked by demonstrators. They had erected metal fencing to close the road and also set up speed bumps — to prevent yeşen-e vizhe from racing through, I think. People had set up some checkpoints, but they just looked quickly at passing ve- hicles, lifted the barriers, and waved you on. They didn’t damage any cars.

When I got back into the city there were obvious signs of conflict between demonstrators and the yeşen-e vizhe. I didn’t see any clashes with my own eyes, but you could tell small fires had been set along some roads. There was residue from burst tires. Streets were still wet where troops had deployed water cannons against demonstrators. And protesters were still congregating on overpasses above the highways.

The yeşen-e vizhe vehicles were po- sitioned everywhere. Confrontations continued the next day and the days afterward in the lower part of the city, the poor and working-class neighbor- hoods. But in the upper part of the city, the better-off middle-class areas, life mostly went on as normal, except for the special squads on patrol.

In the areas where I was, both Saturday and later in the week, the proportion of women to men was almost 50-50. The women shouted and chanted more, since men knew they were more likely to be targeted. Most cars at the protests had both men and women in them. Sometimes only the driver was a man, but there were women drivers too. It’s not like before. Women drive a lot more these days.

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Q: Did anyone say anything about government policies in the region, in Iraq or in Syria, for example?

A: Yes. Some people complained that the government is taking money from us and spending it in Syria. And they might break into homes to break the government from Syria, or from Lebanon or Iraq, or used to attack actions by workers and students here.

I asked around, and saw a group of 60 to 70 people riding motorcy- cles. The riders were wearing civil- ian clothes, with helmets and shields. They’d been driving people off the streets. Maybe they were the Basij [a paramilitary auxiliary of the Iran Rev- olutionary Guard Corps, used along with army units and the police to break- up protests and harass people opposed to government policies].

I approached one of the bikers and looked straight at him. He covered his face and turned away. I told him it was impolite to turn his back to me. “Just look where you’ve ended up,” I said. “You’re heating up fellow citizens from your city just because they protest.” He didn’t say anything, looked ashamed and disappeared into the crowd.

All types of people were out on the streets, but mostly young — from early teens through their 20s and 30s. A lot of university students. They were standing around, protesting, confronting the Ba- sij and yeşen-e vizhe.

I stopped at a place where water cannons had been used earlier against people who’d been sitting down in the streets. I talked with some protesters still there. They told me that when the sit-down began, it had been quiet, with no problems. But later on, when the police doused them with water and the motorcycles came, protesters defended themselves.

“If they beat us, we fight back,” one of them told me. He said they had a right to do so. I pointed to a guy agitation- ing the crowd — “An eye for an eye!” — and so on. He had covered his face, so you couldn’t see his eyes. “Wouldn’t it have been better to continue your sit- down protest?” I asked. The person I was talking with said no, “They beat us. We had to fight back.”

I walked up the hill to a bridge where a nearby police station had been burned. Then through some oth- er squares and streets, including one where another police station had been set on fire. In one of the poorer districts the streets were still very crowded, and clashes continued for a few days.

There were also many people in cars with their families still on the roads. Not many single men, mostly families. Most hadn’t just gotten caught up in the traffic. They had come from other parts of the city or nearby towns to be with the people. By now, of course, a lot of them were shouting so they could get through, but I didn’t hear anyone complaining about the protests or why the roads had been closed.

Q: What about Sunday and later in the week?

A: The authorities announced that government trucks and other vehicles shouldn’t go out on the streets. Under no circumstances, they said. On Sun- day, which is a workday here in Iran, some government employees were told not to bring their cars to work. The parking lots were used to stage the yeşen-e vizhe vehicles.

Many workers participated in the mobilizations. But most employees for various companies were at work dur- ing the protests. Neither the govern- ment nor private bosses ever called off work. I also didn’t hear about workers coming out together from any factories to join the actions.

Q: Have any of your co-workers, or bus drivers, had the same type of ex- periences?

A: There was no bus service on Sat- urday and Sunday. Workers had to walk to work and back home. Most trucks had gotten stopped too, both in the city and surrounding towns. Some truck drivers, when they got to work, just left their ve- hicles. They don’t like to get involved. Workers for the government electrical power and gas companies, telecommu- Continued on page 7

Feb. 11 march in Basra, Iraq, one of many across country challenging government and pro-Tehran militia attacks on protest encampments in Baghdad and other southern cities.

Revolution,
Counterrevolution and War in Iran:
Social and political roots of workers’ protests that swept 90 cities and small towns in 2018
by Steve Clark

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Mona Hoobehfekr/ISNA


Continued on page 7
For second time in 2 months, CP oil train derailers and burns

BY JOHN STEELE

MONTREAL — A Canadian Pacific oil train derailed, crashed and burned near the small community of Guernsey, Saskatchewan, Feb. 6, the second time this has happened there in two months.

With toxic smoke spewing into the air 80 people were forced to evacuate their homes. It took over 36 hours for firefighters to douse the flames. Luckily there were no injuries or deaths.

The derailment of the 104-car train is testimony to the fact that since 2013, when a runaway oil train exploded and killed 47 people in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, the rail bosses’ drive for profits at the expense of safety continues.

The day after the derailment, Federal Transport Minister Marc Garneau ordered rail bosses to cut the speed of trains over 20 cars long that carry crude oil and propane, but for only 30 days.

The TC-117 tanker cars that burned at Guernsey were supposed to be puncture-resistant and met “all Transport Canada standards,” said Canadian Pacific bosses. They were designed to replace the kind of tanker cars that exploded in the Lac-Mégantic disaster.

Over the past few years the amount of crude oil being shipped by rail across Canada has skyrocketed — from 126,230 barrels a day in 2013 to 230,960 a day in 2018 — generating huge profits for Canadian National and Canadian Pacific.

“We are transporting bombs running on 1930 and 1940 infrastructure with negligence,” said maintenance manager Bertelle Bellefleur, spokesperson for the Citizens Coalition Committed to Rail Safety in Lac-Mégantic, warned in La Presse two years ago.

The derailment at Guernsey shows that dangers to the environment and to working people’s lives are not primarily caused by which method is used to transport oil or rail — but that the fact bosses control transportation and are indifferent to the impact of their cost cutting and spedup on workers’ lives.

Their relentless drive for profits underlines the need for rail workers to organize and use union power to defend themselves. Last December, 45,000 Canadian National workers carried out an eight-day “strike for safety.”

Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president, and Malcolm Jarrett, the party’s candidate for vice president, urge a fight to cut train lengths to a maximum of 50 cars and a crew of four — two on the front and two on the rear of the train — in order to make freight transportation safer for workers and those who live near the tracks.

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Iran protest eyewitness: ‘They lie, trample our rights’

Continued from page 6

nacions — none of them were able to drive the truck across the tracks.

My co-workers at the bus depot were all for the protests. They thought the government should block back the hike in gasoline prices. “Why doesn’t the government pay any attention to the people?” many said.

In response to the protests the authorities announced they would provide a subsidy to make up for the gasoline price increase. But in the section of the company where I work only two of the 15 workers has gotten the subsidy. I was astonished that I didn’t qualify, for example.

The government says it will give the gasoline subsidy to 60 million people. But everyone says that’s a lie. When I talk with people waiting in line to buy bread, for instance, most say they haven’t received the subsidy either.

Some people say they did get the subsidy, and they’re surprised to hear others haven’t. Of the two who got the subsidy where I work, one is new, he moved here from out of town and has a contract. The other one is a janitor. But 13 have gotten nothing so far.

Q: The fact that not many were working on trucks in your area seems to be an exception to what happened elsewhere. Hundreds were killed around the country; some sources say somewhere over 1,000. The government even shut down the internet to keep the truth from getting out. What was different where you were?

A: About all the workers there are casuals, especially in the downtown areas of the city. I didn’t observe any deaths or injuries myself, but co-workers told me about them.

Q: One final question. What happened here in November was very important. How have these events affected the thinking of workers in Iran? Do you know? Their spirit and morale? Has it changed their view of the government?

A: I have co-workers of all ages, including some who are veterans manned during the war. [In 1980 Iran was invaded by Iraq’s Saddam Hussein regime, supported by Washington, soon after the 1979 revolution that brought down the U.S.-backed Iranian monarchy.] We didn’t talk much about religion. Now I no longer hear almost any of these co-workers say they can trust this government. Or that it tells the truth.

Many of these workers are religious. One is very devout, and in the past, when I said anything negative about actions by top government and religious figures, he’d warn me to talk about them in individuals respecting them. He insisted on always using their honorific titles, not just their names. Now this very same worker talks about the government leaders lie. Most didn’t use to say that. Now they do. This includes my own wife, who I couldn’t talk with about these questions for many years. Now she says the government lies. That they cheat the people. That they trample on the rights of the people. But they don’t care about anything but their own pockets.

Workers say straight out that these government leaders lie. Most didn’t use to say that. Now they do. This includes my own wife, who I couldn’t talk with about these questions for many years. Now she says the government lies. That they cheat the people. That they trample on the rights of the people. But they don’t care about anything but their own pockets.

Before it was impossible to carry on a discussion like that with most workers I know. That’s changing.

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Airline catering workers stage nationwide protest

SEATTLE — Nearly 100 airline catering workers and supporters rallied and marched at the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport Feb. 14 demanding their bosses negotiate a new contract. The workers are part of 20,000 union members at LSG Sky Chefs and Gate Gourmet who prepare and load on airplanes the food served to passengers.

Many airlines such as American, Delta and United made $74 billion in profits last year but won’t share any of this with the catering workers,” Eunice How, an organizer for UNITE HERE Local 8, which organizes catering workers at the Sea-Tac airport, told the rally.

“We have been in contract negotiations for over one and two years at LSG Sky Chefs and Gate Gourmet, but haven’t made any satisfactory progress. Workers make $13.75 an hour, less than the Washington state minimum wage, and most can’t afford health care coverage.”

She said workers were demonstrating at 16 airports around the country, including at JFK in New York, San Francisco, Detroit, Honolulu and here in Seattle.

Workers voted to authorize a strike in June, but are considered “essential” by major airlines such as American and Delta, and thus are not allowed to strike during the busy travel season through the summer. Many would like to strike, the organizers said, but they fear the company would break the law to prevent them from doing so.

“Major airlines such as American, Delta and United made $74 billion in profits last year but won’t share any of this with the catering workers,” Eunice How, an organizer for UNITE HERE Local 8, which organizes catering workers at the Sea-Tac airport, told the rally.

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“Iraq is using union-busting tactics, not just their names. Now this very same worker talks about the government leaders lie. Most didn’t use to say that. Now they do. This includes my own wife, who I couldn’t talk with about these questions for many years. Now she says the government lies. That they cheat the people. That they trample on the rights of the people. But they don’t care about anything but their own pockets.

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The Militant March 2, 2020 7
Cuban Revolution taught us to go where we’re needed in the world

Book on Cuba’s volunteer medical mission against Ebola in West Africa launched at Havana International Book Fair

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

HAVANA — The successful effort by Cuban medical volunteers to combat the Ebola epidemic in West Africa “was not the work of doctors who were on their own. Behind them was an entire country and a revolution that made this possible,” former Cuban Foreign Minister Enrique Ubieta said.

Ubieta was addressing an audience of some 500 at the Havana Book Fair Red Zone: Cuba and the Battle Against Ebola in West Africa, published by Pathfinder Press in both Spanish and English. The event, part of the Havana International Book Fair, is hosted by the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP).

Based on firsthand reporting, the book tells the story of the internationalist volunteers who helped fight the deadly 2014-15 Ebola outbreak in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. It’s told largely through accounts by the Cuban participants themselves.

“The red zone” was the special section of the clinics and hospitals where medical workers were isolated and cared for.

The panel presenting Red Zone featured Dr. Carlos Castro Baras, headed Pathfinder Press in Cuba and Afghanistan; Dr. Carlos Hernández, former head of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP); and Dr. Leonardo Dreke, former deputy commander of the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces.

The event was held as part of the Havana International Book Fair which ran from March 1 to 11.

The product of a social revolution

Sandra Ramirez, ICAP’s director for North America, welcomed everyone to the event, which was held at the organization’s Friendship House. Mary Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press and a leader of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party, thanked ICAP for sponsoring and publicizing the book presentation.

“For us, defense of Cuba’s socialist revolution is not only an obligation born of solidarity,” Waters told the audience. “It’s a necessity, inseparable from preparing working people in the United States to emulate the example you have given the world.”

Red Zone “gives a vivid picture of how Cuba’s health care system and working-class internationalism are a product of deep-going social revolution that transformed millions of men and women,” said Koppel. “It can’t be grafted onto the U.S. or other capitalist countries.”

He recalled the opportunities to see this firsthand when he was on the U.S. Labor Movement’s Committee for a Democratic Cuba, which he headed from 1974 to 1979. He said he had learned firsthand “the kind of men and women it has produced” in the Cuba revolution.

Koppel, a former Castro supporter, said he had been moved by the way the Cuban doctors and nurses fought to save the life of every single patient in their care. Castro Baras, head of the Cuban brigade in Guinea, was responsible for the lives and well-being of the 36 medical volunteers under his direction. “This experience made me a better person,” he said. “You learn not just to think about yourself! You learn how to work with others under life-end-up-or-death conditions. We held the high name of Cuba in our hands.”

A book by Castro Baras, Year of the Ebola Virus, launched at the book fair the following day. The title, “Always living through Day Twenty-Four,” refers to the 21-day period after the diagnosis for the medical personnel faced the constant uncertainty of whether they had been infected months before the months they were served in Africa.

Ubieta took up Castro Baras’ remark that he had returned from the Ebola mission a better person. “People ask me, ‘What does Cuba gain from its acts of internationalism?’” he said. “The doctors are Cuba’s best ambassadors.”

“Cuba’s army of internationalism and the kind of people it has produced are an example that can never be stopped,” said Ubieta.

“Don’t keep quiet about this. We won’t let them try to expel doctors from places where those lives of African children when they are killed are ours, too. Not heroes created in a laboratory, but with their own hands. That is Cuba’s way of saying: "We’re ready to do this again.""

The tone of the meeting was set by Dreke, who addressed the audience in Sign up to go on 2020 May Day Brigade to Cuba

Continued from front page

joining over a million Cubans in the annual May Day march in support of their living revolution and to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the May 1956 Revolution. It is the most powerful way to tell U.S. imperialism: ‘Hands off!’

The brigade takes place as the U.S. military steps up its economic war against the Cuban Revolution, ordering to isolate and penalize the people of Cuba. The brigade will also provide a unique opportunity for supporters of the revolution in the U.S. and elsewhere to meet and talk with Cuban workers, farmers and youth, to become better armed to return home armed with the same determination to counter Washington’s lies.

“When I heard about May Day, international brigades, I started to think about that maybe I should give one of my construction tool delivery driver Amelie Lantagne told the Militant while attending a reception for the May Day flight participants at Havana’s Revolution Jan. 25. “When we come back home, we can say to our friends and family in the U.S., ‘We were there in getting out the truth about the situation in Cuba.’

The reception was organized by the Communist League in Canada and endorsed by the Revolutionary Solidarity Quebec-Cuba, the Cuban solidarity organization in Montreal. Communist League leader Philippe Fiset encouraged everyone to join the meeting because “we all have been given the opportunity to participate in this unique event.”

Some of the events were co-sponsored by the Central Organization of Cuban Workers and Organizaciones Sindicales Independientes labor union. The May Day action will be followed by a May Day rally in solidarity with the May Day celebration in Havana.

Cuba’s army of internationalism and the kind of people it has produced are an example that can never be stopped,” said Ubieta.

“You can never forget the army in white coats that Fidel sent to our continent,” said Fidel Carin, a fourth-year student at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. “We Cubans feel the same pride. It’s the same organization. It’s the same pride.”

“I want to thank you,” he said, “and to tell you: ‘Hands off Cuba!’

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“Just as the Cuban combatants in Angola set an example that can never be erased, the heroic actions of Cuba’s army of white coats will occupy a place of honor.” — Fidel Castro, October 2014

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Above left:-the book Red Zone: Cuba and the Battle Against Ebola in West Africa, published by Pathfinder Press in both Spanish and English. The event, part of the Havana International Book Fair, is hosted by the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP).

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He recalled the opportunities to see this firsthand when he was on the U.S. Labor Movement’s Committee for a Democratic Cuba, which he headed from 1974 to 1979. He said he had learned firsthand “the kind of men and women it has produced” in the Cuba revolution.

Koppel, a former Castro supporter, said he had been moved by the way the Cuban doctors and nurses fought to save the life of every single patient in their care. Castro Baras, head of the Cuban brigade in Guinea, was responsible for the lives and well-being of the 36 medical volunteers under his direction. “This experience made me a better person,” he said. “You learn not just to think about yourself! You learn how to work with others under life-end-up-or-death conditions. We held the high name of Cuba in our hands.”

A book by Castro Baras, Year of the Ebola Virus, launched at the book fair the following day. The title, “Always living through Day Twenty-Four,” refers to the 21-day period after the diagnosis for the medical personnel faced the constant uncertainty of whether they had been infected months before the months they were served in Africa.

Ubieta took up Castro Baras’ remark that he had returned from the Ebola mission a better person. “People ask me, ‘What does Cuba gain from its acts of internationalism?’” he said. “The doctors are Cuba’s best ambassadors.”

“Cuba’s army of internationalism and the kind of people it has produced are an example that can never be stopped,” said Ubieta.

“You can never forget the army in white coats that Fidel sent to our continent,” said Fidel Carin, a fourth-year student at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. “We Cubans feel the same pride. It’s the same organization. It’s the same pride.”

“I want to thank you,” he said, “and to tell you: ‘Hands off Cuba!’

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“Just as the Cuban combatants in Angola set an example that can never be erased, the heroic actions of Cuba’s army of white coats will occupy a place of honor.” — Fidel Castro, October 2014

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go going to take it any more.

Murphy told the Militant by phone Feb. 24 that the strikers are keeping up a spirited picket line and continue to get real community support. He said the local will be sending members to the Phoenix rally.

Some 1,700 workers from seven unions have been on strike since Oct. 13 at the Mission and Silver Bell mines near the town of Rogers in the Arizona-Sonora desert complex in the “cooper triangle” east of Phoenix; and Asarco’s refinery in Amarillo, Texas.

The workers are fighting against a vicious union-busting drive by the bosses, who refuse to negotiate. The company boasts it will impose steep concession demands, including extending a decade-long wage freeze for most of the miners, tripling health care costs, and restricting the unions’ right to protect workers on the job.

Arizona is the heart of the copper industry in the U.S. and the owners have fought for decades to break the unions and boost their profits. Miners there are fighting a three-year pitched battle in the 1980s with Phelps Dodge bosses at the Morenci mine, the largest in the state. The company was bought by bankrupt unions and the National Guard sent in by the governor.

While the strikers have shut down Asarco’s Amaﬁlo refinery and Hayden smelter, the company continues some production at other complexes. It advertises for personnel on its website and uses supervisors, non-union contractors and other scabs who have crossed the picket line.

“Right now, for the scabs, there’s a huge potential for injuries,” said Murphy. “The supervisors are doing the work and giving the contracts to other workers who have crossed the picket line.”

“We are the heart of the copper industry in the U.S. and the owners have fought for decades to break the unions and boost their profits. Miners there are fighting a three-year pitched battle in the 1980s with Phelps Dodge bosses at the Morenci mine, the largest in the state. The company was bought by bankrupt unions and the National Guard sent in by the governor.”


“We are standing in solidarity with our fellow strikers and demanding that they be allowed to work under fair and safe working conditions. We are calling for real community support. The strikers are keeping up a spirited picket line, and we want to see more people coming to support them.”

The strikers were demanding to see Reed as soon as possible, and a full release as long as it takes.

“ReeD’s decadeslong fight to clear his name and receive a new trial.”

“Chicago judge throws out Gerald Reed’s acquittal.”

Chicago Torture Justice Center. “If they were really about justice, Gerald Reed would be free today.”

Reed’s attorney, Elliot Zinger, challenged Henne1’s assertion that Gainer’s decision barred only a verbal statement to detectives, not the written confession. “Where does it come from that Reed is free today to a new trial, and now he’s basically- a perjurer and sent back to the penitentiary?”

Special Prosecutor Robert Milan backed the judge’s decision, claiming that there is other “extensive evidence” that Reed is guilty.

Mark Clements, himself a police torture survivor who spent 28 years behind bars and is now with the Torture Justice Center, told the Militant, “If someone is free to confess and that confession is used to convict them, then the entire prosecution is tainted and the defendant should receive a new trial.”

Family members and supporters of Reed plan to continue the fight for his release for as long as it takes.

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Toll is result of for-profit system

Nurse attends coronavirus patient in Wuhan, central China, Feb. 6. Chinese government admits responsibility for “shortcomings, deficiencies.” Seven medical workers have died so far.

Continued from front page

Assad regime offensive in Syria brings devastation

Continued from front page

Cuba's system of primary health care is admired around the world. Voluntary Cuban doctors and nurses are being deployed to the most needy areas of the world, including to battle the Ebola virus in West Africa in 2014-15. Donning protective gear, they would enter the highly infectious area of a deadly threat. Some 30 million Kurds comprise an oppressed nationality, living in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria.

US get out of the Middle East!

The misery inflicted on the Syrian people by the Assad dictatorship and its backers is part of broader conflicts and wars and rivalries throughout the region, as Washington, Moscow, Tehran, Ankara and other capitalist regimes jockey to protect their political and economic interests.

"U.S. intervention in Syria and Washington's sanctions on Iran are an extension of the bosses' assaults on working people at home," Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for president, told the Militant Feb. 16. "My campaign demands the immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces from the Middle East and an end to the sanctions on Iran. These fall hardest on workers and farmers who continue to fight government assaults and to protect the impact of the Iranian rulers' wars."

"Our starting point is solidarity with the Iranian people for their independence and sovereignty," she said. "And we back those in Iran and Iraq who are carrying on the fight today against their governments and against Tehran's military interventions in the region."
EDITORIAL

Join Asarco strikers at Feb. 24 rally!

Workers forced out on strike by Asarco copper bosses in Arizona and Texas are coming together Feb. 24 to protest and to plan at the conference of the Society for Mining, Metallurgy and Exploration at the Convention Center in Phoenix. Some 6,000 industry people will be at the conference, sponsored by Freepoint-McMoRan, one of world’s largest copper companies and operator of the nonunion Phelps Dodge mine in Morenci.

Some 1,700 copper miners have been on strike since October against Asarco bosses’ efforts to bust their unions, with no negotiations or end in sight.

This important labor battle is little known outside of the Southwest. The mines are located in rural areas and the boss press keeps a near blackout on coverage of the fight.

The strikers need — and richly deserve — solidarity and support of other workers and their unions. They should be invited by unions across the country to speak about the stakes in the strike. They need financial and other donations to continue to staff the picket lines and provide for their families.

Allyson Kennedy, the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president, will be joining the miners at the protest and visiting their picket lines afterwards.

She’ll be speaking about this important struggle and soliciting support as she tours around the country.

While many Democratic Party politicians in Arizona pledge support to the strike, they have done little to put real pressure on Asarco. The road forward is not to tie workers’ interests to the Democrats — or to any capitalist political party. Only growing independent working-class action and solidarity can make a difference in this or any labor battle.

From one end of the country to the other, workers know that we face ongoing attacks from profit-driven bosses, in the mines, mills, factories, warehouses, transport companies, retail behemoths like Walmart and Amazon, and their governments in Washington and the 50 state capitols.

The strength we have is our numbers and the fact that workers produce all the wealth in this country from our labor. If we use this power on our own behalf and in solidarity with others, here and around the world, we can begin to make gains.

Join us Feb. 24 in Phoenix! If you can’t make it, help get out the word about the miners’ fight. The Militant carries firsthand coverage, help get it around. Invite the strikers to come to your city and speak.

Their fight is all of our fight.


democrats crisis deepens in fight over candidate

Continued from front page

nomination is often seen as “progressive,” despite his record as a Republican New York City mayor who targeted African Americans with “stop and frisk” policing.

Bernie is reportedly considering Hillary Clinton — who called working-class Trump voters “deplorable” in 2016 — to be his running mate. Bloomberg shares her low opinion of the abilities of working people. “If you don’t have a very good idea of what’s going in this room, no offense intended, to be a farmer,” he told students at a University of Oxford business school meeting in 2016. But to get a job in today’s hi-tech economy, “you have to have a lot more grey matter.”

Sanders and others on the party’s left think the only way for the Democrats to win is to run on a platform of democratic socialism, of reforms to regulate capitalism while keeping the bosses in power.

The middle-class left is coalescing around Sanders’ campaign. A group of anarchists, Stalinists and Democratic Socialists of America leaders wrote an open letter to the Green Party urging it not to run for the presidency as a Green Party but to back whoever Democrat ends up with the nomination — to stop Trump. The Party for Socialism and Liberalism says its presidential candidates won’t run in “swing states,” where they say the Green’s party in 2016 cost Hillary Clinton the presidency. They’ll back Sanders there if he gets the nomination.

The schemes of Sanders and the left — like Medicare for all, a basic income to ameliorate the worst effects of capitalist exploitation. But this isn’t what workers need — niche exploitation — but a way to create the bosses, and bosses and their capitalist state as the “broad base” of the state, is the “working class” with power to make the changes.

Sanders has defended capitalist rule at home and around the world and endorsed the rulers’ hatred towards the Cuban Revolution. He demands Cuba’s workers and farmers get rid of their government and “move towards a more democratic society.” Washington’s code words for overthrowing the socialist revolution.

In fact, neither Trump nor any of the Democratic hopefuls offer anything for workers. All are bil-lionaires themselves or firmly committed to the system of the ruling rich.

Democrats consider Trump a special breed of illegitimate and evil president. They continue to search for any way to turn the 2016 election and prevent him from running in November. Rep. Adam Schiff, a central leader of their failed impeachment drive, accused Trump of a new “abuse of power” Feb. 11 — following the president’s tweets about a do-nothing-dared sentence for his former associate Roger Stone.

Much of the legislation passed by Democrats in the House is purely aimed at embarrassing the president, not at passing laws that could address some relief for working people. The toothless War Powers resolution passed Jan. 9 had the stated purpose of preventing Trump from using military force against Iran without congressional approval. But House Majority Leader Nancy Pelosi insisted the resolution be nonbinding, saying she doesn’t want this gesture to be “dimmished” by Trump being able to veto it.

The working-class road forward

All the candidates seeking the Democrats’ nomination claim that the uphill in jobs and the U.S. economy still leaves millions of people struggling, because of the policies of the president. They are the other 99% who speak as if his administration has directed a “great American comeback” and happy days are here again.

But workers and farmers don’t need convincing about what we face — we know that only too well from our own experiences. The question is what to do about it, for a working-class road forward.

The Democrats share Trump’s blindness to the capacities of working people to change our conditions and an unwillingness to ever consider that those whose labor produces all wealth should run society.

They too view workers as too stupid to be trusted with making any important decisions. These have to be taken out of their hands, by having their rights cut back or being “muzzled” until they vote the right way.

Only the Socialist Workers Party and its presidential ticket of Kennedy andJarrett call for organizing workers to fight for higher wages and better working conditions today. They point to the capacities of working people to join together in their millions and to transform ourselves as we engage in the kinds of struggles necessary to take power into our own hands.

Many workers recognize there are more jobs today and sense we have more room to stand up to the bosses and find another way. After years of declining real wages and worsening conditions, they are looking for how to use union power effectively and advance working-class solidarity.

Walmart turns loose its robot delivery cars

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

While Amazon is gearing up to begin drone deliveries directly to consumers’ doorsteps, Walmart has partnered with robotics company Nuro and is building self-driving vehicles to deliver groceries. They plan to run these vehicles in Houston early this year.

These retail behemoths are locked in cutthroat competition to speed up processing orders and making deliveries. They hope to deal blows one against the other as they maneuver for the “last mile” of “workers’ backs.”

And Walmart’s computer-driven delivery vehicles could pose a serious safety hazard to working people as they scurry around our cities and towns.

In February, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration granted approval to Nuro to operate its robotic vehicles, and to do so without having to meet federal safety standards that apply to cars and trucks driven by human beings. Nuro’s vehicles won’t have side and rear-view mirrors, nor windshield wipers, steering wheels or brake pedals, as well, of course, no people.

They are equipped with laser, camera and radar sensors, and will travel interspersed in regular traffic on public roads, making curbside deliveries. If something should go wrong, the bosses insist, human monitors would be ready and able to intervene remotely.

Nuro announced its autonomous vehicles called “R2” — were also testing deliveries for Kroger in Arizona and Houston. (The Militant doesn’t know if this “R2” is related to the “R2-D2” in “Star Wars” movies.)

“The company said it plans to deploy fewer than 100 vehicles this year,” The Associated Press reported, “but has permission from NHTSA to eventually run as many as 7,500.”

“By replacing heavy passenger vehicles,” Nuro pushed in a public statement, the company “is ushering in a new era of neighborhood-friendly and socially responsible transportation.”

In March 2018, a woman in Tempe, Arizona, was struck and killed by a self-driving Uber test car traveling at 40 mph while she was walking her bike across the street.

LETTERS

Sinister precedent

The article about Maya Forstater’s legally upheld firing for “offensive speech,” which the U.K. tribunal decreed a violation of mandated language (Feb. 17 Militant), accurately highlights the corrosive effects of such actions on freedom of speech and thought.

The contemporary obsession with uncovering prejudices, including “invisible white supremacy,” has gone one step further, according to Hobart, University of New South Wales, School of Law, professor Jenny Kelly, the university researchers devised a “test” in the late ’90s that employers now use to determine the “unconscious biases” of their workers. It has even been suggested by the test creators that potential jurors be subject to the test.

No boss or bureaucrat should be given the right to rummage around in our thoughts, conscious or otherwise, under any circumstances. Under the guise of optimizing “fairness” and “diversity” and reducing racist and sexist attitudes, this test sets a sinister precedent indeed, one that workers should resist strenuously.

Jenny-Kelly

Hobart, Australia

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