

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Gov't tells Hurricane Laura victims, 'You're on your own'

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 84/NO. 36 SEPTEMBER 14, 2020

Belarus strikes, protests call on brutal regime to step down

BY ROY LANDERSEN

Tens of thousands of people converged in Minsk, the capital of Belarus, Aug. 30, chanting and flying white-red-white opposition colors, as they demanded the resignation of President Alexander Lukashenko on his birthday. Blocking their way to his palatial residence were riot police and armored vehicles.

This popular upheaval erupted Aug. 9 after Lukashenko moved to prolong his 26-year rule by claiming victory in a blatantly rigged election and then arresting thousands and unleashing cop violence on protesters.

Strike committees were formed leading to a wave of political strikes in major state-owned factories and mines. These, along with a mass walkout at Belaruskali, hit the heart of the regime's economic base. Belaruskali is a huge salt mine and processing plant in Soligorsk, which produces a fifth of the world's potash. These workers added their voices to the protests demanding new elections, the release of all the detainees

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Kenosha rally says, 'Charge cop who shot Jacob Blake!'

BY DAN FEIN

KENOSHA, Wis. — Some 2,000 demonstrators marched and rallied here Saturday, Aug. 29, to demand "Justice for Jacob," in what was described as a "Peace March" hosted by the family of Jacob Blake Jr.

Kenosha cop Rusten Sheskey shot 29-year-old Blake Jr. seven times in the back Aug. 23, leaving him paralyzed from the waist down. In a cell-phone video recorded by an eyewitness, Blake walks around the front of his SUV to the driver's side door as cops follow him with their guns drawn. As Blake opens the door, Sheskey grabs his shirt from behind and opens fire.

"There were seven bullets in my son's back," Blake's father, also named Jacob Blake, told the rally. "Hell yeah, I'm mad."

"I ask the police in this town what gave them the right to attempted murder on my child?" he said. "What gave them the right to treat my son like an animal?"

After his son was taken to a hospital

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Fight for gov't-funded public works program to create jobs



South Florida Sun Sentinel/Carline Jean

SEIU 32BJ union members demand jobs back, safe conditions, unemployment pay Aug. 13, after Delta airlines contractor Eulen America laid off 100 workers at Ft. Lauderdale airport.

Cut the workweek with no cut in pay to stop layoffs!

Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for president, issued this statement Sept. 2. Malcolm Jarrett is the SWP candidate for vice president.

SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STATEMENT

The Socialist Workers Party's 2020 candidates are campaigning around a program of working-class action centered on the need for the labor movement to mobilize workers in their millions to fight against the scourge of widespread unemployment.

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Action needed now against impact of mass joblessness

BY SETH GALINSKY

Massive unemployment is not going away. It's increasing competition among workers for jobs, as millions face devastating conditions, including the spectre of eviction. Rising numbers are forced to "choose" between paying medical bills, putting food on the table or covering transportation costs.

These same "choices" also face millions of those still holding a job

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Back Canadian grocery workers on strike against disparaging wage cut



The Telegram/Juanita Mercer

Aug. 23 picket at Dominion store in Mount Pearl, Newfoundland. Some 1,400 workers rejected contract and went on strike after bosses took back \$2 pay raise begun during pandemic.

BY BEVERLY BERNARDO

"I don't know, but it's been said, Galen's pockets are lined with gold. I don't know, but it's been said, it's time for workers to get ahead," strikers at a St. John's, Newfoundland, Dominion grocery store chanted, kicking off a solidarity rally streamed live from three Unifor picket lines in the Canadian province Aug. 31. Galen Weston is the owner of

the Dominion chain stores and his family is the third richest in Canada.

On Aug. 22 some 1,400 Unifor Local 597 members at 11 Dominion stores across Newfoundland went on strike. The key issues are low wages and for reinstatement of 60 full-time jobs that were eliminated in 2019. Unifor Local 597 President Carolyn Wrice told the

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Letters urge Florida prison authorities to overturn ban on 3 issues of 'Militant'

BY SETH GALINSKY

Authorities at the Florida State Prison have now banned three of four issues of the *Militant* since July 31, falsely charging that each one contains an article that is "dangerously inflammatory" and "advocates or encourages riot, insurrection, rebellion, organized prison protest, disruption of the institution, or the violation of the federal law, state law, or Department rules."

If the impoundment of an issue by one Florida prison is not overturned, the paper is banned in all of the state's 143 prison facilities.

Readers of the *Militant* can help defend the constitutional rights of the *Militant* and its subscribers behind bars by getting co-workers, church groups,

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Yakima workers, SWP candidates talk union building

BY EDWIN FRUIT

YAKIMA, Wash. — Socialist Workers Party presidential and vice-presidential candidates Alyson Kennedy and Malcolm Jarrett, on national tour across the country, explain that the party's

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Seven-month 'truce' ends Montreal port strike

DSI strikers keep up picket lines, win support in contract fight

Letters say, 'End *Militant* ban'

Continued from front page
union officials and locals, and other organizations to send letters to the prison system's Literature Review Committee, calling for it to lift the bans.

The first issue banned was no. 30, for the article "Prisoners Demand Release from Overcrowded Jails" by Jeff Powers, which describes the protests aimed at alleviating prison conditions in California amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Issue no. 33 was banned for the article "After Pennsylvania Prison Ban Is Revoked, Florida Prison Bars 'Militant,'" which reports on the ban on issue no. 30.

"The *Militant* has a right to publish factual information, and Florida prisoners have a right to access it," James Tagger wrote the Literature Review Committee from PEN America, the U.S. branch of the international literary and human rights organization. The charge prison officials used to impound issue no. 30 "is unfounded and infringes upon the *Militant* and its readers' First Amendment rights."

The *Militant's* lawyer, David Goldstein, has formally appealed the ban on no. 30 and is preparing appeals for issues 31 and 33.

Issue no. 31 was barred for an article "Workers Oppose Federal Cops, Antifa Violence in Portland."

It argues that "working people don't like the vandalizing of government buildings, looting and other violent acts, whether justified as political protest or the action of gangs. These aren't acts of frustration, but conscious destruction, which give the government pretexts to unleash more cop brutality.

"Workers also don't like the introduction of federal cops, especially ones trained for military combat, which take advantage of the violence to chip away

at the right to protest."

How can Florida prison officials claim that an article that denounces violent acts by both the government and antifa is "dangerously inflammatory?" The Florida officials don't say.

The *Militant* has challenged the bans on over 40 issues of the paper in Florida prisons over the last seven years, and succeeded in overturning the big majority. But despite repeated requests, the Literature Review Committee has never explained the basis for upholding a ban or what criteria they use for overturning them.

One prisoner subscriber who wrote in to make sure the *Militant* knew about the ban said, "This institution has a notorious track record of rejecting any publication that opposes their conservative views and beliefs."

'Human and constitutional rights'

A number of California supporters of prisoners' rights have written to the Literature Review Committee. "Prisoners have both a human and a constitutional right to think, study and read about things that matter — even if the things in question are 'sensitive' or controversial," wrote Carl Jech, a humanities professor in Cupertino, California.

"Powers is simply reporting the news as it happened," wrote Charlie Hinton, a writer and performer from San Francisco. The argument that the paper is dangerously inflammatory "is bogus."

The ACLU Foundation Florida, Amnesty International USA, Florida Press Association and Reporters Committee on Freedom of the Press are among the groups that have written to the Literature Review Committee calling for lifting of the ban on the socialist newsweekly.

"The number of letters we have re-

Thousands join DC march against cop brutality



Reuters/Jonathan/Ernst/Pool

Thousands converged on Washington, D.C., to voice their outrage at cop brutality, at the "Get Your Knee Off Our Necks" march Aug. 28.

Sponsored by Al Sharpton, his National Action Network and Martin Luther King III, the march was held on the anniversary of the historic 1963 civil rights March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

March organizers were focused on getting out the vote in the November election to defeat President Donald Trump. Kamala Harris, Democratic nominee for vice president, spoke to the crowd by video.

Family members of those killed and brutalized by cops filled the stage, including relatives of Jacob Blake, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and many more. Many participants carried homemade signs with the names of victims of police brutality who were family members or lived in their area.

"We need to end this kind of brutality and the conditions we work in today," Yvonne Campbell, a 39-year-old machinist from Indianapolis, told the *Militant*.

— JAMES HARRIS

ceived is a good start," *Militant* editor John Studer said. "We need more. That's one way to let Florida prison officials know their denial of the rights of both prisoners and of the press are drawing increasing notice and opposition."

"Prisoners have the right to know what is going on in the world, to consider all sides to debates about the way forward for working people, to form their own opinions," Studer said. "They also have the First Amendment right to petition the government for redress of grievances, including on conditions

in the prisons. The *Militant* like other papers across the country has the right to report on this when they do so. Florida prison officials should lift the bans on the *Militant*."

Fight prison ban on the 'Militant'

Get letters of support from unions, churches and defenders of workers rights and free speech. Send to Dean Peterson, Literature Review Committee, Florida Department of Corrections, 501 South Calhoun Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399, or email to Allen.Peterson@fdc.myflorida.com, with copies to themilitant@mac.com

Send a check to the *Militant*, 306 W. 37th St., 13th floor, New York, NY 10018, earmarked "Prisoners Rights Fight."

THE MILITANT

Build fighting alliance of workers and farmers

To halt farm foreclosures, bankruptcies and farmers' skyrocketing debt, the land should be nationalized, to put the soil at the service of the farmers who till it. The 'Militant' supports fights by farmers calling on the government to cover their costs of production.



Militant/Zena Jasper

Silo in Iowa smashed by August windstorm. Farmers face growing debts, foreclosures.

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SWP, Yakima workers talk union

Continued from front page
campaign is aimed at helping workers forge a union in every workplace and a fighting working-class movement.

The SWP's program is drawn from past battles by the working-class movement and from revolutionary struggles worldwide. The course outlined can be used by fellow workers to overcome divisions in the working class, win solidarity with workers' battles around the globe, and to build the labor movement. Discussion on this perspective was at the center of the SWP candidates' Aug. 30-31 visit here in the Yakima Valley. The SWP is on the ballot in Washington.

Kennedy and Jarrett met over dinner with five workers active in the drive to organize a union at Allen Brothers in Naches, 15 miles from here. The union is called *Trabajadores Unidos por la Justicia* (Workers United for Justice).

The first group of fruit packinghouse workers to go out in a series of six strikes last May in the midst of the pandemic, demanding safe working conditions and higher wages, were from Allen Brothers. They returned to work after three weeks, having won some of their demands, and, most importantly, building their self-confidence and fighting spirit.

Agustín López, president of the new union, said they had gotten enough signatures to petition the National Labor Relations Board for a union-representation election at the plant.

Maribel Medina, treasurer of the union, said line speeds are too fast. "If the bosses see one line is going slow, they just put more bags of apples on it to speed things up," she said. "We need to get jobs rotated so you are not doing the same thing all day. Many of us have problems like carpal tunnel."

"Your fight sets an example for what all workers need, a union movement in every workplace," Jarrett said.

Union vice president Angela Lara said conditions improved after the strike. "Before they gave one mask a week to workers. Now we get two a day. There is less harassment now if you need to use the bathroom."

"It's out of struggles like yours expanding the union movement that more workers will see it's possible to build our own party, a labor party," Kennedy said. We need to break from the bosses' parties, the Democrats and Republicans.

Lara said her brother is in prison in Seattle and has been getting the *Militant*. "He has told others there about the strikes and how his sister was part of it."

Kennedy and Jarrett said they will spread word of the packinghouse workers' fight wherever they go.

They also met with Ramon Torres, president of *Familias Unidas por la Jus-*

ticia, which grew out of a four-year battle that won a union contract at Sakuma Farms in Skagit County in 2017. Torres has been helping workers in Yakima County organize.

"The strikes started at Allen Brothers and we think they are going to finish the fight with a union contract there," Torres said. "That will be an inspiration to workers at the other packing plants."

'We need our own party'

Knocking on workers' doors in Yakima, Kennedy met Elizabeth Boyle, a retired nurse. Boyle said, "Everything is getting worse for working people. Prices are going up for groceries and rent, and when the COVID virus hit Yakima a few months ago, the emergency rooms were so crowded people had to wait over night."

That's one reason we need our own party, a labor party, Kennedy said. A labor party based on a union movement would fight for universal, free, cradle-to-grave health care. Boyle got a copy of the *Militant* and *Are They Rich Because They're Smart?* by Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes.

"When anyone talks about a union at work they get fired," Teresa Harris, a plastics factory worker, told Jarrett. It's



Militant/Rebecca Williamson

Workers in fight for a union at Allen Brothers in Washington, discuss with SWP candidates. Clockwise from right to left, unionist Agustín López; SWP candidates Alyson Kennedy, Malcolm Jarrett and supporter Edwin Fruit; unionists José, Angela Lara and Maribel Medina.

always 20 degrees hotter in the plant than outside, she said, but the bosses refuse to cool things down.

"That's why we need a union and workers control of production," Jarrett said. "We need to take control over safety, health, line speed and all aspects of production out of the hands of the bosses. They only care about profits, we care about human beings." Harris subscribed to the *Militant*.

The candidates also campaigned at a shift change at Columbia Reach, one of the plants that had been on strike. Workers took the SWP platform and 15 bought copies of the *Militant*. Some workers greeted Kennedy, remembering her from when she was on their picket line in May.

Rebecca Williamson contributed to the article.

Socialist Workers Party updated 2020 platform

WORKERS NEED A UNION MOVEMENT IN EVERY WORKPLACE. The Socialist Workers Party presents a fighting working-class program to build and use our unions to defend the interests of all working people. We need to fight growing employer attacks on our jobs, wages and working conditions. Build solidarity with workers' struggles to organize and defend themselves. Use union power on our own behalf, and for all those suffering blows by the bosses and their government. One union for all drivers — taxi, Uber, Lyft and other app-based and car service drivers!

MILLIONS NEED JOBS TODAY! Our unions need to fight for a federal government-financed public works program to put millions to work at union-scale wages building hospitals, schools, housing, mass transportation and much more that workers need. Fight for a sliding scale of hours and wages to stop layoffs and the effects of runaway prices. Cut the workweek with no cut in pay! For cost-of-living clauses in every contract that raise pay and retirement benefits to offset every rise in prices!

Demand immediate national government unemployment benefits at union scale for *all* those thrown out of work as long as they need it.

WORKERS NEED THEIR OWN PARTY, A LABOR PARTY. For our unions to lead a class break from the parties of the bosses, the Democrats and Republicans. A labor party can organize workers in our millions to fight in our own interest and in the interests of all those exploited and oppressed by capital. It can chart a course to take political power out of the hands of the capitalist rulers and establish a workers and farmers government.

WORKERS CONTROL OF PRODUCTION. Workers need to fight to wrest control of production out of the hands of the bosses. Employers care about profits, not the dangerous conditions we're forced to work under. This is the only road to take control of and enforce safety and health on the job. Demand the bosses open their books for inspection by workers and consumers. Workers control of production is a school for learning to run the economy ourselves, in the interests of all producers, a crucial step alongside building a labor party to fight to take political power.

FARMERS — WORKERS ALLIES ON THE LAND. To put a halt to farm foreclosures, bankruptcies and skyrocketing rural debt, we support demands for nationalization of the land. This puts the soil at the service of the farmers who till it, as opposed to monopolization by the banks and landlords. We demand the government guarantee farmers their costs of production, including their living expenses.

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 access to driver's licenses for all.

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.

FOR RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL & OF A CONTIGUOUS PALESTINIAN STATE. The leaders of Arab states, of Israel

and Palestinian leaders need to meet and recognize both the state of Israel and an independent Palestinian state. For the right of Jews to return to Israel as a refuge in the face of capitalist crisis, Jew-hatred and murderous violence.

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

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

FIGHT POLICE BRUTALITY! Demand that cops who kill and brutalize people be prosecuted. Fight racist discrimination and the entire capitalist injustice system, with its frame-ups, "plea bargains," onerous bail and "three strike" prison sentences, all of which disproportionately hit workers who are Black. For the right to vote for ex-prisoners and all workers behind bars.

WOMEN'S RIGHT TO ABORTION. Defend women's right to unrestricted access to family planning services, including the right to safe, secure abortions.

DEFEND POLITICAL RIGHTS. Defend the right to vote, to free speech and assembly and to bear arms, under attack from Democrats and Republicans alike. Defend freedom of worship. Stop FBI and other government spying, harassment and disruption. No to middle-class radical "cancel culture" and their efforts to shut up people they deem "politically incorrect."

DEFEND RIGHTS OF PRISONERS. End solitary confinement. End suppression of the *Militant*, books and other newspapers by prison authorities. Abolish the death penalty, an anti-working-class weapon in the hands of the rulers.

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Gov't tells Hurricane Laura victims, 'You're on your own'

BY JANET POST

Hundreds of thousands of people in Louisiana and Texas remain without electricity and water, as the havoc caused by Hurricane Laura is turned into a social disaster, with working people being left to fend for themselves.

Residents returning to Lake Charles, Louisiana, should expect to live without water and electricity "probably for weeks," Mayor Nic Hunter announced.

As of Aug. 27, some 460,000 remain without power in Louisiana. Two hundred and twenty thousand have no running water.

Nineteen people died during the storm. Many of the deaths were a result of carbon monoxide poisoning, emitted by generators used by residents when their electric power failed. At least 8,000 homes were destroyed.

State officials had ordered half a million people in Louisiana and Texas to "evacuate," without providing transportation or places for them to go to. Those with no means to flee in Vermilion Parish, Louisiana, received the following instructions from the sheriff's office: "Please evacuate and if you choose to stay and we can't get to you, write your name, address, social security number and next of kin and put it in a ziploc bag in your pocket."

In sweltering heat, workers in Lake Charles are lining up in a Walmart parking lot for food and supplies from aid organizations. Some workers are

living in their cars.

Louisiana Gov. John Edwards said evacuees would be sent to hotels rather than shelters to minimize the spread of coronavirus. However, laid-off cashier Trichee Abraham told NPR she had used up all her savings staying at a hotel but had yet to receive any aid from the state or federal government.

Some area workers are taking time off their jobs to volunteer to help deal with the growing crisis created by the capitalist rulers' refusal to organize needed relief — including ad hoc groups of workers organized for disaster recovery like the Cajun Navy, Texas Task Force 1, and Team Rubicon.

In so-called natural disasters, the for-profit capitalist system and its government, at all levels, prove incapable of organizing needed preparation and resources to minimize the damage to working people.

Residents living near the BioLab chemical plant in Westlake, Louisiana, were exposed to chlorine gas when a fire at the plant, caused by the storm, unleashed smoke laced with toxins into the atmosphere. Workers at the plant had been evacuated before the fire, but people living near the facility had been told to shelter in place.

Gov. Edwards instructed them to "close your windows and doors and TURN OFF YOUR AIR CONDITIONING UNITS." Pollution from the plant is nothing new. According to the Environmental Protection Agency company bosses dumped chemicals into the Bayou Verdine, violating environment regulations on 185 occasions last year.

In Cuba no one is left on their own

As Laura tore through the Caribbean, at least 31 people died in Haiti and nine in the Dominican Republic. The storm also hit Cuba, Puerto Rico and Jamaica, but no casualties have been reported. While working people under capitalism are left on their own, the opposite is true in Cuba where workers and farmers made a socialist revolution and hold political power.

To prepare for hurricanes Cuba's Civil Defense Committees, working with trade unions, mass organizations and the government, minimize harm to



Juventud Rebelde/José Luis Guía

Damage at July 26 baseball stadium in Artemisa, Cuba, is inspected by local authorities after tropical storm Laura in August. Mass organizations respond immediately to impact of disasters.

life. Everyone knows in advance what shelter they will use or what friend or relative plans to take them in, what route the evacuation will take and which supplies to include in their emergency pack. Government authorities provide food and health care for evacuees. Special measures were taken for Laura because of COVID-19.

The Civil Defense Committees organize preparation drills, detailing what every household and workplace needs to do. Before Laura reached eastern Cuba Aug. 23 they had led the safe evacuation of 334,000 people.

After the storm 500 brigades of electrical workers were organized, taking a goal of restoring all power supplies as rapidly as possible. By Aug. 26, "98.5% of electricity had been restored," said Lázaro Guerra Hernández of the National Electrical Union.

Crops, including bananas, cassava and corn, were destroyed during the storm, creating new challenges for the revolutionary government. Increasing food production is important in the face of the worldwide capitalist crisis and the U.S. rulers' recent steps to tighten their embargo of Cuba.

Pete Kennedy built the communist movement in UK over four decades

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

LONDON — Pete Kennedy, a long-time member and supporter of the Communist League in the United Kingdom, died Aug. 19 a few months after being diagnosed with glioblastoma, an aggressive form of brain cancer. He was 61.

Kennedy joined the International Marxist Group, a forerunner of the Communist League, in his hometown of Liverpool in 1983.

For the last two decades he was part of the supporters auxiliary that is responsible for the production and distribution of books by communists, helping make it possible for the party to introduce its program to workers and youth.

Kennedy also shouldered responsibility for leading the supporters monthly

financial appeal in the U.K. and Europe.

Understanding the importance of making the *Militant* widely available to working people, Kennedy volunteered to work on the production of the audio version of the paper. This ensures it can be accessed by visually impaired readers and others who, for whatever reason, enjoy listening to the paper's content.

Making use of newly acquired Spanish-language skills, Kennedy participated this year, for the first time, as an enthusiastic volunteer at the Pathfinder booth at the Havana International Book Fair, a major literary and cultural festival in Cuba.

He had been living on Fuerteventura in the Canary Islands over the past year, with his companion Fuen de la Cruz.

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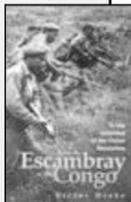
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—ON THE PICKET LINE—

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— Roy Landersen

Seven-month 'truce' ends Montreal port strike

MONTREAL — A hard-fought 12-day strike for a new contract by 1,125 Montreal port workers against the Maritime Employers Association ended Aug. 21 following the signing of a seven-month "truce" between officials of the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 375 and the MEA. For port workers the main issue is unsafe and inhuman work schedules which force them to work 19 days straight out of 21.

Several workers on an Aug. 30 shift change told the *Militant* that the struggle is not over. "The union came out of this fight stronger," port worker Claude Trépanier, with 20 years on the job, said.

The strike ended two days after the workers forced the port bosses to back down on plans to use scab labor to move 480 containers it claimed had important time-sensitive cargo.

Ottawa's minister of labor, Filomena Tassi, who engineered the truce, called its terms "non-negotiable." Karl Blackburn, CEO of the Quebec Employers Council, called the agreement "a relief," saying, "For 10 days the whole Quebec economy was taken hostage," by the strikers.

The truce, which ends March 21, was not voted on by the strikers. It rules out any further strikes by workers or lockouts by the bosses as negotiations take place for a new contract. The old one that expired in 2018 will remain in place for now.

The 27 workers who were fired over a July confrontation between strikers and scabs during an earlier four-day strike will get their jobs back. Local 375 President Martin Lapierre said the union will let "justice take its course" for nine strikers charged with criminal offenses in that incident.

— John Steele

DSI strikers keep up picket lines, win support in contract fight

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Thirteen striking members of Teamsters Local 89 have been picketing outside DSI Tunneling every weekday, rain or shine, for the past month. The workers won a bitter fight last November to win union representation, and then began negotiating for their first contract. After months of stalling by company lawyers, the unionists voted unanimously to strike Aug. 4.

Amanda Owens, a local Walmart worker, joined the striking workers Aug. 28, waving her handmade sign at cars passing by. She told the *Militant* her first picket line experience was exciting. She heard "the workers had to work 10-hour shifts and then stay over for hours of negotiations." She added, "I work four hours and I'm ready to leave."

The bosses are cutting off striking workers' health insurance starting Sept. 1. "The company is trying to put pressure on us to stop the strike," Deyago Urrutra explained to the *Militant*.

The picketers have received solidarity from several local unions, including visits by workers at TARC, Louisville's city bus service.

Owens said she understood that the workers picketed "outside in the hot sun all day" because "it's for their union. If we go through hard times we're going to need someone to stand up with us to help fight, no one should be alone."

Send contributions and messages of solidarity to Teamsters Local 89, 3813 Taylor Blvd., Louisville, KY 40215.

— Kaitlin Estill

London art gallery workers strike against job cuts

LONDON — Bookstore and cafeteria workers at the Tate and Tate Modern galleries are on strike against



Militant/Kaitlin Estill

Walmart workers bring solidarity to DSI Tunneling strikers in Louisville, Kentucky, August 28.

company plans to cut 313 jobs out of 600. The bosses cite declining revenue as visitor numbers fell during the coronavirus restrictions. "Union membership has doubled over the lockdown period," senior Public and Commercial Services union representative Cristina Petrella told the *Militant*. "More and more workers recognize that union action is our only defense."

Tate strikers joined a protest Aug. 28 of 200 called by the PCS and Unite unions at the neighboring South Bank Centre housing the National Theatre, Festival Hall and Hayward Gallery. South Bank Centre bosses announced

400 jobs, 70%, are to be cut. "Workers across the board are being hit, from ushers to cafeteria workers to librarians" PCS chair Paul Valentine told the *Militant*. "This week we're balloting for strike action too."

The protest heard talks from union and cultural figures. Poet and Unite union representative Chris McCabe, a worker for 18 years in the poetry library at the Festival Hall, read his poem "The Bottom Line," blasting the "monetization of culture." The people making the job cuts "have no poetry in them" he said.

— Jonathan Silberman

Canadian grocery workers strike

Continued from front page

media Aug. 23 that more than 80% of workers are part time, with limited access to benefits, and had not received a raise since spring 2018.

Workers began calling for a strike in June — in the middle of contract talks — when Weston's Loblaw Companies Limited, Dominion's parent company, ended a 2 Canadian dollar-an-hour wage increase (\$1.52) that had been granted for "essential workers" to keep them working during the coronavirus pandemic. The company's proposed contract — which would have restored only half of that CA\$2 over the entire three-year contract — was rejected by

workers.

Workers in grocery, retail and other stores across North America face similar cutbacks, as bosses at Walmart, Kroger, Amazon and elsewhere eliminate "essential worker" wage increases like Dominion management did.

Robert Peddle from Mount Pearl, who has worked at Dominion for 40 years, told the Aug. 31 rally how last year the company declared redundant his full-time job as a backdoor receiver. "I now work 25 hours a week part time — forced to work part time — 15 hours less than before, for \$5 less an hour." The change also meant his benefits were cut.

"Please support us in our struggle for a fair and decent contract," he said.

On Aug. 27 dozens of representatives from unions and other organizations — including the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Public and Private Employees; Teamsters; Fish, Food and Allied Workers Union; Canadian Union of Postal Workers; Registered Nurses Union; and the Fight for 15 and Fairness, a group pushing for a minimum hourly wage of CA\$15 — joined the picket line in St. John's.

VOCM Local News reported on Aug. 29 that a judge has granted the bosses' request for an injunction at Dominion stores against the picket lines blocking trucks. Wrice said the company claimed they needed the injunction so they could load food for area food banks. But the union would never stop trucks destined for food banks, she said. In fact, strikers are willing to help load such trucks so the food doesn't go to waste.

Unifor's Atlantic Regional Director Linda MacNeil closed the rally by playing a videotaped message to Loblaw's head Galen Weston by Cherie, a single mother who works as a cake decorator. She describes the difference a \$2 wage increase meant for workers, "like being able to take your two sons out for dinner."

— 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO —



September 18, 1995

HUAIROU, China — [At] the forum on women here, more than 20,000 have proceeded in holding discussions, workshops, marches, processions, debates, and distributing literature on the fight for women's rights.

Daily protests have occurred on the conference grounds, from marches against nuclear weapons testing led by Japanese and Pacific Island activists to a demonstration protesting discrimination against lesbians.

A number of protests were organized on the issue of the comfort women — those pressed into sexual slavery by the Japanese military during World War II. Among them was a meeting organized by women from North and South Korea.

Cuban women also sponsored workshops. On Sept. 5 a march of several hundred against U.S. policy on Cuba wound its way through the grounds of the nongovernmental forum.



September 18, 1970

LOS ANGELES — The police attack on the Chicano Moratorium in Los Angeles has brought about a sharp confrontation between an enraged community and the ruling class of the Los Angeles area.

Learning lessons from the Black struggle and the colonial revolutions, the Chicano community has moved to the forefront of political life, particularly in the Southwest, but also, to a degree, in the United States as a whole. This last year has seen the radicalization and initial mobilization and independent political organization of the Chicano masses.

This experience of the last two years contains several lessons for the Chicano struggle and for other movements in the United States: the importance of the war issue; the importance of mass action; the importance of the struggle for non-exclusion and the united front; the need for independent political organization.



September 15, 1945

CLEVELAND, Sept. 6 — In the greatest demonstration of labor militancy and solidarity this city has witnessed in years, more than 2,000 organized workers today joined in a mass picket line that gave a fitting answer to the bloody police brutality yesterday against strike pickets of the AFL Machinists in the two-week-old Parker Appliance walkout.

The beating of the pickets occurred when they were attempting to persuade a carload of office personnel to turn back from the plant gate. Without warning, a troop of 26 mounted police charged with their huge horses directly into the picket line, mercilessly trampling and clubbing the unarmed workers.

Before this tremendous outburst of militancy and solidarity, the police and company had to beat a retreat. Parker Appliance "advised" its office personnel to remain home "until further notice."

Charge cop who shot Jacob Blake!

Continued from front page

tal in Milwaukee, he was “shackled to the bed,” Blake said, until public outrage pressured the cops to take off the handcuffs.

Protesters, both Caucasian and African America, marched through the streets of Kenosha for half a mile to Civic Center Park where the rally was held across from the Kenosha County Courthouse. Marchers chanted, “Say his name — Jacob Blake.”

Another reason the Blake family and other protest leaders had organized the action was to call for a halt to arson and violence promoted by anarcho-radical forces using the cover of the demonstrations to wreak destruction. The burning and damage have been centered in Uptown and other areas where large numbers of African Americans live.

“If you tear up the city, we have nowhere to go. We become homeless. Where are we going to buy food?” Blake asked. “Why make it easy for the cops to use teargas against us by carrying out violence?”

In marked contrast, one speaker introduced only as “our president” said, “If you kill one of us, it’s time for us to kill one of yours.” His views reflect those who see this fight as an opportunity to advance violence and bloodshed.

A number of area Democratic Party politicians also addressed the rally, including Wisconsin Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes and Congresswoman Gwen Moore. They focused on calls to get out and vote. “We need to march on them ballot boxes,” Moore said.

Shooting at earlier protest

The so-called protesters who’ve organized mayhem and destruction have called forth rightists and other armed groups patrolling the streets in the name of stopping the violence.

On Aug. 25, 17-year-old Kyle Rittenhouse, who had posted on social media that he wanted to defend the police, came to Kenosha from Antioch, Illinois, carrying an assault rifle. In a fight at that night’s protest, where he was knocked to the ground, Rittenhouse shot and

killed 37-year-old Joseph Rosenbaum of Kenosha and 26-year-old Anthony Huber of Silver Lake. Gaige Grosskreutz from West Allis was shot in the arm. One of them was carrying a pistol. All three were Caucasian, as is Rittenhouse.

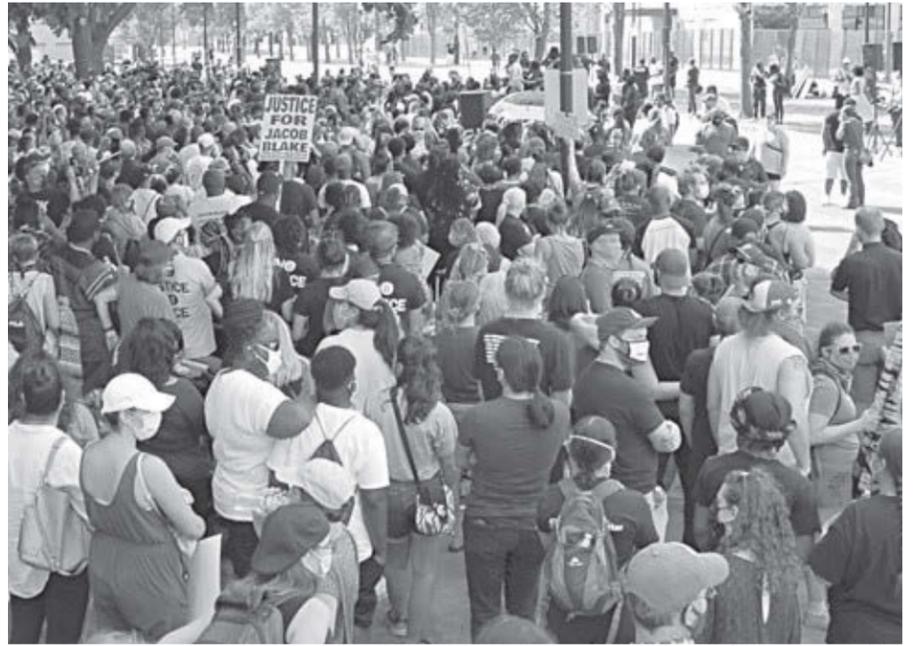
The cops did nothing to stop Rittenhouse or the fight. They even drove right past Rittenhouse when he walked toward them — with his long gun and his hands in the air — after the shooting.

He is now in jail facing charges of murder.

Discipline draws bigger crowd

Because it was clear protest organizers intended the Aug. 29 demonstration to be a peaceful political action, more working people from the area felt comfortable coming out. Jason Jackson, 50, a teacher in the Evanston, Illinois, school district, came. “I grew up with Jacob and his father in Evanston,” he told the *Militant*.

“The cop who shot Jacob needs to be charged.” Nursing student Tiara Harrell, a Black woman, said she had joined the first two days of protest after Blake had been shot, then stopped. She decided to come to the Saturday demonstration with her young daughter to hand out



Militant/Zena McFadden

Some 2,000 demonstrators join Aug. 29 protest in Kenosha, Wisconsin, hosted by the family of Jacob Blake Jr. after he was shot in the back seven times by a city cop. “The cop who shot Jacob needs to be charged,” teacher Jason Jackson told the *Militant* at the rally.

water and to help clean up the park after it ended. Others came to help, including Chenesse Brown, a 31-year-old teacher, who handed out water and snacks.

“The police abuse their power,” Killian Skaronea, a 44-year-old warehouse worker, told the *Militant*. “I am here today in solidarity with the Blake family.”

“The fight against police brutality and killings of youth requires a broad and

sustained mobilization of the working people,” Naomi Craine, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate in Illinois, who joined Saturday’s protest in Kenosha, told the *Militant*. “That’s why the questions of strategy and tactics being debated here are so important. Everything that can bring the power of Black, Caucasian and other workers and our organizations into the struggle is what we need.”

Belarus strikes, protests call on regime to step down

Continued from front page

and prosecution of those responsible for the killing and torture of Lukashenko’s opponents.

On Aug. 31, Anatoly Bokun, leader of the Belaruskali strike committee, was detained by police. Committee spokesperson Glab Sandras said that state secret police, with the Soviet-era name KGB, “have inundated the factory, tracking the most active workers.” They are also trying to “blackmail workers with [threats of] mass dismissals.”

In a video recorded by Belaruskali miners, they offer testimonies: “I am on strike because I am against violence in any form. I am on strike because I cannot look at mothers whose children were killed by the regime. I am on strike because I want to be respected all over the world. I am on strike because I want the

workers to receive decent wages. I am on strike because I want my vote to be reckoned with.”

“Stop working for the dictator and the regime!” the miners say, calling on fellow workers to join the fight.

The red and white colors of the former national flag, adopted by the protest movement, have mushroomed everywhere, hanging off apartment complexes, at factories, schools and offices. Solidarity rallies by supporters of the Belarussian battle have spread to Lithuania and Ukraine, from New York to London. Even the largest Russian trade union federation, loyal to Moscow, protested the violent crackdown against Belarussian workers.

In Minsk, weekly Sunday protests have reached a quarter million people in a city of two million. The population of Belarus is 9.5 million.

Protests and strikes have spread throughout the country, reaching 55 different cities and towns. Several thousand women marched in the capital Aug. 29, with smaller rallies in other cities.

On Aug. 26, a large procession of workers from the Belarussian Automobile Plant and their supporters marched in Zhodzina. They chanted “Lukashenko to the police wagon!”, “Leave!” and “Long live Belarus!”

A council of opposition figures is calling for a peaceful transition of power and new elections. The government refuses to talk to the group and has arrested some on criminal charges.

At the mines and other workplaces, strike leaders responded by organizing workers who didn’t yet feel comfortable with walking out, into work-to-rule and slowing down production.

Lukashenko threatened the striking Soligorsk miners that he could easily bring in replacement labor from Ukraine. Mykhailo Volynets, chair of the Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine, responded via a video address to fellow miners in Belarus

that Ukrainian miners would never be used as strikebreakers.

Regime looks to help from Moscow

Lukashenko has received cautious backing from Russian President Vladimir Putin, who formed a special police reserve for possible intervention in Belarus. Putin said the two leaders “agreed not to use it until the situation starts spinning out of control.”

Since the implosion of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the new Russian capitalist rulers have tried to keep control over adjoining and newly independent former Soviet republics. At times this has led to bloody Russian intervention, as in Georgia in 2008 and after working people in Ukraine rose up in 2014 and overthrew the pro-Moscow government of Viktor Yanukovich.

Today the regime of Vladimir Putin in Moscow sees Belarus as a bulwark against the expansion of U.S.-led NATO forces into eastern Europe. Lukashenko claims the NATO powers are trying to make Belarus “a bridgehead against Russia,” and he has ordered troops to the western border.

The prospect of a democratic movement toppling the autocratic government in Belarus gravely concerns the regime in Moscow. Putin has called for the government and opposition there to find a way out of the crisis.

Putin also has his own problems. In the city of Khabarovsk, in Russia’s far east, there have been weekly rallies by thousands since the July 9 arrest of popular regional Gov. Sergei Furgal. Some protesters have started carrying signs of solidarity with the Belarus protests.

Belarus has longstanding cultural, language and economic bonds with Russia, but an intervention by Moscow would risk turning the sentiment of working people in the country against the Russian government and cause a surge in solidarity protests around the world, not the least in Russia itself.

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Act now against joblessness

Continued from front page

because of wage cuts, the slashing of work hours and increased prices for basic necessities.

Many others know that while they can scrape by on what they make today, there is no guarantee that will be true next month or even next week.

The labor movement needs to organize a serious fight to overcome the biggest division we face today — between those with jobs and those without.

According to the U.S. government there were more than 27 million people collecting either unemployment benefits or “Pandemic Unemployment Assistance” as of Aug. 8. Countless others applied but haven’t been able to get through the bureaucratic maze. Others, including undocumented immigrants, are denied any government assistance.

Those collecting unemployment benefits saw their income plummet when the weekly \$600 “enhanced” benefit

program ended in early August. Meanwhile, the price of beef has gone up more than 20%, eggs 10.4% and poultry 8.6% since February.

Unemployment is officially at 10.2% after peaking at 15% in April. But this figure excludes some 7.7 million people who they call “discouraged” or “marginally attached” as well as 8.4 million who are working part time, but need a full-time job to survive.

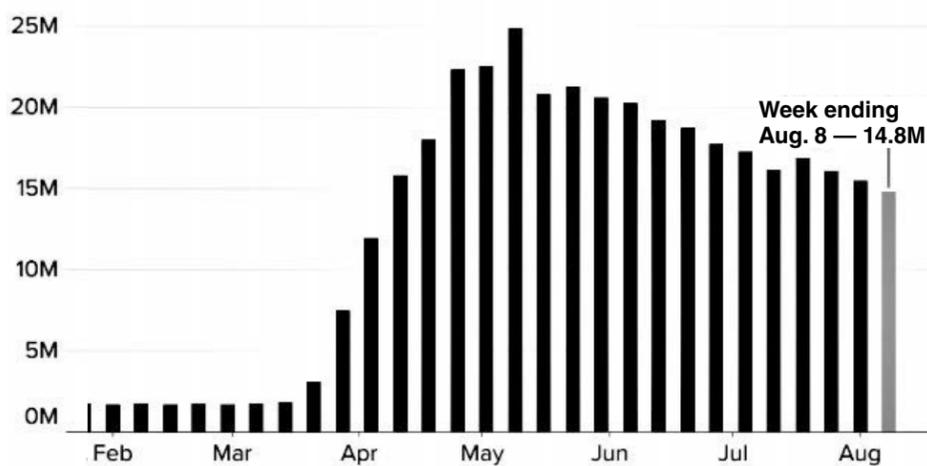
The Labor Department says that 1.8 million jobs were added in July, the third month in a row of new hiring or bringing people back from furlough as government-imposed lockdowns are lifted.

More layoffs on the way

While many businesses are reopening, others are closed for good. Major companies, including MGM Resorts, Stanley Black & Decker, Salesforce.com, Coca-Cola, American Airlines and United Airlines, say

People collecting unemployment benefits

Weekly in 2020
(in millions)



Based on Information from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.

Figures reflect leap in workers collecting unemployment. And about a million people are still applying every week. Additional millions of out-of-work “self-employed” are collecting “pandemic unemployment assistance.” Millions of people with part-time jobs as well as immigrants without “papers” recognized by the U.S. government are denied any benefits whatsoever.

they will soon lay off thousands.

The layoffs are not necessarily because the companies aren’t doing well. Salesforce.com, which provides software for accounting, just posted record quarterly sales and then announced it plans to lay off 1,000 of its 54,000 workers.

With tourism and air travel in the doldrums, American Airlines says that unless the government gives the company more handouts, it plans to lay off 17,500 union workers and 1,500 managers. United Airlines says it plans to furlough 2,850 pilots and eliminate as many as 36,000 workers overall by Oct. 1.

Aircraft company Boeing got rid of 5,500 workers earlier in the year by offering buyouts, another 6,800 were laid off in May, and says it plans even more cuts.

At the same time, with tax revenues down many local and state governments and public transportation systems are threatening big layoffs.

The pandemic accelerated cutthroat competition among capitalist businesses, leaving winners and losers. J.C. Penney, Neiman Marcus, J. Crew and Men’s Wearhouse ended up in bankruptcy. Walmart, Target and Amazon, exempt from the lockdowns, reaped super profits. Amazon bosses are making good on their expansion by hiring a big new levy of “indirect workers” — delivery drivers on an hourly wage responsible for maintaining their own vehicles, paying their own gas and with no health benefits.

Some bosses temporarily upped wages by \$2 or \$3 an hour in March, calling it “hazard pay” for “essential” workers, something they could take back at the drop of a hat. As sustained high unemployment has increased competition for jobs, the bosses tossed the extra pay out the window.

‘Shared sacrifice’ = pay cuts

Millions more never got the temporary boost. Instead, bosses promoted the lie that there must be “shared sacrifice.” What they mean is workers should sacrifice for the bosses’ profits. According to the *Washington Post*, some 4 million workers “sacrificed” for private companies with pay cuts over the last few months.

Tesla cut its lowest-paid workers’ wages 10%. Other companies that cut pay: General Motors, Occidental Petroleum, HCA Healthcare, Sotheby’s and Major League Baseball.

Retail workers who called into the Brian Lehrer show on New York’s WNYC radio Aug. 24, which focused

on conditions workers face in retail, gave a feel for today’s reality.

“They cut our hours, they hired more people,” Dollar Tree worker Kay Devine in the Bronx told Lehrer. “I was doing 60 hours every two weeks. Now I’m down to 40.” With cutbacks in public transportation, the bus comes only twice an hour. “Many times, I walked to work,” she said. “Now they’re like, ‘Oh you came in late, go home.’”

Metropolitan Transportation Authority bosses are threatening to cut 40% more in New York bus and subway service and 50% in commuter rail if they don’t get more federal funding.

Some workers are refusing to take the cuts, using their unions to demand more. Retail workers at the Dominion grocery chain in Newfoundland, Canada, are setting an example, striking for full-time jobs and better wages.

Workshare schemes

One of the schemes bosses use to attack workers’ wages while they promote the myth that “we’re all in this together” is the so-called Workshare program.

Under this federally funded program bosses cut work hours — and weekly pay — instead of laying off some workers. The bosses can then claim they have “softened the blow” because workers get unemployment benefits that partially cover the lost hours. Of course, sooner or later, the benefits run out, in some states after only 26 weeks.

Job cuts are taking place worldwide. The Indian rulers recorded an unprecedented 50% drop in industrial production in April.

A union in every workplace

Workers need unions we can use to fight to defend our jobs, wages and working conditions. Instead of Workshare programs that drive down wages, workers and our unions should demand “cut the workweek with no cut in pay,” to share the available work around. And demand cost-of-living clauses in union contracts that ensure pay goes up every time there is inflation.

Workers need to fight for a massive government-funded public works program, to build the things that working people need: hospitals, schools and housing as well as repairs to decaying infrastructure like bridges and roads. This would both put millions to work and improve the living and work conditions we all face. As long as there are not sufficient jobs, everyone who is unemployed, whether they have “papers” or not, should get weekly jobless pay as long as they need it.

Haiti garment workers protest deaths of co-workers denied medical care



Courtesy Haiti Liberté

Garment workers in Port au Prince July 31 protest death of Sandra René, pregnant coworker, after hospital turned her away. Bosses never paid health insurance deducted from her pay.

BY MICHEL DUGRE

MONTREAL — Garment workers at two plants in Haiti’s capital Port-au-Prince held work stoppages beginning Aug. 4, outraged at the deaths of two workers who were refused medical care by hospital authorities. They were turned away because bosses where they worked held onto deductions taken from the workers’ wages for health insurance.

Hundreds of workers turned out for the funeral of Sandra René July 31, marching with her casket to protest at the offices of OFATMA, the government health insurance company. She had worked for 10 years at the Palm Apparel factory.

“We suffered a blow. It hurt, but we resist,” they sang in Creole — words from a popular song often sung at demonstrations in Haiti. Many wore T-shirts of Batay Ouvriye, an organization that has worked with textile workers trying to organize a union.

Six months pregnant, René was turned away by the Carrefour hospital in Port-au-Prince. Authorities there justified their callous refusal to provide the treatment she needed on the basis that her insurance card

wasn’t paid up. Company bosses had held onto deductions from all their employees’ wages for years instead of paying them to OFATMA. René died at her home four days later.

On Aug. 3, Lunel Pierre, who was working at Sewing International S.A., died in similar circumstances after being denied dialysis treatment.

“We are suing the companies for misappropriation of funds, OFATMA for not getting the money owed to them by the companies, and the Carrefour hospital for not providing the basic human care that was obviously required,” Evel Fanfan, a lawyer working with René’s family, told the *Militant* in a phone interview Aug. 28.

“Workers are determined to not let this happen again,” Réginald Lafontant, from the Association of Textile Workers for Assembly and Export union, told the *Militant*.

There are 57,000 garment workers in Haiti, assembling garments for companies like Walmart and Montreal-based Gildan. Less than 20% of the big garment companies in Haiti pay the insurance to OFATMA that they deduct from workers’ wages.



SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STATEMENT

Cut workweek with no cut in pay!

ALYSON KENNEDY

Continued from front page

All workers must have jobs, regardless of what the bosses and their Democratic and Republican parties say that might do to the profits of the ruling capitalist families. We — the vast majority — cannot allow growing numbers of our class to be tossed aside and left to fend for themselves.

Overcoming the divisive competition workers face for scarce jobs is central to charting a road forward. The starting point is a union movement in every workplace. Workers need to use our unions to fight for a massive government-funded jobs program at union-scale wages — to build the things working people need, including housing, hospitals and schools, and to rebuild the electrical grid and destroyed homes in hurricane-ravaged Louisiana and Texas.

The bosses are using layoffs and other schemes to cut back on our jobs and wages in search of higher profits, at the same time they raise prices and press those still on the job to work harder in increasingly unsafe and unhealthy conditions. Our unions need to fight for a sliding scale of wages and hours. To prevent layoffs, we demand a shorter workweek *with no cut in take-home pay*. No one gets thrown on to the street.

We face shortages and rising prices, especially for food, medicine, paper goods and other essentials. Our unions need to lead a fight for automatic cost-of-living adjustments in our contracts. When prices go up, so should our wages. And so should social security and pensions for all retired workers.

Fourteen hundred workers at Dominion grocery stores in Canada are on strike today, fighting against the bosses' moves to cut their pay. The company had agreed to a \$2-an-hour wage increase at the outset of



MALCOLM JARRETT

the coronavirus outbreak in an effort to keep “essential” workers on the job. Then in July, when jobs were tighter, they took the \$2 back. And they offered a new three-year contract with only a \$1 wage increase! The workers deserve widespread solidarity!

The labor movement must fight for immediate unemployment benefits for all jobless workers *now*, for as long as needed, at union scale. This means for everyone out of work, regardless of whether they're “self-employed,” or “temps,” or immigrant workers without “papers” the rulers consider “legal.”

Working farmers are also facing ruin, crushed by mounting indebtedness. The trade unions must champion a fight for the government to cover farmers' costs of production and put a halt to foreclosures. The SWP campaign calls for nationalization of the land to put the soil at the service of those who work it.

Out of these struggles we can build our own party, a labor party, based on a fighting labor movement, that can organize workers, farmers and all those exploited and oppressed by capital to fight to take political power into our own hands.

It would organize workers and farmers to do what working people in Cuba proved is possible. Led by Fidel Castro and the July 26 Movement, they overturned a U.S.-backed tyranny, took power out of the hands of the capitalist rulers and established a workers and farmers government that took control over the country's industries and large landholdings. Ever since they have used their government to defend their class interests, stand tall against the attacks from Washington and to extend a hand of solidarity to toilers in struggle worldwide.

Join campaigning for this perspective!

Was 'Militant' wrong on Israel-UAE pact?

BY TERRY EVANS

Does the recent pact signed by the governments of Israel and the United Arab Emirates make it more likely that other Arab governments in the region will do the same? Does this increase prospects for talks by Arab governments, Israel and the main Palestinian groups aimed at recognizing both Israel and a Palestinian state? Wouldn't this open the door for working people in both Israel and Palestine to “speak, organize and begin redressing the blood-drenched legacy of imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation?”

These questions were addressed in an Aug. 31 *Militant* article on the pact by Seth Galinsky.

REPLY TO A READER

Reader Yonatan Mosquera from London challenges Galinsky's article, saying the agreement, “does nothing to help or hinder the fight for a Palestinian state because the Arab regimes have never championed the Palestinian struggle.”

But this misses the point.

It's true that no deal between rival capitalist governments can in and of itself provide advances for working people. Such gains can only come as a result of class struggle battles. That's why the headline of the *Militant* article was misleading, by claiming “Israel-UAE Pact Is Step Forward in Middle East.” It does not accurately express what the article actually says.

Pacts between different ruling classes can start things in motion that *will* alter the terrain on which working people organize and fight.

This pact further opens the breach in what had been a common front of Arab regimes that held Israel up to be a pariah nation. It reflects developments in the region that *do* make it more likely other Arab governments will follow suit.

This was furthered Aug. 29 when UAE rulers scrapped their longstanding economic and trade boycott of Israel.

Days after the deal was signed, the Sudanese government refused to deny holding talks over normalizing its relations with Jerusalem. Talks between Israel and the governments of Bahrain and Oman are on the agenda, Israeli officials said.

As Galinsky explains, one of the pressures pushing these developments is that these governments and the rulers in Israel “share an interest in defending themselves against the expanding military and political influence” of the Iranian rulers in the region.

Bourgeois Arab regimes are among the main financial and political patrons of the Palestinian National Authority that rules in the West Bank and of Hamas in Gaza. These new developments can help draw both these organizations and the Israeli government into discussions over mutual recognition.

The continuing refusal of the PNA and Hamas to enter talks with the Israeli government sets back the dispossessed Palestinian people's aspirations for a sovereign homeland. Such talks can lead to mutual recognition of Israel and a Palestinian state. This can bring an end to the deadly cycle of terror attacks and bloody reprisals. It will open the door to Palestinian efforts to fight for a contiguous country.

And, most importantly, it will open the door to struggles for “the class interests and solidarity of workers and toiling farmers across the Middle East — be they Palestinian, Jewish, Arab, Kurdish, Turkish, Persian or otherwise,” as Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes said in a 2017 statement quoted by Galinsky.

That statement says the SWP is “for whatever helps working people organize and act together to advance our demands and struggles against the capitalist governments and ruling classes that exploit and oppress us.”

'Militant' Prisoners' Fund

The fund makes it possible to send prisoners reduced rate subscriptions. Send a check or money order payable to the 'Militant' and earmarked “Prisoners' Fund” to 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018. Or donate online at www.themilitant.com

Gov't execution rejects Navajo Nation protest

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Federal authorities Aug. 26 executed Lezmond Mitchell, a 38-year-old Navajo, despite strong objections by the leaders of the Navajo Nation. This is the only time U.S. authorities have executed a Native American for a crime committed on a Native American reservation over the objection of the tribe.

The decision by federal officials to go ahead with this execution — the fourth this summer after 17 years without any — signifies a further chipping away of sovereign rights of Native peoples living on tribal land. Appeals to the U.S. Supreme Court to halt it and to President Donald Trump requesting clemency were made, all to no avail.

In 2001, Mitchell, then 20, and Johnny Orsinger, a teenager at the time, were hitchhiking from Round Rock, Arizona, on the Navajo Nation to Gallup, New Mexico. They were picked up by Alyce Slim, 63, who was traveling with her 9-year-old granddaughter, Tiffany Lee. After Slim stopped to let them out of her pickup truck on the reservation, the two men proceeded to kill both of them.

In federal court, Mitchell was convicted of first-degree murder, felony murder and “carjacking resulting in death” and was sentenced to die. Orsinger, a minor at the time, was sentenced to life in prison.

The federal government didn't have any jurisdiction on tribal land until Congress passed the Major Crimes Act in 1885. This law was put in place after the Supreme Court two years earlier ruled that federal officials had no authority to prosecute and sentence to death a Native man for a murder committed on the Great Sioux Reservation.

Since then the federal government has increasingly seized more and more control over tribes' sovereign legal proceedings.

While the Major Crimes Act gave federal authorities jurisdiction over certain crimes committed on tribal land, including murder, Native American tribes under federal law can decide whether their members are given the death penalty. While carjacking wasn't covered under the 1885 law, as cars didn't exist then, the administration of President Bill Clinton expanded use of the federal death penalty to cover “carjack-

ing resulting in death” and about 60 other offenses.

“Our decision not to accept the death penalty in federal cases remains a Navajo decision,” said a statement issued by Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer, “but in this instance the federal government ignored the Navajo Nation. This is an affront to our Nation because we should be the ones to decide these matters. The federal government charged a crime that was added in 1994 to the Federal Death Penalty Act and blindsided the Navajo Nation's position.”

The National Congress of American Indians, 13 tribal governments and Native Americans from more than 90 tribes across the country supported Mitchell's request that his death sentence be commuted to life without parole.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights also urged the U.S. government to stay the execution of Mitchell.

All these objections were dismissed with disdain and the execution took place as scheduled.

LETTERS

'Militant' wrong on Israel-UAE pact

The *Militant* is mistaken when it claims that the Israel-United Arab Emirates pact is a step forward towards recognition of “an independent Palestinian state.” Normalizing relations with Israel is good. However, it does nothing to help or hinder the fight for a Palestinian state because the Arab regimes have never championed the Palestinian struggle.

No Arab government, no U.N. resolution, no Trump deal will help the Palestinians fight for a state. Creating illusions on such deals will do nothing to unite working people in the Middle East against the reactionary Palestinian leaderships and Israeli capitalist government.

Yonatan Mosquera
London, U.K.

We welcome your letters. Where necessary your letter will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.