

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Midwest farmers face crisis of mounting debt, bankruptcies  
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 84/NO. 40 OCTOBER 12, 2020

## Anger at lack of charges filed in Taylor killing fuels debate

BY NED MEASEL

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — As National Guard tanks rolled through downtown streets here Sept. 23, Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron announced the decisions of the grand jury he convened on whether, and what, charges should be issued in the March 13 police killing of Breonna Taylor.

For months protests have taken place protesting the killing of Taylor, a 26-year-old African American medical worker, who was shot to death in a midnight raid in her apartment.

One cop — Brett Hankison, who has been fired by the police department here — was charged with felony wanton endangerment, not for killing Taylor, but for firing recklessly into a nearby apartment in the raid. The two other cops who shot at Taylor — Jonathan Mattingly and Myles Cosgrove — were not charged at all.

Thousands here and across the country are outraged at the killing of Taylor and want to see someone held accountable for her death. The fight is not over.

In the days before the grand jury's announcement, government buildings were closed in Louisville, downtown business windows boarded up, and heavy concrete police barriers were placed in streets to cordon off a large

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## Fight to defend jobs, wages, safety, working conditions!



Militant/Alyson Kennedy

From left, retired farmers John and Robert St. Martin, and farmer Karl Butts discuss crisis facing working farmers with SWP vice presidential candidate Malcolm Jarrett and presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy, who took the picture, in Plant City, Florida, Sept. 28.

### Through our battles, workers can unite, transform ourselves

This statement was issued by Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for president, Sept. 30.

### SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STATEMENT

My main opponents — President Donald Trump and Democratic challenger Joe Biden — both claim they

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### Demand gov't-financed public works program to create jobs

BY ANTHONY DUTROW

MIAMI — “Our party alone puts forward a program to address what working people are going through,” Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy told a Sept. 25 Militant Labor Forum here, pointing to the deepening capitalist economic and social crisis working people face today.

“We call on workers and our unions to fight for a government-financed public works program putting people to work at union-scale pay — building

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## Biden, Trump defend bosses; Vote Socialist Workers Party

BY TERRY EVANS

With hundreds of thousands of workers continuing to lose their jobs every week and millions more still laid off from earlier this year, President Donald Trump and his Democratic challenger, Joe Biden, accuse each other of being responsible for this.

Biden blames Trump for failing to shut down society even more to limit coronavirus. Trump says Biden is controlled by radicals who will destroy the economy. Neither advances a concrete program to create the millions of jobs workers need, nor a serious plan to keep jobless benefits flowing for those without work.

Most importantly, neither sees action by working people and our unions to fight for jobs as the foundation for combating the impact of the protracted economic and social crisis we're living through.

In contrast to Biden and Trump,  
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## Fight continues to overturn Florida prison officials' ban on 'Militant'

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Supporters of both the rights of prisoners and freedom of the press are stepping up their efforts to urge Florida prison officials to reverse the banning of four recent issues of the *Militant*. The state's Department of Corrections Literature Review Committee rejected the *Militant's* appeal over the banning of the first of these issues, Vol. 84, No. 30.

“The impoundment and rejection  
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## Protests across Belarus keep up pressure to bring down regime



Tut.By via Reuters

Mass protest Sept. 27 in Minsk demands ouster of repressive regime of Alexander Lukashenko.

BY ROY LANDERSEN

After 50 straight days of protests, 100,000 people marched in Minsk, the capital of Belarus, Sept. 27, demanding an end to the authoritarian and repressive regime of Alexander

Lukashenko. Many more mobilized in more than 20 other cities.

Over 200 protesters were arrested at the Minsk march, as the regime continues to try to suppress the pro-

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## End Washington's economic war against Cuba! No to new sanctions!

BY JANET POST

In a sharp expansion of punishing U.S. government sanctions against Cuba's revolutionary people, the State Department Sept. 23 announced a list of 433 hotels and housing properties U.S. tourists are now barred from using. The ban is justified by saying these properties are “owned or controlled” by the Cuban government or members of the Cuban Communist Party leadership or their relatives.

Almost all of the hotels in Cuba are state run, some in cooperation with foreign companies. In 2017 the Donald Trump administration restricted U.S. travelers from using 80 Cuban hotels. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Cuban government has only just begun opening some airports and hotels

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—On the picket line, p. 5—

10,000 Quebec day care workers strike for better wages, conditions

Southern Indiana casino workers fight for new contract

# Striking grocery workers in Canada win solidarity

BY BEVERLY BERNARDO

Striking Dominion grocery store workers — on the picket lines for over a month — held a noon-hour rally at the Quidi Vidi Dominion store in St. John's, Newfoundland, Sept. 24. Members of the Longshoreman's Protective Union, Canadian Union of Public Employees, \$15 and Fairness and others joined the striking Unifor Local 597 members on the line to show their support.

The strike is for higher wages, more full-time jobs and better benefits. It is one of the most important labor battles in North America today.

The 1,400 members of Unifor Local 597 at 11 Dominion stores across the Canadian province of Newfoundland went on strike Aug. 22. More than 80% of workers are classified as part time, with limited access to benefits, and they haven't received a raise since 2018.

They're fighting to reverse an insulting attack on their wages. In June the bosses at Loblaw Companies Limited — who own the Dominion grocery chain — cancelled a 2 Canadian dollar an hour raise (\$1.52) given to workers when coronavirus exploded. The three-year contract bosses offered workers would only restore half that amount. The strikers also demand sick pay. "This is especially important with the pandemic," Local 597 President Carolyn Wrice said. Less than half of workers in Canada are entitled to paid sick days.

Loblaw's profits have soared by almost 21% in the first quarter compared to last year.

The largest private employer in Canada, Loblaw is owned by Galen Weston, the third richest person in the country.

The strike is being watched by workers nationwide because Loblaw has contract talks coming up elsewhere. In Alberta, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 401 is in negotiations for some 8,500 workers at Real Canadian Superstore, also owned by Loblaw.

Local 597 has been getting solidarity from other unions in the area, including the Memorial University of Newfoundland Faculty Association, which encouraged its members to join striking workers on the picket line. Messages of support and donations to the Dominion workers strike should be sent to Unifor Local 597 at 301-55 Bond St., P.O. Box 922 Station C, St. John's, NL A1C 5L7, Canada, and info@unifor597.ca.



Unifor Local 597

Grocery store workers, members of Unifor Local 597, picket Dominion store in Newfoundland, Canada. Some 1,400 have been on strike over past month against wage cut, for full-time work.

## End Washington's economic war against Cuba!

Continued from front page

after shutting them down in March.

Secretary of State Michael Pompeo said in a statement, "Authorized travelers should instead stay in private accommodations, or casas particulares, owned and operated by legitimately independent entrepreneurs."

The Treasury Department also announced it will restrict "participating in and organizing certain public performances, clinics, workshops, competitions and exhibitions in Cuba," unless you can get a special license from the government.

In addition, the new measures restrict importation of Cuban alcohol and tobacco products into the U.S.

The goal of the U.S. rulers' attacks is to make Cuban workers and farm-

ers pay for their overwhelming support to their revolution.

The expanded government restrictions were publicly announced by President Trump, who appeared along with Vice President Mike Pence at an event in the White House to present awards to 23 Cuban American mercenaries. They had been members of Brigade 2506, part of the U.S.-organized counterrevolutionary forces who invaded Cuba at Playa Girón (Bay of Pigs) in April 1961, seeking to overthrow Cuba's revolutionary government. The invasion was organized by the Democratic administration of President John Kennedy and the CIA, and was defeated in less than three days by a mobilization of the Cuban people.

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel responded that the U.S. rulers' tightened sanctions "violate the rights of Cubans and Americans. Its cruel and criminal policy will be defeated by our people, who will never renounce their sovereignty."

Washington's decadeslong economic war against the workers and farmers of Cuba has been carried out by all 12 of the Democratic and Republican administrations since the victory of the revolution. Fidel Castro and the July 26 Movement toppled the U.S.-back Fulgencio

Batista dictatorship Jan. 1, 1959. A trade embargo was imposed by President Dwight Eisenhower in 1960, expanded by Kennedy in 1962, and has been enforced ever since.

Díaz-Canel spoke for Cuba at the U.N. General Assembly's 75th session, Sept. 22. "The aggressiveness of the blockade has reached a qualitatively higher level that further confirms its role as a concrete, determinant impediment to the functioning of our economy and the development of our country," he said.

"We call for the unconditional end to the U.S. economic war against Cuba, for an end to all travel restrictions, and demand Washington get out of Guantánamo," Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy told the *Militant*. "The Cuban people have resisted the U.S. rulers' efforts to overthrow their revolution for over 60 years, and will continue to do so.

"What the capitalist families that run the U.S. fear most is the example the Cuban Revolution sets for workers and farmers everywhere, especially in the U.S.," Kennedy said. "The workers and farmers of Cuba showed us that with class solidarity and leadership, like they have in Cuba, it is possible to stand up to enormous might and seemingly impossible odds and to win.

## THE MILITANT

### NY taxi drivers demand 'Forgive the debt!'

Taxi and app-based drivers alike are hard hit by gov't shutdowns imposed after coronavirus outbreak. Yellow cab drivers, forced into debt to pay for medallions, are fighting to wipe out the debt. Battles like this can unite all drivers, whether cab, Uber or car service, in one union!



Militant/Sara Lobman  
Cab caravan organized by New York Taxi Workers Alliance Sept. 17 in New York City.

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# NJ Militant Labor Forum discusses Belarus uprising

BY ROY LANDERSEN

UNION CITY, N.J. — “I am here on political asylum. I was forced to leave because of repression in Belarus eight years ago,” Hanna Sharko, one of the leaders of Belarus Together, told a Militant Labor Forum here Sept. 26. Joanne Kuniansky, from the Socialist Workers Party, and John Studer, editor of the *Militant*, also spoke.

Sharko’s parents had received a threatening visit by the KGB, the secret police, after she wrote an article critical of the dictatorial regime of Alexander Lukashenko. “I am too young to remember any other president besides Lukashenko,” Sharko said, since the autocrat has held onto power for 26 years. In this year’s election, his government “suppressed the rival candidates,” then claimed “80% voted for him, when in fact 80% were protesting against him.”

“It is important for working people in the U.S. to support the protests to get rid of Lukashenko,” Kuniansky said. “We have common class enemies.” She noted that this capitalist ruler had called workers “sheep” with no right to participate in politics and claimed “women have no place in public affairs. But today we see them leading the protests.”

“One of the ways the Belarus government tries to control workers is through bonuses,” Kuniansky said, which for many make up almost half their wages. These payments can be “withheld if workers go on strike or otherwise oppose the government.”

“I led a *Militant* reporting team to Ukraine in 2014 when the working-class Maidan revolution brought down the regime,” Studer said. “We met and keep in touch with many fighters, coal miners, Crimean Tartars and others.”

The team also visited Chernobyl, the scene of the 1986 nuclear meltdown. “Some 70% of the radioactive fallout from Chernobyl fell on Belarus,” Studer said. “The Cuban government responded by organizing for over 25,000 children with cancers from Chernobyl to come for free medical care over de-

cares.” This program “survived the collapse of the Soviet Union and Cuba’s Special Period” of extreme shortages, because the Cuban people saw it as their internationalist duty.

In the forum discussion, Aleksandr Khomchenko described Chernobyl’s “huge underlying impact on us, with so many getting sick or dying from it.” He said he worked in Belarus near the nuclear plant as an engineer for six months after the explosion. The government suppressed news of what had happened. But when he decided to protect his wife, who was pregnant, by leaving the area, he was told he had to turn in his Communist Party book. Khomchenko was blacklisted from any state employment after that, and left the country a few years later.

Studer said the Chernobyl disas-

## Protests across Belarus press to bring down regime

Continued from front page

tests since Lukashenko declared himself victor in Aug. 9 rigged presidential elections.

Days earlier, thousands demonstrated when news emerged of Lukashenko’s behind-closed-doors inauguration. Drivers slowed or stopped cars to cause traffic jams, impeding police from breaking up the protests. Riot cops eventually used water cannon and tear gas on demonstrators.

“The inauguration didn’t really change anything,” Hanna Varsotskaya told the *Militant* in a Sept. 26 email from Minsk, “yet it gave an incentive to continue” the protests. It was also “a reason for laughter,” lifting up the spirits of those fighting to rid the country of the regime, she said. At the Sept. 27 march crowds of people chanted “Impostor!” Some mocked Lukashenko’s 26-year rule by wearing cardboard crowns.

“For some time there has been a gradual increase in violence” inflicted on demonstrators, she noted.

Thousands of demonstrators have been detained this year. The government claims only five people have died



Militant/Roy Landsersen

Hanna Sharko, spokesperson for Belarus Together, explained mass opposition to Lukashenko regime at New Jersey Militant Labor Forum Sept. 26. Joanne Kuniansky, left, spoke for SWP.

ter was a product of Stalinist disdain for working people, and the cover-up “helped strip bare people’s confidence in the government that supposedly represented working people.”

Sergei Yermak, another participant originally from Belarus, said that while Lukashenko once had popular support, today it has shrunk to 5% or 10% and “a new generation has appeared.”

at the hands of the cops. But more have “died after they returned home from detention centers, because of gangrene or serious internal injuries, or in the hospitals,” Hanna Sharko, a leader of Belarus Together in the New York region, told the *Militant* Sept. 28. “The exact number now is still hidden.”

Some of those joining the Sept. 27 action in Minsk chanted “Sviata is our president,” demonstrating their support for Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the opposition candidate who is widely recognized as having won the election. Lukashenko jailed most opposition candidates to prevent them from running against him.

His rule has become a political and social disaster for working people. Tsikhanouskaya, who ran after Lukashenko jailed her husband, calls for fresh elections and ran on a program of capitalist reforms. In the course of deepening struggles working people will have openings to forge their own leadership.

In an interview posted on YouTube Sept. 25, miners’ leader Yuri Korzun, from the giant potash mining and processing complex of Belaruskali, said

strike actions around the country at the end of August pushed the regime back and “stopped the violence, torture and killings” for a time.

But “shortly afterwards threats from the factories’ directors started,” he said. Bosses threatened they would make workers “financially responsible” for all the losses claimed by enterprises as a result of the strike action. When a majority of the workers went back to work, many organized to slow down production by working to rule.

### Imperialist powers, Moscow rivalry

On Sept. 29 French President Emmanuel Macron met Tsikhanouskaya in Lithuania, where she is currently in exile. Macron, who is seeking to bolster French imperialism’s position in Europe, said he would press for the release of political prisoners in Belarus.

Tsikhanouskaya has called for sanctioning Lukashenko’s business connections. She opposes sanctions aimed at the country as a whole, saying “ordinary people will suffer most.” She has also emphasized that the protests are “not against Russia.”

Russia is both the main market for products made in Belarus and Belarus’ main source for obtaining raw materials and oil. Russian President Vladimir Putin has denounced European Union “meddling” in what he sees as the Russian rulers’ sphere of influence.

For years Lukashenko ruled by playing off European imperialist powers and Moscow against each other. Now the deep political crisis has forced him to rely more heavily on Moscow to help prop up his widely detested regime.

Around 1,000 Russian paratroopers began exercises with Belarusian troops in Brest, near the Polish border, and in Grodno, near the Lithuanian border, soon after Lukashenko met with Putin in Sochi, Russia, Sept. 14.

Moscow sees Belarus as a buffer against the expansion of the Washington-led NATO military alliance in Eastern Europe. U.S. troops and tanks are in neighboring Lithuania and Estonia as part of long-term NATO exercises. The Pentagon also heads a NATO force stationed in Poland.

Miners’ leader Korzun in his YouTube video said he wanted “our country to remain independent, and not be annexed by Russia or any other country.”

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



October 16, 1995

WARREN, Ohio — Failing to break the resolve of steelworkers on the picket line here, bosses at Warren Consolidated Industries announced September 29 it would temporarily suspend production. This is a major setback to the company’s efforts to run the mill with scab labor.

WCI’s announcement came after escalating violence by company goons increased workers determination to stand up and fight. The violence itself was an indication of the increasingly desperate situation of the company, as its attempt to bust the unions have faltered.

Solid unity and the overwhelming support steelworkers have received in this highly unionized industrial town forced the company to retreat from its assault on the union. The WCI bosses have been taken aback by the unexpectedly strong resistance they have gotten from the workers and their supporters.



October 16, 1970

NEW YORK— Four rat-infested, overcrowded municipal jails, their cells jammed with Black and Puerto Rican inmates most of whom are awaiting trial, became the setting last week for a full-fledged prison revolt as several thousand embittered prisoners seized hostages and laid down demands for lower bails, speedier trials and an end to intolerable conditions.

The rebellion erupted in the Long Island City branch of Queens House of Detention Oct. 1 and spread like a chain-reaction to jails in Brooklyn, Manhattan and Rikers Island.

Three thousand community residents demonstrated at the Brooklyn jail Oct. 3 and it was clear that large segments of the community sympathized with their brothers inside. Some 80 percent of the residents of New York’s massive jail system are Black or Puerto Rican.



October 13, 1945

The drive of Allied imperialism to crush the rising colonial movement for independence in the Far East continued on the two fronts of Indo-China and Java. In both lands the imperialists sought a “truce” with nationalist forces.

In Java, the British made four landings at Batavia. Some 1,700 liberated Dutch prisoners of war have been armed. Another 10,000 Dutch troops are now en route from “Europe and America.” Dutch officials are shipping 43,000 troops for action against the Indonesian nationalists.

The picture in Indo-China is essentially the same. A “truce” was negotiated with the Annamese nationalists. Before the “truce” was reached, the British in Saigon, using mortars, machine-guns and rifles drove the Annamese from the outskirts of the city. Two French battle-ships arrived at Saigon October 3.

# Drive to win new ‘Militant’ readers off to a good start

BY MAGGIE TROWE

The *Militant’s* eight-week drive to sell 1,200 subscriptions kicked off Sept. 26. This effort to expand the reach of the paper during and after the 2020 election is coupled with selling an equal number of books by Socialist Workers Party leaders and other revolutionists. Simultaneously, the Socialist Workers Party has launched its annual Party-Building Fund, with a goal of \$120,000.

Party members are introducing the *Militant* and books to workers on their doorsteps in big cities, small towns and farm areas; on strike picket lines; at protests against police brutality; and to co-workers on the job.

Party branches are discussing higher, more ambitious quotas than in last spring’s drive to take advantage of the increased openness to the party’s political program. This was registered over the summer when party supporters met thousands of workers as they campaigned and won ballot status for the SWP presidential slate of Alyson Kennedy and Malcolm Jarrett in Colorado, Louisiana, Minnesota, Tennessee, Vermont and Washington. If anything, there is more interest now.

“In the course of a 16-day ballot drive in Tennessee in July and August, campaigners not only gathered 810 signatures, we sold 67 *Militant* subscriptions, 104 single copies of the *Militant*, 38 Pathfinder books, and won 11 endorsers for the Socialist Workers Party campaign, as well as getting \$166 in contributions,” Susan LaMont from Atlanta told the *Militant*. “And we’re staying in touch with a number of the people who supported and helped us.”

## SWP: voice of working class

The SWP candidates are the only voice of the working class in the 2020 elections. Their campaign platform — reprinted on page 5 — can be used by fellow workers to advance building a powerful working-class movement to fight against boss attacks on wages, safety and working conditions. The fall subscription drive and the election campaign reinforce each other and help fellow workers see the need to break from the political parties of the capitalist rulers.

Every financial contribution to the fall Party-Building Fund — large and small — makes it possible to carry out the work of the SWP. Workers and working farmers are the bedrock of financing everything the party does.

On the first day of the fall drive Ruth Harris and Dan Fein knocked on the door of Michael Little in Kankakee, Illinois, an hour south of Chicago.

“The *Militant*? Am I glad to see you!” said Little. “I got a subscription a year ago and read the paper.” Little is a member of the AFSCME government employees union and a patient assistant in a mental health facility.

They discussed the importance of the fight that nurses and other hospital workers at the University of Illinois hospital complex waged, winning their strike for hiring more nurses and some wage increases for other hospital employees. “Solidarity works,” Harris said.

“I like the idea of workers acting together,” Little replied. “We can change things.”

Little renewed his subscription to the *Militant* and got two books by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes — *Are They Rich Because They’re Smart?* and *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*.

Little smiled and said, “You may have noticed my last name, I’m relat-



Militant/Ruth Harris

“I like the idea of workers acting together,” Michael Little, right, told Socialist Workers Party campaigner Dan Fein Sept. 26 in Kankakee, Illinois. Little renewed his subscription to the *Militant* and bought two books by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes.

ed to Malcolm.” Malcolm X was born Malcolm Little.

“I like your energy and enthusiasm,” he said.

Little’s reaction is not unusual.

“We got off to a strong start selling

five subscriptions to workers we met during the visit to Florida by Alyson Kennedy and Malcolm Jarrett,” Anthony Dutrow from Miami told me Sept. 28. “Campaigning among agri-

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## For gov’t-funded public works program to create jobs

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or repairing hospitals, child care centers, schools that are safe for children and teachers, and public transportation. And for unemployment benefits for everyone who is out of work until they can find a job,” she said.

Kennedy and running mate Malcolm Jarrett spent six days campaigning in Florida, talking to workers and farmers here and in small towns and rural areas.

A lively discussion followed the candidates’ presentations. One participant noted that New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo forced nursing homes to accept patients infected with COVID-19, rapidly infecting other residents.

“Over 40% of the deaths from the coronavirus across the country have come from poorly maintained and understaffed nursing homes,” said Kennedy. “This shows how the ruling class views those of us who they can no longer exploit as wage workers. We have no value to them.

“The bosses could care less whether we live or die. In Cuba, where workers and farmers took power in 1959, life is valued for workers at any age,” she said.

Another participant asked Jarrett what he thought about reopening schools. “What’s called online education isn’t education at all when there’s no live back-and-forth,” he replied. Jarrett pointed to *Are They Rich Because They’re Smart?* by Jack Barnes. The book explains, “The purpose of educa-

tion in class society is not to educate. It is to give ‘the educated’ a stake in thinking they are going to be different than — better than — other people who work all their lives.”

“Unless teachers and their unions lead a fight to make schools safe,” Jarrett said, “there will be no way to guarantee the safety of children and teachers.”

The day before the forum, Kennedy and Jarrett spoke with Walmart worker Cynthia Landy. Kennedy told Landy, a *Militant* subscriber, that she had heard about the fight cashiers waged for over two years at the store for floor mats.

“‘They’re on order’ the bosses would say,” Landy reported, “but they never came.” Workers persisted and the mats arrived at the end of last year. “Fights like these give workers more confidence to fight,” Kennedy said. “It opens the door to organize a union.”

The key thing, Landy said, is workers “have to be able to trust each other.”

While campaigning in Lake Worth, Jarrett spoke with Tarris Iverson. “The police want to be right all the time, but they aren’t,” Iverson said. Iverson, a disabled laborer, pointed to the case of Corey Jones, a local musician killed in 2015 by a plainclothes cop while Jones was waiting for a tow truck. The cop was convicted of manslaughter in 2019.

“People setting fires, breaking windows, and looting give the police an excuse to use violence against protesters,” Iverson said, referring to actions by

antifa, Black Lives Matter leaders and others. “The demonstrations would be larger without that because people don’t want to be shot by the police with rubber bullets or anything else.”

Jarrett agreed. “To put an end to police brutality will take a gigantic struggle,” the vice presidential candidate said, “one that will not only take on police violence but the system that it originates from. Our campaign points to this as the road for working people — the road to a government of workers and farmers.”

Amanda Ulman contributed to this article.

## Communist League candidates reach out to prisoners

BY MIKE TUCKER

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — Analucia Vermunt, Communist League candidate for parliament for Manurewa, a working-class district in South Auckland, is taking advantage of a recent election law change to reach prisoners.

Inmates serving sentences of less than three years have the right to vote again. There are four prisons in the electorate, which is two-thirds Maori, Pacific Islander or Asian. The CL is also running Patrick Brown, in Panmure-Otahuhu.

Vermunt asked to visit and speak to inmates about her campaign. Officials at one prison told her she could not speak, but they would distribute campaign literature. The campaign sent them 100 copies of the election platform, which includes an ad for a half-price offer for prisoners to a subscription for the *Militant* and for *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*.

Going door to door in Manurewa, Vermunt told Eileen Heremaia that the Communist League says workers need to build unions out of their struggles. “We needed a union where I was working,” said Heremaia, who was laid off during the coronavirus lockdown.

“My campaign calls for the workweek to be reduced without any loss in pay, to counter layoffs,” Vermunt said.

Heremaia subscribed to the *Militant*. “My partner will like this,” she said. He works at a steel mill where the company is talking of laying off 200 workers.

### Join the Socialist Workers Party campaign in 2020!

#### Campaign for what you are for, not who you’re against!

- I want to endorse the Socialist Workers Party ticket of Alyson Kennedy for president and Malcolm Jarrett for vice president.
- I want to join in campaigning or host a house meeting for the candidates. Please contact me.
- Here is my contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to help spread the word. (Make checks to Socialist Workers National Campaign)
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### SWP candidates tour schedule

Sept. 29 - Oct 4

Kennedy - Atlanta; Jarrett - D.C.

Oct. 6 - 10

Kennedy - Phila.; Jarrett - Pittsburgh

Oct. 13 - 18

New York City/N. New Jersey

Oct. 20 - 24

Kennedy - Louisville; Jarrett - Albany

Oct. 27 - Nov. 1

Kennedy - Chicago; Jarrett - Twin Cities

# —ON THE PICKET LINE—

Help the *Militant* cover labor struggles around the world! This column is dedicated to spreading the truth about workers' struggles for a union movement in every workplace today. It gives a voice to those engaged in battle and helps build solidarity. We need your help to make it a success. If you are involved in a skirmish or strike or know other workers who are, please contact me at (212) 244-4899 or themilitant@mac.com. We'll work together to ensure your story gets told.

—Roy Landersen

## 10,000 Quebec day care workers strike for better wages, conditions

MONTREAL — Some 1,000 day care workers from across Quebec rallied in front of the offices of Family Minister Mathieu Lacombe here Sept. 21. Ten thousand at-home day care workers were forced out in a province-wide strike. They chanted in French, "So- so- so-solidarity" and "The battle will continue."

The Federation of Early Childhood Workers of Quebec, the strikers' union, calculates its members make 12.42 Canadian dollars an hour (\$9.32), below Quebec's minimum wage of CA\$13.10, but the government is offering an increase of only 41 cents. Workers are demanding CA\$16.75.

Some 2,500 day care workers' jobs are vacant today, as many have quit over the low pay and poor conditions.

"We know that we deserve better," Khadija Bounit, a day care worker, told the *Militant* at the rally. "We find this unjust, to receive less than the minimum wage, given the contribution that we make to society."

Anne Dionne, a vice president of

the Centrale des Syndicats du Quebec (CSQ), spoke at the rally. She told the *Militant* that home day care workers "work up to 55 hours a week from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m." with each one looking after as many as six children.

Workers have been without a contract for 18 months. On Sept. 1 they began a series of rotating strikes. "We want to be respected and have our work be recognized at its fair value," Lili Illoul told the *Militant* at a Sept. 11 picket in front of the minister's office.

The union is demanding arbitration but the government has refused.

—Steve Penner

## Southern Indiana casino workers fight for new contract

ELIZABETH, Ind. — Members of UNITE HERE Local 23, Teamsters Local 89 and International Union of Operating Engineers Local 399, all of whom are in contract negotiations with Caesars casino here, carried out a march through the casino as well as informational picket lines Sept. 4.

The workers are demanding a wage raise and improved health care coverage. They were laid off when the casino



Militant/Steve Penner

Day care workers rally at Quebec Families Ministry Sept. 21 in support of 10,000 at-home day care workers on province-wide rotating strikes since Sept. 1 for better pay, conditions.

were shut down in March because of coronavirus and then reopened June 15.

"After our contract expired Feb. 1," David Moore, 47, a slot machine rep for 23 years at Caesars, told the *Militant*, the bosses "offered us a 13-cent raise!"

Another big issue for workers is the expensive medical insurance, since many "can't afford to go to the doctor because the deductible is several thousand dollars," Moore said. "In 2001 I had cancer and went through surgery and treatments and I only paid \$2,000 out of pocket. But a few years ago I had my gall bladder removed and it took me two years to pay for it."

The same day, the unionists held an all-day honk-and-wave informational

picket in the parking lot of Daisy's Country Kitchen, a popular eatery in New Albany, which most people drive past on their way to the casino.

—Maggie Trowe

## Norway bus drivers strike demands living wage

OSLO, Norway — "We are on strike because we can't live on our low wages," Rauf Husain, a local bus drivers' union leader here, told the *Militant*. "Everything we buy has gone up, and our wages haven't kept up."

In the most important national strike in over 20 years, 8,500 bus drivers in four unions shut down bus transportation Sept. 26 in Norway. They are fighting for a living wage and more time to check the safety of the buses they drive.

The various employers under the national NHO Transport federation say that declining income due to the coronavirus means they cannot give the bus drivers a wage increase. They threatened the unions with layoffs.

Ninety percent of bus drivers in Oslo are immigrants, from 87 countries. Strikers here at the Jernkroken bus terminal, base for 450 drivers, were eager to tell the *Militant* Sept. 26 about the myriad problems they face on the job.

Inamulhaq Inam, a bus driver for four years, said the unions won agreement from employers in 2007 to gradually increase bus drivers' wages to the level of industrial workers. "They have not lived up to the agreement," he said. "With three children, I can't live on" wages of only 24,000 kroner a month (\$2,600).

The drivers work split shift, and those that live outside of Oslo have to pay tolls four times a day to drive to and from work in the morning and afternoon, Ahmed Abdelkefi, an immigrant from Tunisia, pointed out.

In response to the employers' claim of budget woes, Husain said that the company bosses make "over 3 million kroner a year. It is we who do the work. They believe we are slaves." He concluded, "We are going to hold out until we win our demands."

—Greg McCartan

# 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.

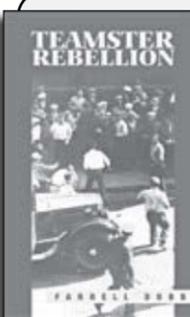
**HEALTH CARE FOR ALL.** Fight for universal, government-guaranteed cradle-to-grave health care, and retirement income for all.

**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.



## Teamster Rebellion

by Farrell Dobbs  
How a class-struggle leadership of the Teamsters union in Minneapolis in 1934 showed how to fight — and win — strike battles in midst of depression. \$16

pathfinderpress.com

# Biden, Trump defend bosses

Continued from front page

and to Democrats and Republicans of every stripe, “jobs are needed now,” Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for president, told the *Militant*, “as well as ample government aid for all who need it, as long as they need it.”

“My campaign calls for workers and our unions to fight for a government-funded public works program that can put millions back to work at union-scale pay to build homes, hospitals, schools and other things working people urgently need,” Kennedy said.

“And wherever bosses are threatening yet more layoffs, like on the airlines, Amtrak and elsewhere, workers need to fight for a shorter workweek to spread jobs around, with *no cut in pay*,” she added.

Tens of millions of workers also face loss of job-related health care, with the burden falling heaviest on the backs of workers who are Black and Hispanic. Bosses claim they can’t afford to keep paying the giant insurance monopolies — whose profits have soared as their payouts fell, as hospitals and clinics cancelled surgeries and procedures to make insufficient beds available for coronavirus patients. Insurance company bosses refuse to give anyone a break, especially small businesses.

Biden says he wants to resurrect Obamacare, which was passed when he was in office. Trump says the free market will solve the problem. Neither is a solution, nor touches the real problem.

“In the U.S. there is no such thing as health *care*, there is only health *insurance*, a big and profitable capitalist industry,” Kennedy said. “The bosses have closed hospitals, turned nursing homes deadly, and now are shutting off insurance to millions.”

“The Socialist Workers Party fights for universal, government-guaranteed cradle-to-grave health care, and retirement income for all, as a human right,” she said.

Inflation — especially the cost of food, home supplies and other necessities — eats deeper into the purchasing power of working people. The government lies about this, averaging out these crucial rising costs with other prices that working people aren’t using, like air travel and hotel rates, to claim inflation is just 1.3%.

“We say workers and our unions should fight for escalator clauses in every contract to assure that our wages go up each and every time prices rise,” SWP vice presidential candidate Malcolm Jarrett said. “And for similar protections to cover all workers who are retired, on pensions or Social Security.”

One “industry” where bosses are engaged in a hiring spree is for “repo” men. As governments at all levels are shutting down special programs that have deferred evictions, the rulers are gearing up to collect outstanding loans and repossess housing and more.

## ‘Don’t let deplorables do it again’

Liberals are determined to prevent working people, those that Hillary Clinton labeled a “basket of deplorables” for putting Trump in the White House in 2016, from doing the same again this November. They consider working people not only worthless, but increasingly dangerous.

“Tens of thousands” of Trump supporters will stand outside polling booths Nov. 3, “to create a climate of menace,” warns *New York Times* columnist Frank Bruni. This simply can’t be a fair election, he says, because “a metastasizing segment of the population” lacks any “decency.” They’re putting the country “on the precipice of being ungovernable.”

Another *Times* pundit, Thomas Edsall, points to one special group of deplorables he blames for Trump’s election, those he calls “missing whites” — workers who are Caucasian and who can’t usually stomach voting for *either* Democrats or Republicans.



AP Photo/Gene J. Puskar

Food banks, like Pittsburgh Community Food Bank volunteers, above, have been overwhelmed as exploding unemployment, cuts in gov’t aid, put workers against the wall. Socialist Workers Party campaign backs workers’ struggles to defend jobs, wages, safe working conditions.

The liberals are becoming more hysterical as each day passes, determined to use all means necessary to deny Trump a second term. Their course threatens the political rights working people have conquered in centuries of struggle.

“Neither the Democrats nor Republicans point a way forward for workers and farmers. They can’t. They are the twin parties of the capitalist rul-

ers. They exist to defend the power and privilege of the ruling families,” Jarrett said.

“That’s why working people need to build our own party, a labor party, based on our fighting unions,” Jarrett said. “To speak in the interests of all those who are exploited and oppressed by capitalism and to use to organize millions of working people to take political power into our own hands.”

## History comes from class struggle, not the Supreme Court

Dire forebodings about Senate confirmation of President Donald Trump’s nomination of Amy Coney Barrett for the U.S. Supreme Court fill the pages of the liberal media. Liberals insist she would cement a conservative majority on the court that would form an impenetrable barrier to social progress and destroy workers’ access to government-funded health care, Social Security and the right to have an abortion.

But whether it is filled with liberals or conservatives, the high court will continue doing what it has always done — defending the class interests of the ruling capitalist families.

The attitude working people should take towards the Supreme Court was taken up by Socialist Workers Party leader James P. Cannon after then-President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1937 moved to greatly expand the number of Supreme Court judges and stack it so they would rule as he told them. This is something Democratic Party leaders say will have to be done if they win both the presidency and the Senate.

“We are 100% against the ridiculous illusion that the addition of a half dozen more exponents of the capitalist system to that judicial body will do away with the class struggle or materially affect the relationship between the workers and their exploiters in any way whatever,” Cannon wrote.

“The Supreme Court, like all other political and judicial institutions in modern society, is a class instrument, pure and simple,” he said. Its rulings are shaped by “the nature of its essential function as a protecting barrier of the system of private property and private profit.”

Working people cannot win concessions “without the most determined struggle,” Cannon said. “And a genuine rectification of the gross inequalities and injustices of capitalism is to be attained only by the development of these struggles to their logical and inevitable climax — the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. A ‘liberal’ Supreme Court can’t and won’t aid these struggles. And a ‘reactionary’ Supreme Court can’t stop them.”

Cannon wrote these words as the class struggle was on the rise and millions of workers were building and using unions in strikes, sit-ins and other battles. That made it easier for workers to see that continuing on this course was the road forward.

Today, horror stories about what will happen if the Republicans win the presidency and fill Supreme Court justice seats that arise is stock in trade for liberals looking for any way to get workers to hold their nose and vote for the “lesser evil.”

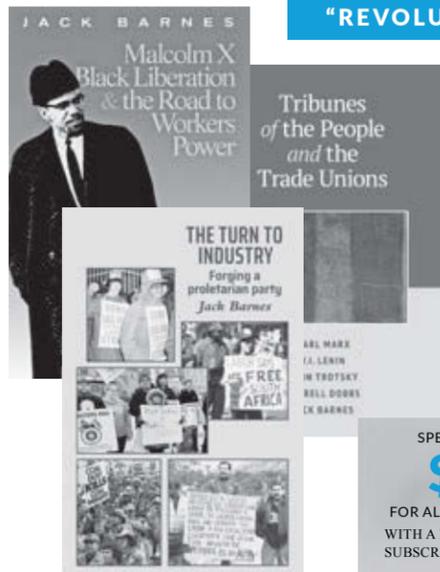
“The development of the workers’ power to attain their historic aims — the abolition of capitalism and all its institutions, including the Supreme Court — that is the real business of the intelligent workers,” Cannon said.

Working people have no stake in the outcome of Barrett’s confirmation. As Cannon points out, what is key for us is strengthening our own struggles and learning to rely on our own forces — not arguing over how we can turn the black-robed robbers for the ruling class that sit on the court into an ally of the working class.

— TERRY EVANS

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# Midwest farmers face crisis of mounting debt, bankruptcies

BY JOE SWANSON

LINCOLN, Neb. — Rising debts and plummeting incomes are forcing more farmers to file for bankruptcy, despite the likelihood that federal payments supposedly to compensate farmers will hit record levels.

About 580 farmers filed for Chapter 12 bankruptcy protection in the 12-month period that ended June 30 — 8% more than a year earlier.

Vernon Jantzen, a leader of the Nebraska Farmers Union and president of a council that operates a hotline for farmers in distress, told the *Militant*, “I’ve had a tremendous increase in calls in the last few months from farmers.

“The small amount of federal aid farmers received has wound up for personal family needs with little or nothing left for payment to lenders and other farm expenses,” he said. “A large percentage of the government aid went to the agriculture production companies and big landowners.”

Like most small farmers, Jantzen depends on working a job to supplement the income he gets from a 200-acre farm near Beatrice. He drives a school bus and a grain delivery truck part time.

“Farmers have struggled with the low prices of farm commodities for the last six years,” he said. “Then the pandemic hit. There are two tracts that farmers supply: one, to all the grocery stores, and the other to schools and restaurants. When they both were shut down, it was a double whammy.”

Earlier in the year, some farmers were forced to euthanize livestock when packinghouse owners shuttered plants after bosses failed to do anything to prevent the spread of coronavirus to workers on the shop floor.

“It was a blow to farmers with the slowdown in production,” Jantzen said, “but it was criminal what the government and the packing plant employers did, forcing workers to produce without strict safety measures for protection against the virus.”

According to the *American Farm Bureau Federation*, farm income from the sales of crops and livestock has fallen by \$12 billion since last year. Moreover, farm debt and debt-to-asset levels continue to climb.

The Department of Agriculture is to hand out a second round of “pandemic” aid amounting to \$13 billion. But some two-thirds of the previous round of payments ended up in the pockets of the top 10% of recipients.



Kenneth Ferriera/Omaha World-Herald via AP  
**Nebraska hog farmer Jim Bartling feared he would have to euthanize pigs like fellow farmers when packinghouse bosses shut plants in April. More farmers are filing for bankruptcy today.**

Betty Lennington, 74, a retired farmer who lives near Tekamah, is concerned about the increasing drought conditions on her now rented-out bottomland farm of almost 300 acres. It stands near the Missouri River and was flooded in 2019.

“Flooding, low corn prices, a world pandemic, and now drought conditions on unirrigated land is becoming a disaster,” Lennington told the *Militant*.

The drought “can upset the pollination cycle and ruin the corn harvest,” she pointed out.

Damage to farmers’ land, crops and

livestock as a result of storms, floods and drought happens many times over. But these natural disasters have nothing to do with the ruin working farmers face as a result of their exploitation by capitalist bankers and monopolies.

In order to buy land and meet the rising costs of seed, livestock, machinery and other operating expenses, farmers must borrow to have any chance of making it. Farmers’ “ownership” of the land becomes a form of their exploitation. Interest payments to the bankers holding their mort-

## Anger at lack of charges in Taylor killing fuels debate

Continued from front page

part of downtown to traffic. The day before the announcement, Louisville Mayor Gregory Fischer enacted a 9 p.m. to 6:30 a.m. curfew that lasted five days. Every night every cellphone in Louisville received a loud alarm signal and an order to obey the curfew.

After Cameron’s announcement, small groups organized to break windows and vandalize shops in the Highlands neighborhood. Two police officers were shot and wounded at an action downtown. Most working people respected the curfew and stayed away, because of the record of vandalism, looting, shootings and harassment of diners and others in the city associated with protests over the past months. Black Lives Matter Louisville organizer Reece Chenault threatened, “There is going to have to be an increased level of discomfort” for people here going forward.

### The grand jury decisions

The laws are written, and were promoted by the attorney general, first and foremost to protect the cops at all costs.

When the Louisville cops broke down Taylor’s door, and busted their way into her apartment, her boyfriend, Kenneth Walker, was convinced they were in danger. He picked up his gun, which he was carrying legally, and fired, hitting Mattingly. The cops responded with a hail of 32 bullets, killing Taylor.

In Kentucky, like in most states, the law stipulates that if someone fires a gun at police, no matter the circumstances, the police are justified in returning fire, no matter how lethal the results.

This is why the attorney general said no charges were filed in Taylor’s killing.

There remain many questions about

the killing, about the conduct of the cops and about how the attorney general presented the findings of the grand jury. One grand jury member filed a suit Sept. 28 charging that Cameron misrepresented their deliberations and did not, as he claimed, offer them the option to indict the two cops who killed Taylor. She said she wanted the transcript of their deliberations made public and to be freed to speak about what happened. Taylor’s family also called for it to be released.

Cameron said he would grant both requests, but then announced he wanted to wait at least a week to protect witnesses’ identities.

### A case watched across the country

Rightly so, Breonna Taylor has become a household name and symbol of the fight against police brutality, particularly toward African Americans, and a focus of anger against police impunity. The fight for justice around her killing has won international attention.

But, in the absence of working-class leadership from unions, churches and other mass organizations, many protests here have targeted Caucasians, restaurant owners and others, as opposed to demanding the cops be held accountable. The actions have been organized in ways that encouraged indiscipline and violent acts. Groups carrying arms have been allowed to participate, opening the door to retaliation by cops and right-wing groups.

Vandalism, looting, and attacks on police by protesters have occurred. Downtown Louisville, once a thriving center of restaurants, stores and museums, is a boarded-up, graffiti-scarred ghost town.

There was the potential here to build

gates is the principal way they are squeezed by the capitalist class.

They also face the big-input food processing and distribution companies that dictate to farmers the price they will pay for seed and fertilizer, and the price they will get for what they produce.

If little profit is made in a given year, the farmer will be forced to use some of the money normally spent carrying out farm production for personal consumption. If this situation persists for any period of time, working farmers are forced off the land.

In the face of conditions that are driven by capitalism’s debt and mortgages system, the Socialist Workers Party 2020 campaign demands immediate government relief to fully cover farmers’ production costs, including living expenses for themselves and their families.

The party’s platform calls for an end to all foreclosures and the nationalization of the land, guaranteeing its continuing use by those who live on and till it, not “repo” seizures by absentee bankers, landowners or capitalist farmers.

“This is the only way farmers can protect themselves and ensure they can work the land,” Alyson Kennedy, the SWP’s candidate for president, told the *Militant*. “Any movement by the working class to defend our own interests must be based on forging an alliance with farmers — who are exploited by the same capitalists as we are.”

broad, disciplined protests to involve tens of thousands of working-class people of all races and nationalities who oppose the police killing of Taylor and others. Examples of what was possible started to happen early on, before these actions were hijacked by petty-bourgeois violence mongers and race-baiters who have contempt for working people. But the opening to mobilize the broad social pressure needed to hold the cops and city officials accountable has been badly damaged and squandered.

Middle-class radicals in and around organizations like Black Lives Matter have encouraged race-baiting, confrontations with police, and provocative armed bravado. And they have presented this as revolutionary.

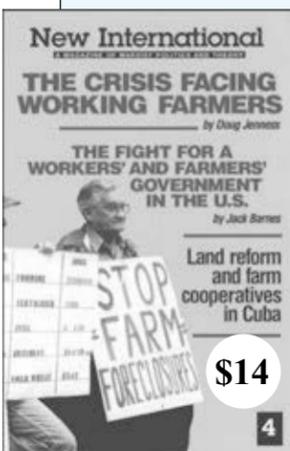
This narrows the space for increasing an understanding that police brutality is an essential component of the continued rule of the capitalist class and its government.

The rulers here recognize that the cop killing of Breonna Taylor aroused the attention of tens of thousands. This is reflected in the decision of the city government to settle a civil case brought by Taylor’s family and pay them \$12 million and agree to some police-related reforms.

Charges against the cops and other authorities remain possible. A federal investigation continues, including the possibility of charges based on the cops’ violation of Taylor’s constitutional rights. There are many questions about the killing that remain unanswered. The discussion of police brutality and the killing of Breonna Taylor is not over, and the need for the working class to put its stamp on whatever comes next isn’t either.

New International no. 4

### The Crisis Facing Working Farmers



“The material basis for a governmental alliance of workers and working farmers is their shared exploitation by banking, industrial, and commercial capital.”  
— Jack Barnes

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# 'Imperialism is an arsonist setting fire to our forests'

Thomas Sankara Speaks is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for October. Sankara was the exemplary leader of a revolution in Burkina Faso, one of the poorest countries in Africa, from 1983 to 1987. His speeches explain how the peasants and workers of this West African country established a popular revolutionary government and began to fight the hunger, illiteracy, and economic backwardness imposed by imperialist domination, and the oppression of women inherited from millennia of class society. The excerpt is from "Imperialism Is the Arsonist of Our Forests and Savannah," a speech given by Sankara on Feb. 5, 1986, in Paris at the First International Silva Conference for the Protection of the Trees and Forests. Copyright © 2007 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Burkinabe women building terrace to prevent spread of the desert, 1986. Revolution led by Thomas Sankara mobilized peasants, workers, women to take control of their lives, country.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY THOMAS SANKARA

My homeland, Burkina Faso, is without question one of the rare countries on this planet justified in calling itself and viewing itself as a distillation of all the natural evils from which mankind still suffers at the end of this twentieth century.

Eight million Burkinabè have painfully internalized this reality for twenty-three years. They have watched their mothers, fathers, daughters, and sons

die, with hunger, famine, disease, and ignorance decimating them by the hundreds. With tears in their eyes, they have watched ponds and rivers dry up. Since 1973 they have seen the environment deteriorate, trees die, and the desert invade with giant strides. It is estimated that the desert in the Sahel advances at the rate of seven kilometers per year.

Only by looking at these realities can one understand and accept the legitimate revolt that was born, that matured over a long period of time, and that finally erupted in an organized way the night of August 4, 1983, in the form of a democratic and popular revolution in Burkina Faso. ...

After having vaccinated throughout the national territory, in two weeks, 2.5 million children between the ages of nine months and fourteen years — children from Burkina Faso and from neighboring countries — against measles, meningitis, and yellow fever; after having sunk more than 150 wells assuring drinking water to the 20 or so districts in our capital that lacked this vital necessity until now; after having raised the literacy rate from 12 to 22 percent in two years — the Burkinabè people victoriously continue their struggle for a green Burkina.

Ten million trees were planted under the auspices of a fifteen-month People's Development Program, our first

venture while awaiting the five-year plan. In the villages and in the developed river valleys, families must each plant one hundred trees per year. ...

I have come to join with you in exploring the harshness of nature. But I have also come to denounce the ones whose selfishness is the source of his fellow man's misfortune. Colonial plunder has decimated our forests without the slightest thought of replenishing them for our tomorrows. ...

We are not against progress, but we do not want progress that is anarchic and criminally neglects the rights of others. We therefore wish to affirm that the battle against the encroachment of the desert is a battle to establish a balance between man, nature, and society. As such it is a political battle above all, and not an act of fate. ...

We must fight to find the financial means to exploit our existing water resources — drilling operations, reservoirs, and dams. This is the place to denounce the one-sided contracts and draconian conditions imposed by banks and other financial institutions that doom our projects in this field. It is these prohibitive conditions that lead to our countries' traumatizing debt and eliminate any meaningful maneuvering room.

Neither fallacious Malthusian arguments — and I assert that Africa re-

mains an underpopulated continent — nor the vacation resorts pompously and demagogically christened "reforestation operations" provide an answer. We and our misery are spurned like bald and mangy dogs whose lamentations and cries disturb the peace and quiet of the manufacturers and merchants of misery.

That is why Burkina has proposed and continues to propose that at least 1 percent of the colossal sums of money sacrificed to the search for cohabitation with other stars and planets be used, by way of compensation, to finance projects to save trees and lives. We have not abandoned hope that a dialogue with the Martians might lead to the reconquest of Eden. But in the meantime, earthlings that we are, we also have the right to reject a choice limited simply to the alternatives of hell or purgatory.

Explained in this way, our struggle for the trees and forests is first and foremost a democratic and popular struggle. Because a handful of forestry engineers and experts getting themselves all worked up in a sterile and costly manner will never accomplish anything! Nor can the worked-up consciences of a multitude of forums and institutions — sincere and praiseworthy though they may be — make the Sahel green again, when we lack the funds to drill wells for drinking water a hundred meters deep, while money abounds to drill oil wells three thousand meters deep!

As Karl Marx said, those who live in a palace do not think about the same things, nor in the same way, as those who live in a hut. This struggle to defend the trees and forests is above all a struggle against imperialism. Because imperialism is the arsonist setting fire to our forests and our savannas. ...

Yes, the problem posed by the trees and forests is exclusively the problem of balance and harmony between the individual, society, and nature. This fight can be waged. We must not retreat in face of the immensity of the task. We must not turn away from the suffering of others, for the spread of the desert no longer knows any borders.

We can win this struggle if we choose to be architects and not simply bees. It will be the victory of consciousness over instinct. The bee and the architect, yes! If the author of these lines will allow me, I will extend this twofold analogy to a threefold one: the bee, the architect, and the revolutionary architect.

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## SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STATEMENT

# Though our battles, workers unite

ALYSON KENNEDY

### Continued from front page

speak for the interests of working people. But the truth is they seek to wield power to advance the wealth and despotic power of the class whose interests they defend — the ruling capitalist families. This is a proven fact, after four years of Trump and eight of Obama-Biden before him.

What working people face today is widespread joblessness, and attacks on our wages, hours and working conditions, health “care” and living conditions, as they try to shore up their crisis-ridden system at our expense. Workers and farmers are looking for ways to resist through on-the-job skirmishes and union battles, in fights against farm foreclosures, police brutality and more, and by engaging in other social struggles. Through these actions we are building solidarity and trust in each other.

Whatever concessions we wrest from the bosses, as long as the bosses and bankers hold power their dog-eat-dog capitalist system drives them to push harder and harder to make profits on the backs of our labor.

A working-class movement to lead millions to put an end to the dictatorship of capital can and will be forged in the course of mounting struggles. Key is looking at *all* political questions from how they effect the irreconcilable class interests of the two main contending classes — workers and bosses.

The Socialist Workers Party analyzes “all politics from the point of view of the historic goals of *our* class — the class we are simply the most conscious and organized part of and the most consistent fighter for,” writes Jack Barnes in *The Turn to Industry: Forging a Proletarian Party*. “The class whose task it is to govern, expropriate the exploiters and oppres-



MALCOLM JARRETT

sors, and lead a great social movement to reorganize society to eliminate oppression and lay the foundations of a socialist society — changing ourselves utterly in the process.”

The book is essential reading and currently on special with a subscription to the *Militant*.

The capitalists and their millions of enablers among the middle-class meritocracy try to convince working people we don’t have the “smarts” to take power and run society for ourselves. Their cops, courts, prisons and death penalty are all there to keep us in check.

But a deeper capitalist crisis — that today’s struggles foretell — will impel working people more and more to take our destiny into our own hands. We’ll come together to wage disciplined and united struggles to defend ourselves, and to fight in the interests of all those exploited and oppressed by capital.

In the course of these struggles workers will increasingly see ourselves as part of a *class*, and gain class-struggle experience. We will find ways to overcome divisions between us — employed and jobless, Black and Caucasian, native-born and immigrant, women and men — that bosses try to foster and prolong to break our fighting capacities. We will discover our own worth, as Malcolm X explained, and advance battle-tested and proven leaders from our ranks.

We will build and strengthen fighting unions and organize our own party, a labor party. And use it to reinforce our battles and to wage the decisive struggle to take political power into our own hands and build a workers and farmers government.

The SWP 2020 campaign offers workers and youth the chance to advance that liberating perspective today. Join us!

## Drive for new readers

### Continued from page 4

cultural field and packing workers in Lake Worth and outside the Walmart store where I work in Miami, we found many workers interested in learning more.”

“The Chicago SWP branch set a target week for the first week with a goal of 30 subs and 30 books,” Ilona Gersh told the *Militant*. “We’ve already collected \$1,000 for the fund and have sold 12 subscriptions and almost as many books. We’re preparing for our next target week.”

SWP members and supporters in Louisville are using the *Militant* coverage to build support for the Dominion grocery workers strike in Newfoundland, Canada, and two local labor struggles — the strike by DSI Tunneling workers in Louisville for a first contract and the contract struggle of union workers at Caesars Casino in nearby Elizabeth, Indiana.

Many workers want to discuss the police killing of Breonna Taylor, the destruction and looting condoned by some protest organizers, and the large national guard and police presence and curfew that city and state officials imposed after minor charges were brought against one of the cops.

“Most workers we meet campaigning or on the job tell us they oppose racism and police brutality, but they also oppose burning and looting, shooting police officers and race-baiting against Caucasians,” Kaitlin Estill, the organizer of the drive in Louisville, told the *Militant*. “They agree when we say that such actions damage the struggle and alienate many who could be involved.

“In the intense debate around this and other political questions we have already sold 14 subscriptions and four books,” she said. “Four DSI strikers subscribed on the picket line Sept. 25.”

Starting next week the *Militant* will run weekly charts on the progress of the subscription drive and the Party-Building Fund. To join in winning new readers or to make a contribution to the Party-Building Fund, see page 8 for the party branch nearest you.

## Fight continues to overturn Florida prison officials’ ban on ‘Militant’

### Continued from front page

were upheld,” Dean Peterson, the committee’s administrator, wrote *Militant* attorney David Goldstein. “As a result of that decision the issue will not be allowed into Florida correctional institutions.” This affects all of the state’s 143 prison facilities.

Protests against the impoundments have come from both prominent political rights groups like the American Civil Liberties Union in Florida and press freedom organizations like the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press.

“We urge Florida State Prison authorities to cease the arbitrary impoundment” of the *Militant*, wrote Justin Mazzola, deputy director of research for Amnesty International USA, in a Sept. 21 letter to the committee.

Peterson’s letter informing the *Militant* of the committee’s decision was dated Aug. 28, but it wasn’t postmarked until Sept. 16. So the *Militant* didn’t even know about it until three weeks after it was made.

As with the three subsequent impoundments of the paper — issue nos. 31, 33 and 34 — the committee’s decision give no clear reason what prison authorities found objectionable in *Militant* articles.

They just claim that each of the four issues are “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.”

Issue no. 30 was confiscated because of the article “Prisoners Demand Release from Overcrowded Jails.” It describes a peaceful rally in California by inmates’ family members and supporters urging the state government take steps to relieve the dangerous overcrowding in prisons there amid the COVID-19 pandemic. It also reports on a letter from a prisoner describing conditions where he is incarcerated.

The spread of coronavirus amid widespread prison overcrowding has been widely covered in Florida and nationwide. The *Miami Herald*, for example, at the end of July — the same time that the *Militant* article appeared — ran articles focused on the abysmal conditions within Florida’s prison system. The paper’s headlines included, “South Florida Prison Tallies Most Inmate COVID-19 Deaths Among Florida Facilities” and “‘It’s Apparent that They’re Failing’: As Florida Inmate Deaths Soar, Families Feel Dread.”

Issue nos. 33 and 34 were banned for articles reporting on the *Militant*’s efforts to reverse the impoundment of issue no. 30. Issue no. 31, however, was banned for an article that opposed violence in Portland, Oregon, by both antifa and federal cops. These are also questions that have been widely covered in the press.

The *Militant* has appealed the banning of these three issues also, but hasn’t yet received a response from the Literature Review Committee.

The *Militant* has fought an ongoing series of battles against prison bans on the paper in the last few years, with growing support, and has won the vast majority.

“I urge you to lift the ban on the *Militant* newspaper in Florida prisons,” Martin Knaeble, a baggage handler for Delta Airlines in Minneapolis, wrote Sept. 27. “I’m sure you value the constitutional right of freedom of the press and freedom of speech. Please do the right thing!”

“More letters are needed to urge Florida prison officials to overturn their bans,” said *Militant* editor John Studer. “What’s at issue here isn’t our reports on prison conditions — this is widely covered and hasn’t led to Florida officials carrying out wholesale suppression of the media. The fact is, Florida prison authorities don’t like our political views.

“The *Militant* will never stop fighting for the right of prisoners to read different points of view and form their own opinions,” Studer said. “Our growing numbers of subscribers behind bars look to us to defend their rights.”

Other groups that have sent letters calling for lifting the ban include the Florida Press Association, News Leaders Association and PEN America. A growing number of individuals have done so as well.

Send letters to Dean Peterson, Literature Review Committee, Florida Department of Corrections, 501 South Calhoun Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399 or via email at [Allen.Peterson@fdc.myflorida.com](mailto:Allen.Peterson@fdc.myflorida.com), with a copy to the *Militant*.

### Letters urging Florida prison officials to end ban on ‘Militant’

American Civil Liberties Union - Florida

Amnesty International USA

African Diaspora Association of Canada

Florida Press Association

News Leaders Association

PEN America

Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press

Charlie Hinton, writer, performer

Carl Jech, professor De Anza College

Martin Knaeble, airline worker

Chris Pennock, shop steward, National

Association of Letter Carriers

Dolores Piper, activist in fight against

police brutality

### 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](mailto:Allen.Peterson@fdc.myflorida.com), with copies to [themilitant@mac.com](mailto:themilitant@mac.com)

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