

THE MILITANT

INSIDE
Cuban volunteers plan vaccination drive, extend int'l solidarity
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE VOL. 85/NO. 9 MARCH 8, 2021

SWP candidate on ballot in Nebraska, gives workers a voice

BY NAOMI CRAINE

LINCOLN, Neb — Joe Swanson, the Socialist Workers Party candidate for Lincoln City Council at-large, and supporters spent the Feb. 20-21 weekend building solidarity for locked-out workers at the Marathon Petroleum refinery in Minnesota and collecting signatures to put Swanson on the ballot for the April 6 primary.

“As a 60-year union veteran, Swanson said he would advocate for workers, help them organize and increase their rights,” wrote the *Lincoln Journal-Star* Feb. 22, after Swanson, a former railroad and meatpacking worker, filed 289 signatures. On Feb. 24, city officials certified the campaign for the ballot with nearly 100 more signatures than required.

Campaign supporters talked to workers at their doorsteps here and in the rural towns of Mead and Wahoo.

Swanson and David Rosenfeld, a campaign supporter from Minnesota, met up with Lance Anton, a freight rail conductor and member of SMART-TD Local 0305 who has been getting the word out about Swanson’s campaign.

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Solidarity with struggle against Myanmar junta!

Workers and farmers lead massive protests



Confederation of Trade Unions Myanmar

Thousands of farmworkers and farmers march in Hlegu Township Feb. 22, first day of nationwide general strike against military coup. Huge protest actions took place across the country.

BY SETH GALINSKY

Hundreds of thousands took to the streets across Myanmar Feb. 22 on the first day of a general strike demanding an end to military rule. They did so despite the junta’s threat that protesters will “suffer loss of life” if they continue.

Myanmar’s military commanders overthrew the National League for

Democracy-led government elected overwhelmingly in November. The party’s leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, is under house arrest.

In an escalation of the repression, police and army soldiers killed two people and wounded at least 30 in Mandalay, Myanmar’s second-largest city, Feb. 20. But far from deterring the fight, coup opponents responded with more protests and strikes.

Thousands returned to the streets of Mandalay the next day to protest the killings and demand the junta step down. Thousands also lined the streets of the

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Back refinery workers’ fight over lockout by Marathon

BY GABRIELLE PROSSER AND HELEN MEYERS

ST. PAUL PARK, Minn. — The fight of 200 locked-out Teamsters Local 120 members against attacks by Marathon Petroleum — the largest refinery company in the U.S. — is now in its fifth week. Solidarity and support is critical, and it continues to come in. Keep it coming!

Visiting the picket line Feb. 19 and 20, we met KerryJo Felder, an organizer for the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation. She pulled her car up to the pickets and served pots of steaming hot jambalaya to those walking the line. “I’m a Teamster too, and these are my boys. I am here to support them,” she told the *Militant*.

Workers said she comes out once a day, seven days a week, bringing a hot meal.

Another time we visited a small dump truck pulled up to one of the picket lines and dropped off a big load of firewood. The pickets told us the driver was a former contract worker at the refinery who now works at a construction company and knew the dangerous conditions they faced inside. As he left, he said, “I’ll be back with more.”

The two key issues in the standoff are safety for workers on the job and in the surrounding community and

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Bosses’ profit drive at heart of capitalist catastrophe in Texas



Boombox Taco

In act of working-class solidarity, Jessica Villa-Gomez, owner of Boombox Taco, has given out thousands of tacos to working people in Houston who have been without electricity for days.

BY ALYSON KENNEDY

DALLAS — An unusual major winter storm beginning Feb. 12 spread snowfall and damaging ice here, all across Texas, in other parts of the South and Midwest, and in northern Mexico. Snow blanketed 80% of Texas, from Dallas to Brownsville on the southern border.

Some 25 million people in Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi were under a hard freeze warning for the next week.

The storm produced a disaster here and across Texas. “The cause of the social catastrophe confronting workers and farmers in Texas and beyond

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SWP candidates campaign to build support for fights of workers, farmers

BY TERRY EVANS

NEW YORK — “The SWP candidates in 2021 are going to use our campaigns to get out the story and build support for whatever working-class struggles are taking place, no matter how big or small.” That’s what John Studer, Socialist Workers Party national campaign director and editor of the *Militant*, told a lively Militant Labor Forum here Feb. 20.

Studer pointed to the example set by Farrell Dobbs, the party’s presidential candidate in 1956, who urged unionists across the country to organize donations of station wagons to the Black community in Montgomery, Alabama. They were fighting to desegregate city buses there, a watershed battle in the growing movement to overthrow Jim Crow segregation.

The party used Dobbs’ campaign — and the *Militant* — to join in this historic battle. Studer held up the front page of the April 2, 1956, *Militant* with a banner headline, “Montgomery Free-

dom Fighters Appeal for Station Wagons to Build Car Pool,” with Dobbs’ on-the-scene reporting from Montgomery. Dobbs himself drove one of the first cars down there.

While there are no working-class battles today on the scale of the Montgomery

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Amazon workers fighting for union in Alabama need solidarity
Visually impaired workers fight boss attack in Ohio

Communist League candidates back labor struggles in the UK

BY ÖGMUNDUR JÓNSSON

MANCHESTER, England — Workers at British Gas, members of the GMB union, went on strike Feb. 19-22 protesting the company’s attempts to impose increased hours while cutting pay. The union said the company refused to drop its threat to “fire and rehire.” This means if you refuse to agree to the new contract terms, you’re fired and then offered your old job back on the bosses’ terms.

Since Jan. 7 the 7,000 workers, who install and maintain gas ovens, radiators, meters and other equipment, have gone on strike in blocks of up to four days.

“The attack by British Gas is part of a broader assault by bosses against workers’ jobs, pay and conditions,” Peter Clifford, a rail worker and Communist League candidate for mayor of Greater Manchester, said at a Feb. 19 meeting here to launch the CL campaign. On several occasions, Clifford has joined the GMB picket line in Stockport, which is kept up by gas workers from all across North West England.

The Communist League is running a national slate of candidates in both Manchester and London.

“In recent weeks we’ve seen two small but important victories in working-class battles,” Clifford said. “Workers at Rolls-Royce in Barnoldswick were able to save 350 jobs through their nine-week strike. And workers at DHL in Liverpool carried out effective picketing and won a pay rise.”

On Feb. 20 meat worker Hugo Wils, Clifford’s running mate as CL candidate for Manchester Council, was joined by Andrés Mendoza, who is the party’s

candidate for mayor of London, campaigning outside the Queens Road Go North West bus depot here. Some 400 drivers represented by the Unite union voted for an open-ended strike starting Feb. 28 against job cuts, increased hours with no pay increase and other attacks on conditions. The bosses there are also using the “fire and rehire” stick to impose the concession contract.

The Communist League candidates are building support for the gas workers and bus drivers.

“I heard about the drivers,” Temmy Edwards told this *Militant* worker-correspondent and campaign supporter Anne Howie Feb. 21 when we knocked on his door in the Gorton area and raised the two labor battles. “You’re right, it’s what a lot of people are facing.”

Edwards, who works both as a drummer and coffee server, said the coffee chain where he’s employed often puts him on “flexible furlough.” This means his hours are cut and he receives only 60% of the lost wage paid from the government.

The CL’s platform calls for a shorter workweek *with no cut in pay* in response to job and wage cuts, as well as a government-funded public works program to provide jobs at union-scale pay replacing decaying infrastructure.

The estate where Edwards lives is a case in point. Several houses are being torn down after a massive sink-hole opened up in the street following heavy rain in January.

“I never considered myself political, but when it catches up with you, you can’t hide from politics,” Edwards said as he subscribed to the *Militant* and took



Militant/Jonathan Silberman

George McDonald, striking British Gas worker, talks with Pamela Holmes, Communist League candidate for London Assembly, on picket line in Sidcup, North Kent, England, Feb. 22.

a copy of the CL’s election platform.

At the end of a successful day of campaigning in the Moston area, campaigners spoke with Vartan Lloyd Morris, an agency nurse who first met the CL at a protest following the killing of George Floyd. “I’m not surprised the bus drivers voted to strike,” she told Mendoza. “It’s no secret that they’ve been unhappy about the way they’ve been treated for a long time.”

Lloyd Morris endorsed the Communist League campaign. “This is the right time for a working-class campaign,” she said. “People’s minds are open because of what’s happening all around them.”

Seven people subscribed to the *Militant* and five endorsed the election campaign over the Feb. 20-21 weekend here.

The CL campaign is reaching out across the country, including to working people in small towns, to farmers and other small proprietors.

Solidarity with fishermen

On Feb. 12 rail worker Pamela Holmes, CL candidate for London Assembly, traveled to England’s south coast to meet with fishermen, who are being hit hard by a drop in the wholesale price of fish.

“Price is always an issue but the pandemic has contributed,” said fisherman Mark Dewey. “There used to be a market in local restaurants but that’s dried up with the lockdown. Most of us are selling directly to the public now.” Dew-

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‘Stimulus’ fund for ‘Militant’ goes over \$78,000!

Though the pace has slowed a little, the *Militant* is still getting contributions to our special “stimulus” fund appeal, hitting a total so far of \$78,480 from 181 readers!

“Since its founding nearly a century ago, the *Militant* has served as a beacon for working people and the oppressed — a true ‘tribune of the people,’” Patti Iiyama wrote along with her check.

The appeal assures the paper has the funds available to respond to developments in the class struggle. Our goal is to make a difference in the fights workers wage and help draw the lessons from them to build a fighting working-class vanguard.

Please give as generously as you can to the *Militant*, 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018, or online at themilitant.com.

— JOHN STUDER

THE MILITANT

Say ‘No!’ to ‘canceling’ revolutionary history

The ‘Militant’ opposes the race-baiting and ‘cancel culture’ policies of ‘woke’ government officials like the San Francisco School Board, which seeks to shut down debate and hide the truth about the history of revolutionary struggle in the U.S. Don’t miss an issue!



Abraham Lincoln in “People’s Progression Toward Equality” mural by Jared Bader.

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SWP on ballot in Nebraska

Continued from front page

Dropping by various Latin American stores and markets he told people about the working-class candidate and left campaign leaflets.

Rosenfeld described the support Marathon oil workers had received during their first five weeks on the picket line, including the solidarity messages that Rebecca Williamson, SWP candidate for City Council in Seattle, brought to the locked-out workers during a recent solidarity caravan in St. Paul Park where the oil refinery is located.

Swanson pointed out that the oil workers' fight for safety on the job is also a fight for the safety of the community near the refinery. "The same is true on the railroad," he added.

"That's right," Anton replied. "There are bomb-trains passing right by the football stadium," referring to huge amounts of highly explosive materials freight trains haul through the area. "You know what could happen if one blew up."

"You got a lot of signatures to put Joe on the ballot from your co-workers, and others," Rosenfeld said to Anton. "What do you think about getting people to sign a solidarity message for the Marathon workers? They need support to keep strong in their fight." Anton readily agreed and we began drafting the message to get his co-workers, union members and neighbors to sign.

The fight by Marathon workers for safer conditions also drew interest from residents of Mead when the socialist campaigners visited that small town 35 miles north of Lincoln. Outrage from residents forced the state to order the closure of the AltEn ethanol plant Feb. 4 after toxic residue from the plant contaminated soil, air and water in the surrounding area. Unlike at most plants that process regular corn into fuel, bosses at AltEn used pesticide-coated seed corn.

"The odor was way worse than the cattle feed lot next to the plant," Crystal Hartgrave, a school cook in Mead, told this correspondent and Kevin Dwire when we knocked on her door. Her neighbors told us the same thing, saying the stench made them sick.

Although the plant was forced to stop operations, "it's not really closed yet," Hartgrave added. "They need to clean it up."

"That's why we need to fight for workers control of production, to stop them from putting profits ahead of the safety of workers and our communities," Dwire said. "We need to organize in our own interests, against the bosses and their Democratic and Republican parties."

Hartgrave knew about a public meeting to be held at the Mead high school on March 1 to discuss what will happen with the shuttered plant. "I'll probably go to speak my mind," she said.

Workers need own foreign policy

"Building solidarity with workers' struggles to organize and defend themselves is at the center of the SWP campaign," Swanson told a public meeting in Lincoln Feb. 21. "That's true here and around the world. The working class needs our own foreign policy," he said, that includes supporting struggles of working people from Myanmar to Haiti and Turkey.

Millions of workers in Texas and Oklahoma, including several of Swanson's relatives, "face a social disaster following the snow and freezing temperatures. Many lost electricity and water. The capitalist politicians and pundits say this is an 'act of God,'" while debating which group of capitalist energy producers are to blame, Swanson noted.

"The disaster is the result of the capitalists' profit drive, no matter what the energy source," he said. "That's why the Socialist Workers Party calls for nationalizing the energy industry, under workers control."

Swanson said he is using his campaign to support the fight to demand Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts free Ed Poindexter, a former Black Panther in Omaha who was framed up by cops and the FBI and has been imprisoned for 51 years.

The SWP candidate also took up the impeachment trial of former President Donald Trump. "We're against impeaching any president in a manner that does damage to the rights of working people," he said. "Impeachment was written into the Constitution as an alternative to any form of popular recall," keeping the decision about removing a president in the hands of political representatives of the propertied owners.

"I appreciate you said impeachment isn't really the voice of the people," commented Joseph Rathe, a greenhouse worker who'd gotten a subscription to the *Militant* from SWP campaigners the day before.

"This is not our government, it's a capitalist state," Swanson responded. "It's their Constitution. All of the rights we have, everything that has been changed in our interests, came out of fights in the streets. Living under capitalist rule, you often hear the view 'things will never change.' That's not true, there have been mass struggles by men and women 'from nowhere.'"

"I'd like to bring others to learn about this," Rathe said after the meeting.

Over the course of the weekend, supporters of the campaign signed up seven new subscribers to the *Militant* and sold four books about the party's program.

SWP: 'Support fight against Myanmar coup!'



Militant/Seth Galinsky

NEW YORK — "Working people here and around the world should join in denouncing the coup in Myanmar and demand freedom for all the political prisoners," Róger Calero, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of New York, told a Feb. 20 rally of 250 here in solidarity with the protests in Myanmar. "The rulers everywhere make working people pay for the capitalist crisis." He pointed to the "millions who are facing the consequences of capitalist greed" in the wake of power outages across Texas, and to India, where farmers are standing up to attacks by the Indian government.

"History teaches us that working people can only rely on our own strength," Calero said. "The ruling classes have their foreign policies," he added. "The working class must have our own foreign policy — to support the struggles of working people everywhere."

— SETH GALINSKY

Communist League in Canada launches 2021 campaign in Quebec

BY JOHN STEELE

MONTREAL — "Working people in Canada and around the world should act to support the struggle of the people of Myanmar against the recent military coup," Beverly Bernardo, Communist League candidate for mayor of Montreal, told over two dozen people at a Militant Labor Forum here Feb. 21. The meeting celebrated the launching of the CL's campaign.

"The hundreds of thousands of people protesting in the streets, including striking coal miners, garment, dock, rail and government workers, are an inspiration and an example for working people here looking to advance our struggles," she said.

Philippe Tessier, CL candidate for mayor of the Montreal borough of Saint-Laurent, pointed to the example of the determined struggle by hundreds of thousands of farmers in India against the government's drive to end the decadeslong state system of subsidizing the prices farmers get for their produce. "There are lessons in this struggle for small farmers in this country," he said.

Tessier works as a conductor for Canadian National Railway. Bernardo works at Walmart.

Bernardo described how the Communist League campaign will build solidarity with these struggles and others, like the union-organizing drive by Amazon warehouse workers in Alabama and the fight of locked-out Shell refinery workers in Montreal. "Our campaign will take word of these struggles to thousands of working people — co-workers, workers on picket lines, and on their doorsteps in Montreal, across the country and in small towns and rural communities.

"We don't need government handouts to deal with unemployment and the pandemic. We need a fighting course of action," said Bernardo. "We will discuss and debate the CL action program, which points to the need to strengthen our unions and build a labor party to

organize a movement of millions to replace capitalist political power with a workers and farmers government."

"And we will introduce working people to the *Militant* newspaper and Pathfinder books, which contain the lessons of past revolutionary struggles, written by their leaders and participants," she said.

"The example of the Cuban Revolution today shows workers who want to fight what can be done," Tessier said. He contrasted the success of Cuba's revolutionary government in mobilizing working people to dramatically limit the impact of the coronavirus, with the repressive "stay-at-home" decrees of Ottawa and Quebec City that have thrown millions out of work, isolating them from fellow workers.

The two candidates urged those present to build and participate in the upcoming Feb. 28 car caravan to demand the end of Washington's embargo against Cuba and the return of the U.S.-occupied Guantánamo naval base. The action — the first of its kind in Montreal — kicks off at 2 p.m. from Parc Lafontaine in the Sherbrooke Street parking lot.

Campaign in UK

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ey said he is finally at the end of a costly yearlong process, mired in red tape, to register and equip his five-meter (16.4 foot) quarter boat to be able to fish from Worthing beach to catch sole and rock salmon. Like Dewey, who also works as a self-employed brick layer, almost all the fishermen are forced to have more than one job to get by.

"As I campaign I will get the word out to working people about the conditions you face," Holmes told him. "The Communist League campaigns for the government to guarantee farmers and fishermen prices that cover their costs and livelihoods."



Feb. 23 article in *Lincoln Journal Star* reports on launching of campaign of SWP candidate Joe Swanson.

Myanmar protests spread

Continued from front page
capital, Naypyitaw, chanting, “Our uprising must succeed!” for the funeral of 19-year-old student Mya Thewt Thewt Khine. She was shot in the head Feb. 9, the first protester killed since the coup.

Other protests across the country Feb. 21 included thousands of farmworkers and farmers, who marched in the small town of Hlegu north of Yangon.

As the general strike began, police arrested nearly 200 as thousands from the surrounding countryside attempted to enter Naypyitaw. The sparsely populated city was set up as the capital by the military in 2005 to insulate it from protests in Yangon, the country’s largest city and former capital.

Almost the entire population of Yangon, some 5 million in a country of 53 million, “was joining the moving rivers of people along major roads in the city,” reported Myanmar Now news service.

Suu Kyi was arrested for the first time in 1989, after the military massacred thousands to crush massive protests. She became head of the government after winning the election in 2015, just five years after being released from her most recent house arrest.

Since the 2015 election Suu Kyi has often collaborated with the generals, especially in defending the military’s brutal repression of the Rohingya people in Rakine state. But she is still viewed by many as a symbol of opposition to the military and its long history of bloody rule. Her father, Aung San, was a central leader of the independence struggle against British imperialism and was assassinated in 1947.

Under the 2008 constitution, drawn up by the military, the generals appoint 25% of the seats in parliament, granting them veto power over government decisions. But they still feared that the 2020 election results would lead to inroads on their grip on power, including their many lucrative corporate holdings in combination with foreign capital.

Security forces open fire

The deadly assault in Mandalay took place after working people rushed to the Yadanabon dockyard to support workers who had refused a police order to load a boat with oil.

Teenage market laborer Wai Yan Tun was shot in the head and killed. Carpenter Thet Naing Win, 36, was killed with a shot to the chest. The security forces threw spikes — designed to cut through sandals — as they charged into the crowd.

“They even fired on ambulances and medical personnel taking the wounded

to the hospital,” Yon Yati Naing, told the *Militant* during a solidarity protest in New York Feb. 20.

Myanmar Now reported that soldiers involved in the assault are from the same notorious unit that carried out a massacre of Rohingya men and boys in Rakhine state in 2017.

Following the killings in Mandalay, 25 unions and other organizations formed the General Strike Committee, including the All Burma Federation of Trade Unions, the National League for Democracy, the Federation of Farmers’ Unions, the All Burma Federation of Student Unions, and the Saffron Monk Network, as well as women’s rights organizations, ethnic rights groups and other political parties.

The committee demands the release of all political prisoners, the repeal of the 2008 constitution, and the formation of a federal union that would guarantee the rights of ethnic minorities.

Legacy of British rule

Divisions between the ethnic minorities and the Burman majority are a legacy of British colonial rule. The Myanmar government officially recognizes 135 ethnic groups, but excludes the mostly Muslim Rohingya, who it falsely claims are “illegal” immigrants from Bangladesh, denying them citizenship.

Burma, renamed Myanmar in 1989, became independent in 1948. The British colonial regime had stoked ethnic divisions as part of its divide-and-rule strategy, largely excluding Burmans from the government. After independence the new government, now led predominantly by Burmans, enforced its own discrimination against other ethnic minorities.

The latest protests are notable for the participation of workers and farmers from all the ethnic groups. While many are skeptical of Suu Kyi, they are united in opposition to military rule.

Over the last decade Myanmar has become a major center for world garment

NY solidarity action: ‘Down with military gov’t’



Militant/Seth Galinsky

NEW YORK — “We don’t want military government!” 250 protesters shouted in English and Burmese at a Feb. 20 rally here against the Feb. 1 military coup in Myanmar. “Military generals. Criminals! Criminals!” The action was held in the Jackson Heights neighborhood of Queens.

The protest also called for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi, the head of the government and the National League for Democracy, and hundreds of others arrested since the coup.

“The military rulers oppress and try to divide the people of Burma,” Khating Hsu Wai, 26, told the *Militant* at the protest. “But in the fight against the military coup we are all united.” She was referring to the many ethnic groups that face discrimination in Myanmar. This includes the Rohingya, who have been brutalized by the army, a policy defended by the Suu Kyi government.

Some opponents of the coup at the protest called for Washington and the U.N. to send troops and intervene. “I don’t want the U.S. Army to come,” said Aung Bobo Lwin, who is from the Karen ethnic minority. “We want to create a democracy. We have to solve our problems ourselves.”

— SETH GALINSKY

production, with over 600,000 workers. Its main trading partner and supplier of its military is Beijing, but capitalist companies from Singapore, Japan and India have substantial investments, all attracted by wages that are roughly half those in Cambodia and Vietnam.

Workers and farmers in much of the country don’t have access even to basic services. As of 2014, two-thirds of households didn’t have electricity, 70% depended on firewood for cooking and barely 2% had flush toilets.

Workers and their unions have been at the forefront of the protests. Moe Sandar

Myint, a leader of the Federation of General Workers, told garment workers at a Feb. 13 protest in Yangon that they had hoped that as the COVID-19 pandemic was ending and shutdowns lifted, there would be better opportunities to win higher wages and better conditions. But the military coup meant that “instead we face tears and sorrow,” she said.

“We are not fighting just for one political party,” Confederation of Trade Unions leader Phyo Sandar Soe told the crowd. “We are fighting for the whole nation and for the wishes of the Myanmar people.”

Volunteers expand Pathfinder bookstore placements

BY GALE SHANGOLD

Supporters of the Socialist Workers Party who volunteer to get Pathfinder books into bookstores, libraries and classrooms across North America surpassed their goals during the fall 2020 sales effort. Now they’re looking forward to an even more successful spring sales campaign building on that achievement.

Pathfinder publishes titles by SWP leaders, as well as books about the Cuban Revolution and labor battles, and by Malcolm X, Thomas Sankara and other revolutionaries.

Even though many libraries were shut down and bookstores were not running at full capacity, volunteers won 104 orders, with 29 of them coming from new buyers and librarians — more orders than in any past sales effort.

“In the face of widespread shutdowns, we had to be persistent, but the persistence paid off,” Nick Castle, a volunteer from Los Angeles, told the *Militant*. Volunteers found growing interest in understanding the roots of today’s capitalist crisis and what working people can do to find a way out of it.

Many book buyers “wanted Malcolm X and other related titles, responding to last year’s protests against police brutality,” Castle said.

Volunteers found an interest in a broad range of Pathfinder’s 450-plus titles. A longtime book distributor in Maryland whose focus has been titles on Africa and the struggle for Black rights ordered over 200 books, including *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation* by Abram Leon; *Red Zone: Cuba and the Battle Against Ebola in West Africa* by Enrique Ubieta; and *The Turn to Industry: Forging a Proletarian Party* by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes.

Volunteers call their efforts “shoe leather work,” since visiting buyers face to face is the most effective way to introduce Pathfinder’s titles.

“We got the third order from this rural bookstore in the last 10 months,” reports Rosemary Ray, a volunteer from Hamilton, Ontario. “Last July and August were the busiest months he’s ever had as people got away from cities and visited small towns.” When Ray visited the buyer, “He bought seven titles, including *The History of the Russian Revolution* by Russian revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky.”

Several prison librarians told Ray they have no budget to buy books. But at one Ontario prison, “a cart of donated books goes around to prisoners twice a week. Two librarians responded positively when we asked if they

would put Pathfinder brochures on the cart so prisoners could see what was available and order online.” Pathfinder offers a 50% discount to prisoners.

Most public and campus libraries remain closed, but volunteers were able to get the new edition of *The Jewish Question* into a number of them.

Scott Breen from Seattle got a significant order from a campus librarian there, including that title and *The Turn to Industry*. Seattle volunteers also got titles adopted by a number of professors for their classes.

A spring sales campaign from Jan. 11 to July 4 has been launched with goals in the same range — 100 orders, with 20 of them from new bookstores, libraries or classrooms.

That effort has gotten off to a good start in Washington, D.C., Arrin Hawkins reports.

“After months of lockdown, layoffs and the presence of 20,000 National Guardsmen on the streets since the inauguration, we knew many working people would be searching for books that answer some of the questions they are asking today,” she said. Volunteers there are visiting stores they haven’t been to for several years.

Black History Month and Women’s
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MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

CALIFORNIA Oakland

Malcolm X’s Legacy: Revolutionary Leader of Working People of All Colors and Creeds. Speaker: Joel Britton, Northern California Socialist Workers Party 2021 campaign chair. Fri., March 5, 6:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 675 Hegenberger Road, Suite 250. Tel.: (510) 686-1351.

NEW JERSEY Union City

Hear the 2021 Socialist Workers Party Candidates. Joanne Kuniansky for New Jersey governor; Candace Wagner for New Jersey lieutenant governor; Róger Calero for New York City mayor. Sat., March 6. Reception, 6.30 p.m.; program, 7 p.m. Donation: \$5. 3600 Bergenline Ave., 2nd floor. Tel.: (551) 240-1512.

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

Amazon workers fighting for union in Alabama need solidarity!

Some 80 unionists and others turned out in Philadelphia Feb. 20 for a solidarity action with workers fighting for a union at the Amazon warehouse in Bessemer, Alabama. Almost 6,000 workers there began voting Feb. 8 on whether the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union should represent them to help fight to improve wages and working conditions and defend their dignity on the job. Voting ends March 29.

“We have everything in common with the workers in Bessemer,” Adam Rizzo, a worker at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, told the crowd at the action. The museum workers recently voted by 89% to be represented by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, he said. “Like at Amazon, they tried to divide us, but we won!”

Also participating were members of the nurses union at Temple University Hospital. “Our struggles are connected,” said Marty Harrison, a representative of the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals. The Amazon bosses time the workers on the assembly line down to the minute to squeeze every ounce of labor out of them, she said, but now “they take workers off the floor for mandatory anti-union meetings.”

The action was one of a number held as part of a national day of solidarity, one of which drew the largest number of workers.

In Atlanta, 75 people attended a rally, including students who were just learning about the union fight in Bessemer. Rachele Fruit, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor, and Sam Manuel, SWP candidate for City Council president, were among those who took part. They met Wyatt Schroeder, an art student at Georgia State University, who told them, “I first got active last summer in the protests against the killing of George Floyd.”

“The civil rights movement brought workers together, not only breaking down segregated neighborhoods and schools but also segregation in the

workplace,” Manuel explained. “That intertwined history, with union coal mines and steel mills in that part of Alabama, is a big part of why the organizing drive is happening in Bessemer. The battle makes workers stronger, more confident.”

—Janet Post and Susan LaMont

DHL Liverpool workers use union power to win raise

LIVERPOOL, England — After 10 days of strikes since mid-December, 120 drivers and warehouse workers at DHL’s Croxteth depot here ended their current round of action Feb. 8, winning a pay raise.

The striking workers, members of the Unite union, were flagging down trucks arriving at the warehouse to persuade other drivers not to cross their picket line when this reporter visited them Feb. 2. One driver parked his vehicle and joined the picket line for a while, discussing with the workers how he could win support for their fight at his workplace.

Workers won a 3% pay raise, backdated to April 2020, and a further 3% for 2021, along with a 75 pound (\$105)



Militant/Osborne Hart

Workers who recently won a union at the Philadelphia Museum of Art joined Feb. 20 Philadelphia action in solidarity with Amazon workers fighting for union representation in Alabama.

one-time payment.

The union “will not allow its members to be mistreated and will consider all avenues to protect them, including fresh industrial action,” Unite regional officer Kenny Rowe told the media as the union announced its settlement with the company Feb. 8.

Peter Clifford, Communist League

candidate for Greater Manchester mayor, visited the warehouse workers picket line on several occasions to show his support for their fight. He told workers their action set an example for others. “Workers not only won some gains but go back more able to use your union to stand up to the bosses,” he said.

—Anne Howie

Visually impaired workers fight boss attack in Ohio

BY JACQUIE HENDERSON

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — “Not just those of us who are visually impaired, but all workers, have to fight for everything we get,” Dave Perry, a member of Teamsters Local 100 in Cincinnati, told participants at the Feb. 5 Militant Labor Forum here.

Perry described how he and fellow workers at the Teamster-organized factory run by the Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired have stood up to the bosses’ attacks. Workers slit tape; produce exit signs and craft and exam paper; assemble kitchen gadgets; and prepare products for shipment. Two-thirds of the workers, including Perry, are blind or visually impaired.

Bosses “tried to ignore seniority and pay rates, and workers’ safety, when they brought back workers after a COVID-related shutdown last spring,” Perry said. “And they put some people on dif-

ferent jobs, at lower rates of pay. They rearranged machines, eliminating the physical barrier keeping workers out of a danger zone where cranes move huge tape rolls to slitting machines.”

A high proportion of workers at the plant who are visually impaired weren’t initially called back to their jobs according to seniority, Perry said.

Some workers organized a petition against these violations and presented it to management. “We are still fighting for safety, pay, and to get everyone back in the building,” he added.

“I have learned over the years that you can’t be afraid to fight for rights — to get together, and really go for it,” Perry said. “Only by all of us sticking together are the bosses going to understand that we mean what we say.”

“All workers should support struggles of visually impaired workers,” Maggie Trowe, speaking at the forum

for the Socialist Workers Party, said. “It’s part of unifying the working class and rejecting the bosses’ efforts to divide us. The fight of the Teamsters in Cincinnati strengthens all workers in our fight for our rights and dignity.”

Trowe, a Walmart worker, pointed to the efforts by Amazon workers in Bessemer, Alabama, to win representation for their union, the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union.

“They have won the right to a mail-in vote for union recognition,” she said. Trowe said the bosses are driven by the crisis of their capitalist system to push hard to defend their profits, attacking workers’ jobs, wages and working conditions. And there have been some important fights against those attacks.

She pointed to the example set “by nonunion miners in 2019 when they were laid off by Blackjewel Coal in Harlan, Kentucky, and bosses refused to pay them what they were owed with the blessing of a bankruptcy court.

“The miners blocked the railroad track leading out of the mine for two months, winning solidarity from working people and getting the pay that was stolen from them,” she said. “Last year miners at Quest Energy followed their example when bosses failed to pay their wages, winning the pay they were owed in just three days.”

Trowe also pointed to lessons from the historic wave of strikes and organizing drives in the 1930s described in the four-volume Teamsters series by Farrell Dobbs, a leader of those battles and of the SWP. Perry said he enjoyed hearing that the leaders of those fights preferred a short, page-long union contract.

“While some of us might have trouble reading more than a page,” he said, “the bosses clearly seem to have more difficulty sticking to even that length of a contract without us making them do it.”

“Taking part in labor struggles, protests against police brutality and other actions in the interests of the working class, builds workers’ self-confidence and class consciousness. Only working people can resolve the crisis we are facing today,” Trowe said.

—25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO—



March 11, 1996

At a February 26 press conference, President William Clinton announced a new round of hostile measures against the socialist revolution in Cuba.

These moves followed by two days the action of Cuba’s Revolutionary Armed Forces in shooting down two Cessna aircraft that, despite unambiguous warnings by Cuban air traffic controllers, invaded Cuban airspace on a course toward the capital city of Havana. The planes were piloted by members of a group called Brothers to the Rescue, led by Cuban-American counterrevolutionaries, a number of them with long histories of armed action against the Cuban state.

The invasion on February 24 was the second hostile incursion that day and the tenth such violation over the past 20 months. Throughout this period, Washington had done nothing to stop these provocations organized from U.S. soil.



March 12, 1971

The Stalinist Polish bureaucracy announced that the price rises that sparked a massive workers’ uprising in December were being rescinded. This latest and far-reaching retreat was the direct result of a textile strike in Lodz, Poland’s second largest city. Eighty percent of the workers are women, and the majority of the 10,000 strikers were women.

The workers are among the lowest paid in Poland. Added to this are inadequate child-care centers, insufficient maternity leaves, and the low number of women managers. Initially, strikers were represented as “hysterical” and “unrealistic” females. The women won for every worker in Poland wage increases comparable to what they were demanding for themselves.

The Kremlin bureaucrats are worriedly watching the developments and fear repercussions among other East European and Russian workers.



March 9, 1946

PHILADELPHIA, Feb. 28 — In defiance of a court injunction, mass picket lines of CIO workers, determined to defend their right to picket and peaceably assemble, have fought bitter pitched battles on two successive days against motorized and mounted police near the strike-bound General Electric plant here. Over 5,000 men and women surrounded City Hall today in an angry demonstration against police brutality.

Police terror was instigated by the corporation and local capitalist press, after General Electric early this week obtained an injunction limiting the number of pickets to 10. Special target for the attack was a group of union veterans.

Veteran Richard Duane declared, “They’re taking it out on our vets because the company and the cops had expected the vets would serve as strikebreakers. Instead, they’re our best union defenders.”

Social catastrophe in Texas

Continued from front page
is not the storm,” Gerardo Sánchez, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Dallas City Council, said in a statement Feb. 23, “but the dog-eat-dog capitalist system, which puts profits for the few over the human needs of the millions.

“The Socialist Workers Party says workers need to fight for workers control of all aspects of production, from the plants and refineries where we work to workers control on a state and national basis,” he said.

Temperatures plunged below 20 degrees for days and below zero at night in Texas, a state where homes and businesses are usually not winterized. Almost every energy source in the state became paralyzed, as power companies have installed little protection for subfreezing temperatures, as that cuts into profits. Ice-covered wind turbines in West Texas stopped running, 185 power generating units, including gas and coal-fired power plants, tripped offline and a nuclear unit in South Texas broke down because its water supply froze.

The Electric Reliability Council of Texas, which runs the electrical grid, began ordering power outages. “Unfortunately,” ERCOT CEO Bill Magness cynically told the press, “those have terrible outcomes for people when they have to last a long time.” By Feb. 16 over 4 million people were without heat and lights in the coldest temperatures in decades.

Thousands in Killeen, home of Fort Hood, the big military base, were without power for over a week. “I have three small children — you know I have an infant — and there was just no possible way I could keep my kids in that house any longer,” Kayla Holmes told KWTX-TV. She moved in with another family that had power.

“I’ve had a few neighbors say they are burning their dining room tables, their chairs, their beds” and making makeshift tents in their homes to stay warm, she said. There have been over 70 deaths nationwide from the freezing temperatures, more than half in Texas, but the real total won’t be known for weeks.

Now working people confront a

new crisis of contaminated water, broken water pipes and water shortages. More than 14.6 million were put under a boil-water advisory.

Workers’ solidarity

Socialist Workers Party members George Chalmers and Hilda Cuzco interviewed their next-door neighbor, Patricia Madrigal, in Dallas for the *Militant*. The apartment complex where they live hasn’t had power or water for over a week. Madrigal gave them water out of solidarity. There have been many examples of people helping fellow workers get through the disaster.

“I have babies, I called around and nobody had water,” Madrigal said. “A friend of my husband gave us water to flush the toilets, I had to buy clean water. As for food we have cold cuts, and salads.” Without water to wash or cook with, many people are forced to resort to prepared foods and disposable dinnerware, despite the higher cost.

Before her power was restored, everybody had to wear two sweaters at night. “I got a big scare when I noticed my 4-year-old daughter Alondra’s hand was getting too cold, frozen I thought, so we wrapped it with blankets to stay warm.”

Because power companies in Texas are allowed to offer electric rates that vacillate based on demand, many workers are starting to get outrageous bills. “My uncle got a bill for \$14,000, and was told that he’s got to pay it,” said Madrigal. Many contracts give the power bosses the ability to take the money for their bills directly out of your bank account.

There are three power grids in the U.S. One covers the east, another the western states, and the Texas grid covers almost all of that state. A Feb. 19 *Wall Street Journal* article, “The Texas Freeze: Why the Power Grid Failed,” said, “The U.S. is becoming more reliant than ever on electricity but has no perfect model for running a power market in the 21st century.”

That’s because their “model” is based on maximizing profits, not assuring power supplies.

‘Nationalize energy industry’

Sánchez, the SWP candidate for Dallas City Council, said that in addition to rebuilding after the disaster, “Working people and our unions need to fight for a federally funded public works program to put millions to work at union-scale wages repairing broken pipes, damaged homes and apartment buildings, and replacing the worn-out power systems and other infrastructure in Texas and around the U.S.

“We cannot rely on the Democrats and Republicans, the two parties of the bosses. We need our own party — a labor party based on our unions — to champion and lead a fight for the nationalization of the energy industry under workers control,”

Farmers meet across India, plan to expand protests



Tribune

Some 125,000 farmers and farmworkers gathered in a grain market in Barnala, in Punjab, India, Feb. 21 to discuss and protest three new laws enacted by the Indian government that threaten their livelihoods.

The government’s laws would end state-backed minimum prices for crops, opening up agricultural production and distribution to greater exploitation by agribusiness conglomerates. Millions of farmers fear being driven into greater debt, or off the land altogether, as a result.

Rally speakers called on participants to join the tens of thousands of farmers who have set up protest encampments on the main roads into New Delhi, India’s capital, since Nov. 26. “The sea of supporters, including tens of thousands of women, began gathering in Barnala early in the day, riding in on buses, tractors, trailers and cars,” Reuters reported. Farmers’ union leaders called for a mass mobilization outside the capital Feb. 27.

“Special assemblies are being held to discuss the fight,” Gursimran Singh told the *Militant* by phone Feb. 20 from Mandiani in Punjab. People from his village attended one in Jagraon Feb. 17, he said. “They are not giving up.”

Singh said he just got back from a visit to the Punjabi city of Amritsar. “There are trolleys full of people on the road to Delhi,” he said. “Every 5 kilometers [3 miles] there is food. I can tell you, people are fully confident.”

“If we remain peaceful, we will win,” Balbir Singh Rajewal, president of the Bharatiya Kisan Union, told a mass meeting in Jagraon Feb. 18. But “if any violence happens, Modi will win.” He noted that provocations at the last big tractorcade in New Delhi Jan. 26, India’s Republic Day, were a “setback.”

The Modi government and bourgeois media tried to divide and weaken the movement by focusing on acts of violence that occurred there and flags raised by some Sikh separatists. But “it took just two days for people to understand,” Singh Rajewal said, and again return to the protests “on the Delhi borders.”

Modi, he added, “still says it is a morcha [demonstration] only of Punjab,” which is majority Sikh. But, he said, the protests are much broader than that.

Farmers held a nationally coordinated four-hour-long “rail roko” protest across the country Feb. 18. Hundreds sat on the railway tracks in Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Karnataka, West Bengal and elsewhere.

— ROY LANDERSEN

he said. “Such a fight can inspire and give confidence to working people, showing that we are capable of building a movement of millions that can draw in all those exploited and oppressed by capital to replace capital-

ist rule with a government of workers and farmers.”

Sánchez met Hector Benegas and his wife, Patricia Benegas, originally from Argentina, campaigning in a Walmart parking lot Feb. 21. They have lived in Dallas for over 20 years. Hector has a small trucking business and Patricia runs a day care center.

“At first my small business didn’t have power. It was restored yesterday,” he said. “Luckily there was no problem with the water.” Business has been rough, but it’s not just the weather, “the pandemic has also slowed things down,” he said.

“With the freeze I had to temporarily close the day care center for lack of services,” said Patricia Benegas.

“The capitalist rulers are taking us to a dead end since they don’t care whether workers live or die in this crisis,” Sánchez said. The couple agreed.



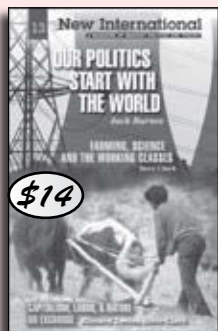
Militant/Alyson Kennedy

Gerardo Sánchez, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Dallas City Council, speaks to Claudia Acosta in Dallas Jan. 25. She told him, “We have to come together. There has been many years of bad conditions and violations of our rights.” In wake of winter storm, social catastrophe caused by workings of the capitalist system deepened crisis for working people.

Our Politics Start With the World

by Jack Barnes

In *New International* no. 13



“Electrification is an elementary precondition if modern industry and cultural life are to develop, and communists fight for it to be extended to all the world’s 7 billion people. This is a prime example of how our politics start with the world.” — Jack Barnes

pathfinderpress.com

Cuban volunteers plan vaccination drive, extend int’l solidarity

BY RÓGER CALERO

Pharmaceutical institutions in Cuba are gearing up to produce 100 million doses of Soberana 2 — one of four vaccines against COVID-19 in development there — by the end of the year.

It will soon be given to 42,000 Cuban volunteers for the final stage of clinical trials. The Cuban daily *Granma* reports the first 150,000 doses have been produced, with more on the way. A vaccination drive is being prepared that will make Cuba one of the first countries to inoculate its entire population by the end of 2021.

This follows the government’s mobilization of working people over the last year to knock on people’s doors across the island to see if anyone feels sick or needs help. No one was left on their own.

Cuba will be the first Latin American country to produce its own vaccine. The name Soberana, Spanish for “sovereign,” underscores the Cuban people’s longstanding struggle to defend their independence from U.S. imperialism.

Similar trials for Soberana 2 are under negotiation or underway in Iran and Mexico. “The spread of the virus is not very high in Cuba,” said Dr. Vicente Várez, director of the Finlay Vaccine Institute in Havana, Jan. 26, “that’s why we’re using larger samples of population in phase 3” trials from other countries to confirm its effectiveness.

After a year of action by the Cuban people that limited the spread of illness and deaths, Cuba is now grappling with a surge of infections. In mid-February confirmed cases climbed to 900 a day



Medical worker visits family in Pinar del Río in Cuba this month. Volunteers have been mobilized during COVID pandemic to knock on thousands of doors to see if help is needed.

for the first time. Cuba reopened the island to tourists and foreign travelers recently. Even with strict controls, this facilitated the increase.

While those figures are still tiny compared to other countries, they are serious enough to place additional strains on the country’s resources.

The “COVID-19 mortality rate in the world is above 2%,” said Dr. Eduardo Martínez Díaz, director of Cuba’s Biotechnologic and Pharmaceutical Industries Group, Feb. 4. “In our country it’s at 0.74%, but we’re deeply saddened by the death of 220 Cubans,” he added, expressing the conviction that guides the country’s government that every life is precious

— no matter how old or young.

The U.S. rulers’ economic war on the Cuban people and their socialist revolution is having a serious impact on the country’s ability to produce and buy medication and supplies, said Martínez. No other country has ever been subject to such a severe or long-lasting embargo.

Its brutal consequences are felt in the gathering of raw materials to produce vaccines. Some vendors refuse to sell the components we need, explained Dr. Eduardo Ojito, director of the Center for Molecular Immunology. They cite U.S. restrictions banning sales to Cuba of medical supplies that contain more than 10% of

U.S.-made products.

“But medication to treat COVID is a priority,” Martínez said, “to save lives.” Less than 3% of infected patients in Cuba develop serious illnesses, he explained, compared to more than 10% in the rest of the world. “Our medical personnel and the COVID treatment they provide are responsible for saving these lives.”

A product of the revolution

Cuba’s medical and scientific achievements are possible because of the conquests working people made when they took power out of the hands of the capitalist rulers and their backers in Washington in 1959. Internationalism and solidarity have been a hallmark of the Cuban Revolution ever since. In developing a vaccine, the Cuban government aims to not only inoculate its own population, but to make it available to working people in other countries.

Cuban doctors and nurses have been at the forefront of treating people infected with COVID around the world. More than 200 arrived in Panama, the Central American country with the largest number of COVID cases, at the end of December. Prior to requesting Cuba’s help, the Panamanian government’s appeals for aid had been rejected by eight other governments, including Washington.

“Not enough vaccines are being produced worldwide,” said Martínez. “Only 108 million doses have been administered so far. That’s just a little over 1.4% of the world’s population!” With production and distribution controlled by big pharmaceutical monopolies, he said, the vaccines are inaccessible to most countries.

U.N. Secretary General António Guterres announced grim figures Feb. 17 — some 75% of all vaccinations have been administered in just 10 countries. Government programs in more than 130 countries have yet to receive a single dose.

Back refinery workers’ fight over lockout by Marathon

Continued from front page

workers’ opposition to the bosses’ demand to use more nonunion contract labor.

“As workers, we all need the support of other working people to win our battles against the bosses,” Chris Pennock, a shop steward in the National Association of Letter Carriers Minneapolis branch, told the *Militant*. He’s been on the picket line a number of times. “One thing union members can do is to speak up to our union brothers and sisters in support of strikes that are going on. Solidarity is the road forward.” His local has contributed \$500 to the locked-out workers’ fund.

Kyle Edwards, a member of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 3800, which organizes clerical workers at the University of Minnesota, told the *Militant* he and several other union members had participated in the 70-car caravan held the previous week in support of the refinery workers.

“I went because I want to show the locked-out workers standing in the freezing cold they have support from workers across the state,” he said.

Local 3800 President Cherrene Horazuk spoke at a Feb. 6 support rally for the Teamsters. “The pandemic has laid bare Marathon’s corporate greed for all to see. Workers are risking their lives while the big companies are raking in profits, showing

no concern for workers’ safety, especially if they can turn a faster buck,” she said. “But when workers stand together, they have power to turn things around. Teamsters 120 members are setting an example for the labor movement as a whole.”

Tylor Sardenson, a locked-out worker, told us on the picket line, “We really haven’t been getting any coverage from local media. One of the platforms we’ve been using to share information is Facebook, but they’ve started editing some of our posts or wouldn’t let us post at all. They’re censoring us. Everyone should be able to use these platforms. Agree with him or don’t, but it’s not right what they did to Donald Trump. They shouldn’t be able to shut down anyone.”

“The company is making the workers’ pay for the pandemic and its losses,” picket Steve Sklavenitis said. “When the government gave the company money to support its ‘essential workers,’ the company kept it for their own pockets and continued its attacks on the workers.”

Sklavenitis was referring to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act, which was promoted as a measure to provide emergency relief from damage wrought by COVID-19. But Marathon took \$411 million in rebates over losses from before the pandemic.

The Teamsters picket 24/7 and welcome all who want to help. If you can,

join them and bring some solidarity. Send messages of support and contributions to the lockout fund at Teamsters Local 120, 9422 Ulysses St. NE, Blaine, MN 55434.

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To advance our struggles, workers need a labor party

Statement by Róger Calero, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New York City mayor, Feb. 24.

Every battle workers find themselves in is strengthened by solidarity and support by fellow workers — from the fight for a union by Amazon workers in Alabama to the struggle of locked-out Marathon refinery workers in Minnesota.

We urge workers to take these fights to your union, church and to co-workers, friends and neighbors. Organize to get messages of support and contributions to the strike fund. Socialist Workers Party candidates are doing the same as we join every fight and campaign for solidarity.

There is no one else we can turn to for support besides our fellow workers and others who suffer the assaults of the capitalist rulers. We have to rely on this class solidarity against the attacks of the bosses and their government.

To advance our struggles, working people need a party of our own, a labor party. It would attract millions through principled defense of all the exploited and oppressed and by the conduct of its members in working-class struggles. It would help us understand that the bosses' twin parties — the Democrats and Republicans — are obstacles to workers making progress. Through our struggles, we build our self-confidence and class consciousness.

Every political question working people confront today, from the millions who faced power outages in Texas to persistent joblessness to U.S. military intervention abroad, has to be answered from the standpoint of the interests of the working class.

Both Democrats and Republicans tell working people that “we Americans” have common interests and need to join in defending “our” way of life from foreign competition. This is a lie. Like all capitalist countries, the U.S. is class divided.

Both of the bosses' parties protect the ruling families and their drive for profits at the expense of working people at home and abroad. U.S. military intervention aims to shore up the fortunes of the world's dominant imperialist power and is used to put down inevitable rebellions by working people.

The working class needs its own foreign policy — solidarity with the battles of workers and farmers against the rapacious encroachments of U.S. imperialism.

There is an example we can emulate. Led by Fidel Castro and the July 26 Movement, working people in Cuba rose up to overturn the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista and took power into their own hands. They established a workers and farmers government and, through their struggle, gained the consciousness and experience to use that government to forge a new future.

Join us!

SWP candidates campaign to build support for fights of workers, farmers

Continued from front page

ery bus boycott, Studer said, the party's 2021 national slate of candidates will act on the example Dobbs set.

Working people don't need “critiques” of the squabbles between the bosses' parties, the Democrats and Republicans, Studer said. They need a clear presentation of how to advance the line of march of the working class and its allies.

“Politics is explaining and defending the interests of working people, the vast majority, against the attacks of the capitalist rulers and their system of exploitation and oppression,” he said. “What workers need is a clear picture of how the working class can move forward.”

Studer pointed to the *Militant's* coverage of the trip by Rebecca Williamson, SWP candidate for Seattle City Council, to bring messages of support from the union of fruit packing workers in Yakima Valley, Washington, and from her co-workers at Walmart to locked-out Marathon Petroleum workers in Minneapolis last week. She joined a solidarity car caravan for the refinery workers initiated by United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1189, the local Williamson was a member of when she was part of union battles at Dakota Premium Beef over a decade earlier.

Labor solidarity like this “can make a difference and it's what SWP candidates seek to organize everywhere,” Studer said.

Forum leaflet misleading

“There is a problem with the leaflet for this meeting,” Studer said, pointing to the headline, “Constitutional Rights: What's at stake for working people?”

“But the Constitution isn't our document, and ‘constitutional rights’ mean different things to different classes,” he said.

The U.S. Constitution was a product of historical development, codifying the new governmental alliance of the rising merchant capitalist class and the slaveholders that overthrew British colonial tyranny. Protection of their property rights was uppermost in their minds. That constitution sanctified slavery, barred women and working people without property

from voting, and mandated selection of senators not by popular election but by decision of state legislatures.

Battles by farmers and artisans led to the inclusion of the Bill of Rights — a list of protections from government interference with speech and assembly, the right to worship, the press and other matters, Studer said. These protections were later expanded through the Second American Revolution — the Civil War — Radical Reconstruction and the fight to pass the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments, which abolished slavery and guaranteed voting rights and equal protection under the law. And by working-class struggles up to today, like the Montgomery bus boycott.

“The SWP's goal,” Studer said, “is to mobilize millions of working people to bring an end to capitalist rule and establish a workers and farmers government. To do so workers and farmers need to jealously guard political space.”

Today the Democrats are moving to constrict free speech and to expand the operations of the political police, the FBI. “They are attempting to use events at the Capitol Jan. 6 to advance new thought-control laws against so-called domestic terrorism,” he said.

Their immediate target is former President Donald Trump and their bourgeois rivals in the Republican Party. They are determined to crush Trump, his family and his allies and to hold onto their control of the Senate and House in 2022.

Ultimately they are concerned about how to shut up the “deplorable” working people, who the Democrats hold responsible for Trump's election, Studer said.

“The protections against the power of the state to limit freedom of speech, press, worship, assembly and other rights in the first 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution are important for working people,” SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters said during the discussion. “We must defend them.

“These protections are under attack by the liberal left today. Their defense has been handed over to forces on the right wing of bourgeois politics, who are now posturing as the protectors of our rights as they pursue their own anti-working-class course.”

‘All questions are class questions’

Lessons learned in the course of previous working-class battles are vital for working people to advance our interests today. But there is a far-reaching effort by “woke” liberals “to eradicate any notion that the class struggle is the motor force of history,” Studer said. They argue the inborn racism of Caucasians and other workers is the defining “fact” of U.S. history, obliterating the massive struggles that brought down the oppression of the British crown, ended chattel slavery, toppled Jim Crow, built the union movement in the 1930s and changed attitudes among working people toward each other forever.

Studer described how a New York public school principal recently sent hundreds of parents a “survey” asking them to select which of eight “white identities” describes them and to rank their own degree of “white privilege.” Race overrides everything

for these middle-class forces, Studer said.

Similar ideas are shared by President Joe Biden's nominee for attorney general, Merrick Garland, Studer pointed out. Garland says his priorities will be rooting out “violent extremism” and “ensuring racial equity.” The banner of equity, Studer noted, is the opposite of the demand for *equal rights* that was at the center of the Black-led mass movement that overturned Jim Crow, and that opens the door for the working class to unite against capitalist rule.

Proponents of “equity say the state must make up for centuries of oppression by handing out money, especially to the ‘experts’ leading the ‘woke’ crusade,” Studer said.

Liberals like Garland champion ever-more government regulation and interference in the lives of working people who they consider dangerous. Many commentators describe the proliferation of such rules as a growing “administrative state,” Studer said.

But when the *Militant* used that expression in a recent article, he said, that was misleading. “There is only one kind of state under capitalism, a bourgeois state, dedicated to preserving the rule of the capitalists. It will take different forms. But until workers and farmers take power into our own hands, its class character remains the same,” he said.

In the imperialist epoch, the capitalist state tends to expand its bureaucracy and size, but that doesn't change its class reality, Studer said. The liberals in particular like to use regulations to “nudge” and “control” working people.

The lively forum discussion included comments on the unfolding disaster facing working people in Texas — a product of the workings of the capitalist system — and a report by Róger Calero on a solidarity action earlier that day with the struggle against military rule in Myanmar. Calero, SWP candidate for mayor of New York, spoke at that action.

What is the road forward? one participant asked.

“We need two things,” Studer said. “An expansion of the class struggle — something the conditions inflicted on working people over time by the working of capitalism will ensure.

“And, out of our struggles, we need to forge a leadership like working people did in Cuba — one that led millions to overturn capitalist rule and make a socialist revolution. There are no shortcuts to accomplishing this, but it can be done. That is what the SWP candidates urge those we meet to join us in fighting for.”

Bookstore sales expand

Continued from page 4

History Month offer opportunities to win orders.

The *Kansas City Star* ran an interview during Black History Month with local bookseller Willa Robinson, who said she was keen to present books by Malcolm X so people could learn about what he stood for. Robinson prominently displays titles by Malcolm as well as *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* by Jack Barnes in her store.

The 2020 effort took persistence and imagination. Its success is a source of pride for the volunteers. Books by revolutionaries are wanted and needed more than ever by working people and the sales effort will make them more widely available.

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