

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 85/NO. 10 MARCH 15, 2021

Myanmar protests defy new military crackdown

BY SETH GALINSKY

Despite escalating daily assaults by police and soldiers on peaceful mass demonstrations that have left more than 30 dead, hundreds wounded, and over 1,500 jailed, opponents of the Feb. 1 military coup in Myanmar are continuing to protest across the country, in small towns and big cities.

Their heroic struggle has won the admiration and support of workers and farmers worldwide. Demonstrations in support of their actions have taken place in New York, Los Angeles, New Zealand, a number of Southeast Asian countries and elsewhere over the last few days.

The military junta Feb. 26-28 unleashed its biggest assaults since the coup. Cops and soldiers used rubber bullets, slingshots, tear gas, water cannons, truncheons and live ammunition to break up actions, arresting and beating protesters, striking workers and journalists. The junta's Myanmar
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SWP campaign says struggles can help build stronger unions

BY SETH GALINSKY

Bernie Senter, Socialist Workers Party candidate for California State Senate, and his supporters campaigned at the Marathon Petroleum refinery shift change in Carson, California, Feb. 23, and urged workers to join in building support for locked-out Marathon refinery workers in Minnesota.

Some workers who pulled over commented that their Steelworkers local had contributed funds to the locked-out Teamsters. Fifteen workers bought copies of the paper with the headline "Solidarity with Marathon Oil Workers in Minnesota" to learn more about this important fight.

Socialist Workers Party candidates across the country are joining in struggles going on today — building solidarity with the locked-out Marathon workers and with Amazon workers fighting for union representation in Alabama, and joining protests
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Support union battles at Marathon, Amazon!



Union Advocate

Feb. 4 rally in support of Teamster union members locked out for over six weeks by Marathon Petroleum bosses in St. Paul Park, Minnesota. Fight is over safety and union protections.

Amazon workers organize in fight to win a union

BY SUSAN LAMONT

ATLANTA — In the midst of their seven-week-long mail-in vote on whether or not Amazon bosses have to allow workers to be represented by the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, workers at the company's Bessemer, Alabama, fulfillment center are getting support from fellow workers and union members. Some 5,800 workers are eligible to vote in the election, which ends March 29.

The *Militant* calls on workers to join in sending messages of solidarity and building support for the organizing effort among co-workers, in your union, church and anywhere else you
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Marathon workers battle largest US refinery owner

BY HELEN MEYERS

ST. PAUL PARK, Minn. — Two hundred oil refinery workers have been locked in battle here since Jan. 21 against Marathon Petroleum, the largest oil refining company in the country. They deserve and need soli-
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Protests in seven cities demand: Stop US economic war on Cuba!



Militant/Mary Martin

Feb. 28 rally in Seattle, one of actions in seven cities in U.S. and Canada, protest U.S. embargo of Cuba. For more than 60 years Washington has tried to overthrow Cuban Revolution.

Opponents of Washington's economic war against Cuba took to the streets in seven cities in the U.S. and Canada Feb. 28 — Miami, Seattle, New York, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Montreal, and Ottawa, Ontario. Car caravans and rallies demanded an end to punishing U.S. economic, commercial and financial sanctions.

For more than 60 years Washington has sought to overthrow the workers and farmers government that came to power after the July 26 Movement led

the overthrow of the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista.

With all attempts to destroy the revolution through military intervention or armed counterrevolutionary bands ending in dismal failure, every president, Democrat and Republican alike, has waged a relentless economic war against the Cuban people. They make it as difficult as possible for Cuba to import food, fertilizer, oil and medical supplies, and to access interna-
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In first attack of Biden presidency, US airstrikes hit targets in Syria

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

U.S. airstrikes hit several locations in eastern Syria Feb. 25, the first military assaults of President Joseph Biden's administration. The attacks targeted weapons storage sites used

US TROOPS OUT OF THE MIDDLE EAST!

— SWP statement page 9

by militias organized by the Iranian government, killing at least 17.

The Pentagon said its actions were retaliation for a Feb. 15 rocket attack by Tehran-backed militias on the U.S. military base at Erbil airport in Iraq
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Democrats push attacks on free speech, rights workers need

BY TERRY EVANS

Democrats are pressing forward with new attacks on free speech and rights working people need. Their bludgeon is an all-points campaign claiming the Jan. 6 disruption of Congress was nothing less than an "insurrection," carried out by some right-wing militia forces, conspiracy theorists and a tiny minority of the thou-
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Democrats attack rights workers need

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sands of supporters of Donald Trump rallying in Washington that day.

The liberals' offensive includes efforts to further unleash the capitalist rulers' political police, the FBI. It is dangerous for working people who need free speech to defend ourselves from assaults on our jobs, wages and working conditions by the bosses and their government.

Jan. 6 was "the most heinous attack on democratic processes that I've ever seen," Merrick Garland, Joseph Biden's nominee for attorney general, said during Senate confirmation hearings Feb. 22.

Garland said his number one priority as attorney general would be the fight against "domestic terrorism." FBI Director Christopher Wray said he would vow to do the same.

"It was a planned insurrection, we know that now," Sen. Amy Klobuchar insisted Feb. 23.

The Justice Department has arrested and charged some 300 people in the Jan. 6 intrusion, including with thought-control conspiracy charges.

Sedition and conspiracy laws make advocating ideas a crime, and have long been used by the government and the FBI to try to frame up vanguard workers, including leaders of the Socialist Workers Party.

Garland dismissed comparison of the Jan. 6 action with the provocative attacks on federal buildings and stores carried out by antifa and some Black Lives Matter leaders over many months in Portland, Oregon, and elsewhere. Only Jan. 6 was "a core attack on our democratic institutions," Garland said. In fact both actions are dan-

gerous for the working class, opening the door to government attacks on political space working people need.

Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Markoyas chimed in, saying the agency would widen its hunt for "domestic extremists," including "white supremacist, anti-government or anti-authority extremists." Such people, he added, must be prevented from using "the banner of the First Amendment to disguise their attempts to incite."

'New York Times' invents attack

Conspiracy laws are crucial to efforts like this, because there was a paucity of real violent attacks Jan. 6. The liberal media has done its best to remedy this, even if it had to promote a "narrative" that just wasn't true.

The *New York Times* ran an article Jan. 8 titled, "Capitol Police Officer Dies from Injuries in Pro-Trump Rampage." It claimed that Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick was murdered when "he was struck with a fire extinguisher." In another article, the paper said, "With a bloody gash in his head, Mr. Sicknick was rushed to the hospital and placed on life support" and died. They attributed these "facts" to unnamed "law enforcement officials."

The *Times* continued to repeat this for weeks, as did other media. In fact, the charge was incorporated into the Democrats' bill of impeachment against President Trump.

But none of it was true, a fact they knew long before they admitted it. While the *Times* said Sicknick was on life support, his brother told ProPublica, he "had texted Wednesday night [Jan. 6] to say that while he had been



Covers of *Militant* from Aug. 2, 1941, above, as well as of *Minneapolis Star Journal*, above left, and *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, left, both from June 28, 1941. U.S. rulers use FBI, their political police, to target and try to frame up vanguard workers. Special targets were leaders of Socialist Workers Party, Minneapolis Teamsters union leading labor opposition to Washington's entry into second imperialist war.

pepper-sprayed, he was in good spirits."

To this day no one knows why Sicknick collapsed and died.

The *Times* never printed a retraction. They quietly went back to the early articles online and posted what the editors called an "update."

In fact, every one of the five people who died Jan. 6 — Ashli Babbitt, who was shot by cops, three who had medical emergencies, and Sicknick — were supporters of Donald Trump.

Liberals push press censorship

Homeland Security chief Markoyas also says steps are urgently needed to suppress "media disinformation and false narratives."

The foundation for more censorship was advanced by Democrats at congressional hearings Feb. 24, under the guise of eradicating "misinformation that causes public harm," code words for anything they don't agree with.

In his *Times* column March 2, Ross Douthat quotes "experts" who have called for Biden to appoint a "reality czar" tasked with enforcing the administration's version of reality.

Bosses at Facebook, Twitter and other "social media" are on the bandwagon, canceling accounts of those they deem questionable — on both the right and in the workers' movement.

The right wing of capitalist politics seizes on moves like this to claim for themselves the mantle of defenders of

free speech, while they push their own course to defend capitalist rule.

The liberals drive to censor and attack the political rights of Republicans and Trump for partisan advantage is rooted in a deeper fact. They hold working people in contempt, and fear struggles to come against the bosses' attacks on us.

Millions of workers and farmers have been subjected to years of worsening conditions and increasingly recognize that changing administrations in Washington has done nothing to halt this. Until workers break with the Democrats and Republicans and build our own party, a labor party, millions will be attracted to capitalist politicians like Trump who claim they will take steps to create jobs and drain the political "swamp" in Washington.

Neither of the bosses' parties offer any way to address what working people confront.

"Socialist Workers Party candidates in 2021 champion struggles that workers and our unions are organizing today for jobs, better wages and conditions, and to defend the rights we need to decide and act on a course forward," Joanne Kuniansky, SWP candidate for governor of New Jersey, told the *Militant*. "We use our campaigns to explain that only through our own struggles can workers fight for what we need, not what the bosses and their Democratic and Republican parties tell us is 'possible.'"

THE MILITANT

Capitalism caused social catastrophe in Texas

Only the 'Militant' explains the capitalist profit system is responsible for the social disaster from winter storm in Texas, while Democrats and Republicans blame each other for the failure of the power grid. Crisis shows why we need to fight for workers control of production.



Boombbox Taco

During blackout, Boombbox Taco gave out free meals in act of working-class solidarity.

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SWP: struggles build unions

Continued from front page

against the military coup in Myanmar and car caravans protesting the U.S. rulers' economic war against the Cuban people.

As they do so, they explain that workers need to learn to rely on themselves, to break with the bosses and their political parties — the Democrats and Republicans — and build their own party, a labor party based on a fighting union movement.

Maggie Trowe, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Louisville mayor, joined Dave Perry, a member of Teamsters Local 100 in Cincinnati, to campaign in Florence, Kentucky, where he used to live. Perry has been part of a fight against layoffs, pay cuts and unsafe working conditions at the factory run by the Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired where he works.

"Hi, I remember you. I'm glad to see you are as active as ever," Gary Fabre, 59, an information technology worker, told Perry when he and Trowe knocked on his door Feb. 27.

"I agree with you that the Democrats and Republicans are the parties of the rich," Fabre told the two SWP campaigners. "Millions are out of work and so many here in Kentucky aren't able to get unemployment benefits.

"It does seem that working people could do with their own party, but I'm not sure about this socialist thing," he said. "I'm not for big government ordering us around. And it seems like raising the minimum wage would cause even more small businesses to close."

"Small-business owners are facing hard times," replied Trowe. "Mom and pop' businesses, working farmers, truck owner-operators and oth-

er small proprietors are all being squeezed out by giant capitalist corporations and their government. My campaign says the labor movement has to fight in their defense."

"Many workers don't make enough money," Fabre said. "My wife has worked at the airport for years and she only gets \$12 an hour."

"My campaign supports workers fighting for higher wages, I'm part of that fight at Walmart where I work," Trowe said.

"The 'socialist' wing of the Democratic Party has contempt for workers and thinks we have to be nudged and regulated into doing what they think is good for us. We have the opposite view," she added. "We have confidence in the capacity of working people to unite and fight for what we need and to build an alliance with working farmers and small proprietors. Only the working class can lead humanity forward."

"I don't agree with everything, but I think there is a lot to what you say," said Fabre. He gave \$10 to the campaign, subscribed to the *Militant* and bought a copy of *Are They Rich Because They're Smart? Class, Privilege, and Learning Under Capitalism* by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes.

'Back struggles in Myanmar, India'

"I had no idea about all this," 24-year-old Jalisa Joiner said when Atlanta SWP mayoral candidate Rachele Fruit knocked on her door Feb. 27 and explained how the party supports farmers in India fighting the government's attempt to drive them off their land, and workers, farmers and youth protesting the military coup in Myanmar.

"They don't talk much about these things in the news," Joiner said. "As



Militant/Jacquie Henderson

Maggie Trowe, SWP candidate for Louisville mayor, and Dave Perry, right, discuss need for workers to organize themselves, with Gary Fabre at his home in Florence, Kentucky, Feb. 27.

you describe, these are people going through the same kinds of things as we are here."

"Our campaign encourages workers to join in solidarity with workers' struggles all over the world," Fruit said. "We raise demands to unite the working class so we can defend ourselves."

Joiner, who lost her motel clerk job when the pandemic hit, is trying to start a cleaning business. "People want to work, not depend on government resources."

"My campaign supports Amazon workers in Alabama organizing to get a union at their workplace," Fruit said. "That would put workers there in a better position to win higher wages and better job conditions, and inspire workers elsewhere. Through struggles like these, workers will see the need to forge our own party, a labor party.

"We're inviting workers we meet to go with us to Bessemer and meet some of these Amazon workers and bring our

support," Fruit said.

"I'll try to get some of my neighbors to come to my house to meet you and talk more about these ideas," Joiner said. She added that when one of her neighbors saw an overdue rent warning on her door, they organized a fundraiser to help her pay the rent. "These are the kinds of people who would be interested in your campaign. Give me some flyers so I can get them out." Joiner subscribed to the *Militant*.

Back Steelworkers on strike

Tony Lane and Ruth Robinett, supporters of Malcolm Jarrett, SWP candidate for mayor in Pittsburgh, met with Melinda Swartz in Sharon, Pennsylvania, Feb. 17. SWP campaigners have been visiting the area to win solidarity for the six-month strike by United Steelworkers members in nearby Farrell.

Swartz, who recently renewed her *Militant* subscription, described her experiences when workers at the plant where she works won a union almost 20 years ago. "Every day the bosses had us in the office watching an anti-union video," she said, "but we voted the union in."

Swartz said she would come to Pittsburgh to help with the SWP campaign. To join the SWP candidates building solidarity with workers' struggles and discussing their working-class program, contact the nearest party branch listed on page 8.

Books by revolutionary leaders sell well at Tehran fair

BY SHOHREH IZADI

TEHRAN, Iran — More than a million books were sold by mail order during the Tehran International Book Fair, held online Jan. 20-29. The Iran Book News Agency reported that 1,732 Iranian publishers took part. Some 180 foreign publishers also participated, selling more than 20,000 books. Initially scheduled for six days, the unexpectedly high demand led organizers to extend it twice, for a total of 10 days in all.

Sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, Islamic Guidance, and other agencies, the online event was the first nationwide book fair here since the 33rd annual fair, set for May 2020 at the huge Mosalla mosque complex, was canceled due to COVID-19. Iranian publishers sold books at a 20% discount, and foreign publishers at 50%. Publishers prepared shipments, which were delivered by the post office at no cost.

Pathfinder Books London, which distributes books by revolutionary leaders, and Iranian publisher Talaye Porsoo, which translates Pathfinder titles into Farsi, Iran's official language, both participated.

Talaye Porsoo sold 218 books. Among its top sellers was *Are They Rich Because They're Smart? Class, Privilege, and Learning Under Capitalism* by Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party in the U.S. Talaye Porsoo sold 23 books on the Cuban Revolution, 27 on women's emancipation, 55 copies of *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, and a num-

ber of other titles by SWP leaders. Forty Pathfinder books in English were sold.

The geographic spread of those who got Pathfinder titles in Farsi or English was notable. Orders came from large cities and rural villages across Iran, including in predominantly Kurdish and Azerbaijani areas. Books were shipped to buyers in Tehran, Ahwaz, Yazd,

Rafsanjan, Shiraz, Mashhad, Sanandaj, Qazvin, Mianeh and Jajarom.

After the book fair one professor at an Iranian university informed the publisher that he has placed the Talaye Porsoo translation of Pathfinder's book *Women's Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle*, by Thomas Sankara, on the reading list for his students.

Striking UK bus drivers, gas workers exchange solidarity

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

LONDON — Striking bus drivers mounted a lively picket at London's Park Royal depot here Feb. 22-24. They are fighting wage cuts of up to 2,500 pounds (\$3,500) a year and longer shifts. Some 2,000 drivers took strike action. They're members of Unite union at three companies, London United, Sovereign and Quality Line.

"They're taking advantage of the pandemic," picket supervisor Rupert Buchanan told Andrés Mendoza, Communist League candidate for London mayor, who visited the picket Feb. 24.

"This is happening in different workplaces across the country," Mendoza replied. "On Friday, I shall be taking solidarity to striking gas engineers in Sidcup, Kent. They face cuts to wages and conditions, as well as being sacked if they don't sign up to worse contracts." On hearing this, Buchanan wrote out a solidarity message for Mendoza to take to the gas workers, and organized for all

the pickets to sign it.

Getting out the truth and building solidarity with struggles of working people is one of the centerpieces of the Communist League's campaign, Mendoza said.

Gas workers fight wage cuts

"That's brilliant," responded Darren Chambers, GMB gas engineers union rep, when Mendoza delivered the message two days later.

"We'll get it around. We've had tremendous support to our strike fund from GMB ambulance service branches and from the RMT rail union," Chambers and George McDonald, another union rep, organized a message for Mendoza to take back to the drivers when they next take strike action. Signed by 20 pickets it reads: "We have to stand united, stand strong and stand proud together. We will win."

McDonald was one of five pickets to sign up for a *Militant* subscription on the two picket lines this week, and was

among a larger number of strikers to take Communist League campaign material. He asked Mendoza about the "yellow vest" protests that swept France in 2018 against the impact of the capitalist crisis on working people and the disdain of the government of President Emmanuel Macron. "That seemed strong," he said. "It was important because 'yellow vests' were workers and small proprietors in the countryside," Mendoza said. "Working people of town and country are all exploited. We have to unite in struggle along the road to establishing a workers and farmers government."

Alawia Ahmed, who had been a veteran of union organizing and fights in Sudan, joined Mendoza visiting the gas workers' picket line.

"Your solidarity is a big boost to our morale," George McDonald told her.

The government and "many employers are looking at our fight to see who comes out on top, the company or the union," picket Natalie Foster told Ahmed and Mendoza.

Myanmar protests defy gov't

Continued from front page
mar Radio and Television agency reported that 479 were arrested on Feb. 28 alone.

In the first days of the coup the junta arrested scores of leaders of the National League for Democracy, the bourgeois party that won last November's elections in a landslide. On Feb. 26 the military announced it had declared 16 labor unions and farmers associations "unlawful." There are warrants out for the arrest of trade union leaders. Some bosses have been turning the names and addresses of union activists over to the junta.

In Monywa, in the Sagaing region in the north — just across the river from copper mines where thousands of workers went on strike to protest the coup — police and soldiers detonated stun grenades, fired guns and beat protesters Feb. 28. They raided a Buddhist monastery where protesters had taken refuge.

Determination to bring junta down

On March 1, the day after the most killings since the coup began, tens of thousands once again took to the streets across the country, from Myitthar, a small town in the middle of rice paddies and farmland, to Mandalay, the country's second largest city, where several people have been killed.

Garment and other workers in Yangon, the largest city, are continuing their strikes and protests.

In Dawei, a town in southeastern Myanmar where five were killed Feb. 28, groups of protesters marched through the city March 1 to the applause of bystanders, who gave them the three finger salute of defiance to military rule.

Similar scenes are taking place daily across the country with protesters demanding freedom for political prisoners, reinstating the winners of the November elections and equal treatment for ethnic minorities.

Discrimination and oppression of ethnic minorities has marked the country's history since the early days of British colonial rule, conquered in a series of bloody wars beginning in 1824.

Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, the head of the military junta, overthrew the National League for Democracy gov-

ernment headed by Aung San Suu Kyi before the new parliament could meet. The generals claim that Suu Kyi's victory was the result of fraud.

Suu Kyi — the daughter of Aung San, a leader of the fight for independence from Britain — became the symbol of the fight against military rule when she returned to the country in 1988 after years in exile, and began speaking out against then-ruler Gen. Ne Win. A popular rebellion broke out that year but was crushed in blood.

Her popularity grew during the nearly 15 years she spent in detention between 1989 and 2010. Starting in 2010 the military regime began lifting some restrictions on democratic rights leading to parliamentary elections. Still, the military imposed a constitution in 2008 that guaranteed them 25% of the seats, giving them veto power, and permanent control over three of the key government ministries.

Suu Kyi became head of the government in 2016 after her party swept the elections. Despite often tense relations with the top military officials, she became the main public defender of the military's repression of the Rohingya minority in Rakine province, including the forced expulsion of 700,000 in 2017.

The National League for Democracy government removed additional restrictions on democratic rights, but it also used colonial-era laws to jail journalists who were critical of the government, especially its treatment of ethnic minorities.

Hated overnight guest law

In her first year as head of the government, the hated "overnight guest registration" law was repealed. Under



Mandalay InDepth News

Protest in Mandalay, in Myanmar, March 1, day after police and soldiers killed at least 20 people during actions across country. Government violence hasn't stopped protests, strikes.

that law anyone who stayed somewhere besides their own home overnight had to register with the government under penalty of fines and arrest.

After the coup the junta reinstated the law, seeking to make it difficult for union and protest leaders to find a safe haven.

Myanmar, known as Burma until 1989, is a country of some 54 million people. Over 60% percent of its people are from the Bamar ethnic group.

Over the last 10 years, as the Myanmar economy opened more to the world capitalist market, the country became a center for world garment production. U.S. corporations, like Gap, as well as companies based in China, Japan and Singapore, set up shop to take advantage of wages that are even lower than in Vietnam and Cambodia. Many of these foreign capitalists formed profitable joint ventures with military-owned corpo-

rations, not only in garment, but also in large copper mines, jade production and oil.

At the same time, some 70% of Myanmar's population live in the countryside, most with no electricity, no running water, no cooking gas. One-third of those living in rural areas are landless peasants.

As the working class in Myanmar grew, so did fights to form unions and struggles for better wages and working conditions. Small farmers have fought moves to take away their farms.

Workers, farmers, and members of all ethnic minorities have joined together in the fight against the military regime. In a March 2 statement, the newly formed General Strike Committee of Nationalities — made up of youth from 27 ethnic groups — declared "its full support" for the Civil Disobedience Movement fighting to oust the junta.

Marathon workers battle largest US refinery owner

Continued from front page
darity from working people.

At issue is the bosses' attempts to replace dozens of union maintenance and production jobs with subcontractors, along with increasing the workload for other workers. The union says the company's demands threaten the safety of workers both in the refinery and people who live nearby.

Jim Swanson, an electrician, told the *Militant* that during summer months barges deliver oil that is "loaded and unloaded by the union maintenance workers. The company wants these jobs to be contracted out and some of these jobs to be on call."

Highly toxic hydrofluoric acid is used at the refinery. The union points out that the chemical is considered so volatile that authorities in Superior, Wisconsin, evacuated much of the town in 2018 after an explosion took place near the tanks where the acid was stored.

Drivers for Kwik Trip, a gas station chain, and Barton Sand and Gravel Co. refuse to cross the picket line, workers told this *Militant* correspondent during a solidarity visit to their picket line Feb. 27. Management personnel at Canadian Pacific Railway are taking trains into the refinery, they said, after CP rail workers refused to do so.

Support for the refinery workers' fight has been won from area workers and unionists, who have provided food, firewood and more. Teamsters picket 24/7 and welcome all who want to help out.

Visit their picket line and send messages of support and contributions to the lock-out fund at Teamsters Local 120, 9422 Ulysses St. NE, Blaine, MN 55434.

Teamster Local 120 business agent Scott Kroona told the *Militant* the union is organizing roving picket teams to Speedway gas stations urging drivers

not to buy gas supplied by Marathon, telling them it was being produced during the lockout. The union has continued its food bank for the workers and local community and will have two more food distributions in March.

The company has refused further talks with the union until March 23.

Special 'stimulus' fund for 'Militant' over \$80,000!

The *Militant's* special "stimulus" appeal has gone over \$80,000! So far 187 readers have contributed \$80,351.

The contributions have made a tremendous difference! Donations are winding down as the government reports all "stimulus" checks, for this round, have been sent out. Next week we will publish a round-up article on the special appeal.

The paper is financed and gets around solely through the efforts of our readers, to ensure it speaks in the interests of the working class. This week a prisoner at the Lawrence Correctional Center in Illinois wrote, "Once we get off of this pandemic lockdown, I'll be sharing the *Militant* with my friends throughout this gulag." The note came with his \$3 contribution.

No other paper tells the truth about politics — that every question pits the class interests of working people against the profit-driven interests of the ruling capitalist families. That's why all efforts of workers to come together to fight boss attacks on our jobs, wages, health, working conditions and our rights are crucial. And that's why the *Militant* prioritizes getting out their stories and building solidarity with labor and social actions.

The *Militant's* coverage of these struggles, of the Socialist Workers Party 2021 election campaign, its in-depth features on the history and hard-earned lessons of earlier class-struggle battles, are so important. The paper helps advance a course forward toward political organization of the working class, in our own party, a labor party, on the road toward taking power and ending the dictatorship of capital and its brutal consequences.

Please send your contribution to the *Militant*, 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018, or donate online at themilitant.com.

— JOHN STUDER

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GEORGIA

Atlanta
Solidarity with Struggle Against Myanmar Junta! Speaker: Janice Lynn, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 12, 7:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 777 Cleveland Ave. SW, Suite 103. Tel.: (678) 528-7828.

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Capitalist Catastrophe in Texas Freeze Shows Need for Workers Control. Speaker: John Hawkins, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 12, 7:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 1858 W. Cermak Rd., 2nd floor. Tel.: (312) 792-6160.

PENNSYLVANIA

Pittsburgh
Stop the Government's and Liberals' Attacks on Free Speech. Speaker: Dave Ferguson, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., March 13, 7:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 5907 Penn Ave., Suite 313. Tel.: (412) 610-2042.

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

Manchester bus drivers strike against attack on hours, pay

MANCHESTER, England — Bus drivers at Go North West here went on strike Feb. 28 after bosses tried to impose a new contract with longer working hours for the same pay.

The company insisted workers individually sign the contract, bypassing their union, Unite, and threatened to fire workers who refused. Bosses claim that 393 out of the 474 drivers “volunteered” to accept the new terms. The company also plans to reduce sick pay and cut the number of drivers by 10%.

“This is the first day. Everyone is signing up for picketing times. Spirits are high!” Unite’s Regional Coordinating Officer Lawrence Chapple-Gill told the *Militant*. “We’re organizing a food kitchen and others have come to donate. We’re also setting up a sound system.”

The company is subcontracting its routes to other bus and coach companies

in an attempt to break the strike.

“Their class stands together and so must working people and our unions,” Peter Clifford told bus drivers when he visited the picket line Feb. 28 to support their fight. Clifford is the Communist League candidate for Greater Manchester mayor and a member of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union. “We need the broadest solidarity to beat back their attacks.”

Train driver Aled Lloyd-Morris joined Clifford on the picket line.

“Workers in other industries need to be vigilant too,” he told the *Militant*. “This ‘fire and rehire’ is the thin end of the wedge,” he said, referring to bosses who fire workers when they refuse to sign up to worse conditions and are then offered their old job back on the bosses’ terms.

—Hugo Wils



Militant/Ögmundur Jónsson

Striking Go North West bus drivers picket in Manchester, England, March 1. Company is trying to bypass workers’ Unite union to implement longer work hours, layoffs and benefit cuts.

Amazon workers organize in fight for a union

Continued from front page

can! Send this support to midsouth@rwdsu.org.

RWDSU members from other workplaces, including a number of poultry processing plants, have come to Bessemer to stand at entrances to the warehouse and talk to workers about why they should vote “yes” and answer any questions they have.

Actor Danny Glover joined these workers at the plant Feb. 22 to show support for the union-organizing drive. Actress Tina Fey and over 1,760 television and film writers, members of the Writers Guild of America, have signed a petition supporting the organizing drive.

At the same time, the company is stepping up efforts to pressure workers not to back the union. They’re texting workers multiple times a day with anti-union messages, says Darryl Richardson, one of the Amazon workers who helped get the union drive off the ground. They’ve forced workers to attend mandatory “information” meetings where managers try to convince workers the union will be bad for them and their families. They

even put anti-union posters in the bathroom stalls.

Richardson, who is 51 years old, used to work in an auto parts plant in the area, which was organized by the United Auto Workers union. The Birmingham-Bessemer area has a long history of union-organized coal mines, steel mills and other industries.

The auto parts plant closed and he decided to get a job at the warehouse. “I thought the opportunities for moving up would be better. I thought safety at the plant would be better,” he told the *Guardian* Feb. 23. “And when it comes to letting people go for no reason — job security — I thought it would be different.”

But, he said, he quickly learned that workers are fired regularly at Amazon for not meeting production quotas. That’s 315 items an hour for his job as a “picker.” Nearby video monitors tell him what to do minute by minute. “You’re running at a consistent, fast pace,” Richardson said. “You get treated like a number. You don’t get treated like a person. They work you like a robot.”

Injury rates at a fifth of Amazon

warehouse facilities are at 10% or higher, with the industry average being four serious injuries per 100 workers.

So Richardson jumped in when the RWDSU began looking for people to help lead the organizing drive. They quickly got over 30% of the warehouse workers to sign up.

“We’re working for Amazon and one of the richest men in the world,” he said, referring to owner Jeff Bezos, who is worth around \$190 billion.

The company propaganda says pay and benefits are great and the union would just take money from workers in dues. But, Richardson explains, “Amazon says they’re giving you great stuff that nobody else gives you, yet Amazon has big turnover.”

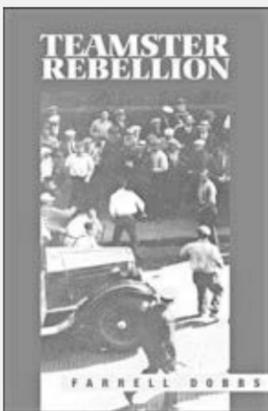
Amazon bosses attack the union

Warehouse bosses have put up a mailbox right in front of the fulfillment center for workers to cast their votes, and texted “instructions” to all workers, urging them to vote “no” and to do it by March 1.

Placement of the mailbox “creates all sorts of possibilities for intimidation,” RWDSU President Stuart Appelbaum told the news website *Al.com* Feb. 24. People “understand Amazon’s ability to survey everything they do. Also they may feel compelled to show supervisors that they’re mailing at the facility. People are not sure whether or not Amazon will know how they voted because they know every other thing that goes on at their facility.”

The RWDSU also reports that Amazon workers in Bessemer got notice in late February that the company is making a \$1,000 bonus offer for any worker who isn’t happy and wants to quit. This is aimed at getting workers who are angry over pay and conditions to leave, as opposed to fighting for the union. Amazon responded by claiming the program isn’t new, but they admit the idea is to give workers who don’t like working at Amazon an incentive to resign. The union has also accused the company of pressuring Jefferson County officials to alter the traffic lights near the fulfillment center to keep union members from talking to workers.

The union-organizing fight is important, and the workers deserve all the support they can get.



The 1934 strikes that built the industrial union movement in Minneapolis and helped pave the way for the CIO, as recounted by Farrell Dobbs, a central leader of that battle.

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— 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO —



March 18, 1996

Marching in picket lines, holding press conferences, appearing on radio and TV shows in dozens of cities throughout the United States and in other countries — opponents of U.S. government attacks on Cuba made their voices heard as Washington stepped up its campaign of lies and aggression.

The downing of two aircraft flown by members of the right-wing group Brothers to the Rescue after repeated violations of Cuban airspace has been used by Washington to impose harsher sanctions against the Cuban people.

A Militant Labor Forum titled “U.S. Hands Off Cuba! End the Embargo” was held in Miami drawing more than 40 people. Miami police tried to convince organizers to cancel the event, claiming they would not provide security after threats by right-wing Cubans to disrupt it. Forum organizers refused to back down.



March 19, 1971

CLEVELAND — On March 6, 300 women came from all over northeastern Ohio to celebrate International Women’s Day at a conference at Case Western Reserve University.

Fourteen different workshops were held, the largest being on abortion and on women and the Vietnam war. The abortion project group scheduled a demonstration for the end of this month, when the Ohio legislature will be having hearings on abortion bills. The women and war workshop outlined several projects for involving women in the fight to end the war, including the women’s contingent at the march on Washington April 24.

The conference was the first major women’s liberation action in Cleveland since last Aug. 26. It ended with a feeling of confidence and enthusiasm to continue working together on future actions.



March 16, 1946

Nationwide protest by labor, Negro and civil rights organizations against the savage Jim-Crow atrocities and bloody warfare unleashed by state troops on February 25 upon the entire segregated Negro section of Columbia, Tennessee have borne fruit. The last 13 of 101 Negroes arrested were released March 8.

The lynch hysteria and armed invasion followed an altercation between a Negro woman, Gladys Stephenson, and a white radio repairman, William Fleming. Immediately white lynch gangs began to gather.

When it was reported that the Negro citizens were preparing to defend themselves from the murderous mobs, 500 state troops, police and hundreds of armed vigilantes invaded the Negro community. Like Nazi storm troopers they blasted away at Negro dwellings and stores with machine guns and carbines.

End US embargo of Cuba!

Continued from front page

tional banking services and more. In the latest move, on Feb. 24 President Joseph Biden renewed Washington's declaration of a "national emergency with respect to Cuba." First imposed by then President William Clinton in 1996, this gives the Department of Homeland Security the authority to take possession of any ship in U.S. waters that Washington says might travel to or from Cuba without U.S. permission.

Below are reports from several of the Feb. 28 actions.



MONTREAL

Over 50 people in nearly 25 cars drove through the streets here, sporting Cuban flags and signs denouncing Washington's embargo against Cuba. The caravan also expressed support for Cuba's internationalist medical brigades, which provide health care in some of the most underdeveloped regions in the world.

The protest was organized by the Cuban Community in Canada group here and by the Table de concertation de solidarite Quebec-Cuba.

"We will always be Cubans, wherever we are," participant Yennar Warner, a Cuban who lives here, told the *Militant*. "The embargo prevents Cuban children from getting proper nutrition."

Mohammed Abdul, a Walmart worker, was at his first protest. "I came to see the unity among people who are against the embargo," he said.

Jennie-Laure Sully, from Solidarity Quebec-Haiti, joined the caravan. She noted that hundreds of volunteer Cuban doctors and nurses have provided health care in Haiti, one of the poorest countries in the world. "Without Cuban doctors I think the health situation in Haiti would be very serious. They've been there ever since the [2010] earthquake," she said.

Supporters of the caravan greeted it as it arrived at the U.S. Consulate, handing out informational leaflets to passersby.

"I have never heard of this embargo," said Gurdeep Singh, a warehouse worker who took a flyer. "It's very cool to tell people about this." Originally from India, he supports the Indian farmers' mass protests.

— *Katy LeRougetel*

MIAMI

"It doesn't matter if you're a communist, socialist or capitalist. It doesn't matter if you're a Republican or a Democrat," Robert Diaz told the media during the caravan of 30 bicycles and over 100 cars, made up mostly of Cuban Americans protesting here. "The only one who is suffering this big problem is the Cuban family. We want to lift the embargo for the Cuban family."

The protest in Miami was the largest here so far in the series of end-of-the-month actions that began last September calling for an end to the embargo, the repeal of the Helms-Burton Act and the return of the Guantánamo military base to Cuba.

The caravan got a friendly response as it drove through Cuban neighborhoods, with some residents coming out of local businesses to wave as it drove by. Caravan participants were urged to meet again at the same location March 28.

— *Steve Warshell*

SEATTLE

Twenty-five people participated in a picket line and rally followed by a car caravan here to protest the U.S. embargo. The participants included a half dozen Cuban Americans.

"I am glad to see people here of different generations and different ideologies," Carlos Lazo of the Bridges of Love, an anti-embargo group he initiated, told the rally. "We are all of one mind to end the U.S. embargo. We need to expand our numbers and keep up these monthly actions." He led everyone in chanting, "Cuba sí! Bloqueo no!"



Militant photos: top, Chuck Guerra; bottom, Katy LeRougetel

Feb. 28 rallies in Miami, top, and Montreal, bottom, protest Washington's economic embargo against Cuba, demand Washington return Guantánamo military base to Cuban people.

Rebecca Williamson, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Seattle City Council, pointed to the more than 200 new U.S. measures over the last four years that have tightened the economic squeeze against the Cuban people. She said it was important to demand that the U.S. get out of Guantánamo, which it occupies against the will of the Cuban people. John Waller from the Seattle Cuba Committee and Jane Cutter of the Party for Socialism and Liberation also spoke.

As the caravan wound its way through South Seattle it was met with thumbs up of support from many drivers and working people out shopping.

— *Mary Martin*

Avenue and Obama Boulevard participants got out of their cars to hold signs and distribute leaflets demanding an end to Washington's economic war.

— *Laura Garza*

MINNEAPOLIS

Passersby responded with honks, waves, raised fists, smiles and thumbs up to the 20 protesters gathered here in solidarity with Cuba. When we told one young man who rolled down his window that we are for ending the U.S. economic embargo against Cuba he responded, "Hands off Cuba!"

"We are part of an international effort to denounce the criminal blockade against Cuba that's been imposed by the U.S. government for more than half a century," August Nimitz said for the Minnesota Cuba Committee. "This new administration doesn't mean anything will change. We need to continue to put pressure on."

— *Nick Neeser and Gabby Prosser*

LOS ANGELES

Some 35 people in 20 cars caravanned to protest Washington's economic embargo against Cuba and demand the opening up of the right to travel and trade with the island.

This was the third monthly caravan sponsored by the LA-US Hands Off Cuba Committee. Speaking at a brief rally at the start, 27-year-old Cuban American Nia Mitchell said she had just returned from Cuba and the situation is difficult for people there with shortages of many items as a result of U.S. sanctions. "We have to let people know what is happening," she said. This was the first time she and her mother had joined a protest against the embargo.

Mitchell noted that Cuba's response to COVID-19 and steps to protect its population stands in stark contrast to the lack of adequate care in the U.S. Among others speaking at the kickoff of the caravan were Rachel Brunke, a longtime Cuba solidarity activist from the San Pedro area; Laura Garza, Socialist Workers Party; Mark Friedman, co-chair of the sponsoring group; and Scott Scheffer, Socialist Unity Party.

At the busy intersection at La Brea

NEW YORK CITY

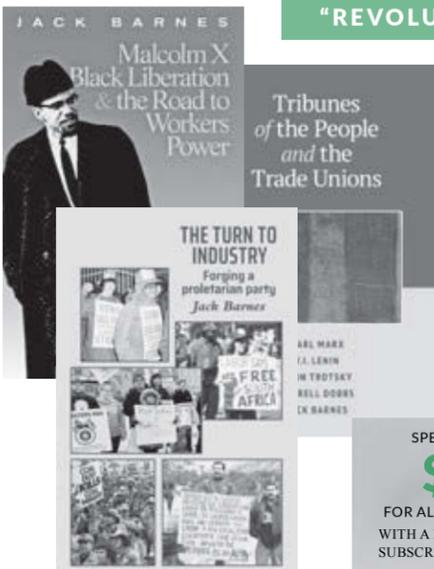
Horns honking, a car caravan against the U.S. economic war on Cuba rounded Columbus Circle three times and ended with a brief rally at the statue of Cuban revolutionary hero José Martí at the south end of Central Park. This was the third monthly caravan here sponsored by the New York-New Jersey Cuba Sí Coalition. Ten cars and 30 people took part.

Andy Arango, a New York native of Cuban and Puerto Rican descent and a pedicab driver, was one of the speakers at the rally. Arango said as a teenager in Harlem he was attracted to the fight for Black rights. Through that fight, he learned about Cuba's role in helping to liberate Africa from colonial rule and became a defender of the Cuban Revolution.

— *Sara Lobman*

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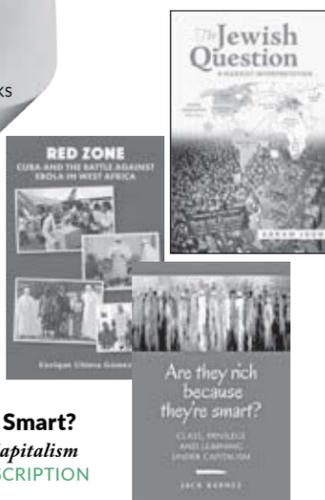


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Pathfinder's new website — easier to search, browse, buy

Books help us see today's fights as part of working-class line of march to end exploitation

BY HOLLY HARKNESS
AND MARY ELLEN MARUS

Pathfinder Press unveiled a new website this month at www.pathfinderpress.com. The attractive colorful design, enhanced search and greater security make for easy-to-use shopping and checkout. Built with improved technology, it helps readers searching the internet for various authors, titles and subjects to find Pathfinder books more quickly on search engines like Google.

As Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder, explains in the pamphlet *Pathfinder Was Born With the October Revolution*, the publishing house and its forerunners for more than a century “have had one and only one objective: to publish and distribute as widely as possible the books, pamphlets, and magazines that are necessary to advance the construction of a communist party in the United States — an objective that is inseparable from the building of a communist movement internationally.”

That’s why it’s true to say, as Waters’ pamphlet describes, that Pathfinder traces its continuity to the October 1917 revolution in Russia, led by V.I. Lenin, and the founding of the Communist International.

Readers of the *Militant* newspaper will find Pathfinder Press books valuable companions to the newspaper’s weekly coverage. In *Tribunes of the People and the Trade Unions*, Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, explains that reading these books help class-struggle-minded workers and youth “gain a historical perspective and see our actions as part of a long line of march of the working class and its allies toward emancipation from all forms of exploitation and oppression.”

Pathfinder authors recount experiences and lessons from the heat of political battle, like Farrell Dobbs’ four-volume *Teamster* series about the 1930s truck drivers strikes and organizing drives that built the industrial union movement across the Midwest; struggles against racist discrimination in the U.S.; and speeches and accounts by leaders of Cuba’s socialist revolution.

“Picking up a Pathfinder book and reading Marx, or Lenin, or Malcolm X, or Che Guevara for yourself not only increases your knowledge, it also deepens your self-confidence and stretches your political horizons,” Waters explains. That’s why throughout the pages of the *Militant*, Pathfinder books are featured for further reading or offered at special prices.

Pathfinder distributes more than 800 books in 11 different languages. Customers from around the world — individuals, as well as bookstores and libraries — visit the website. Titles address pressing social questions, such as building a fighting union movement; women’s emancipation; the fight against police brutality; the roots of Jew-hatred and a working-class road to end it; and much more.

The revamped pathfinderpress.com is now “mobile responsive,” too. That means that users’ browsers automatically adjust in size and structure,

whether you’re on a computer, mobile phone or tablet. Today almost 60% of web searches are done on phones, making such flexibility important.

Customers who are blind or otherwise visually impaired will find the Pathfinder site easier to navigate, due to rigorous tagging of images and content that can be read by screen-reading software.

As part of the new site, designers added photos of Pathfinder authors. There is also a News section featuring Pathfinder-related events — photos of book fairs and conferences in which Pathfinder participates, noteworthy book reviews, and videos like the one of Mary-Alice Waters speaking at the New York book launch in March 2020 of *Red Zone: Cuba and the Battle*

Against Ebola in West Africa.

Readers interested in building their revolutionary libraries can join the Pathfinder Readers Club for \$10 a year to receive 25%-30% discounts and special offers.

The new Pathfinder site offers easier access to a world of books that contain the words of revolutionary leaders, letting them speak for themselves. In addition to those already named, these include Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Leon Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg, James P. Cannon, Malcolm X, Fidel Castro, Evelyn Reed, Thomas Sankara, Vilma Espín, Maurice Bishop and many more.

We encourage readers of the *Militant* to visit the new site and explore what it has to offer.



New website is optimized — for computer and phone — to help locate titles, authors, and subjects of interest in 11 different languages, and with Google and other search engines, also.



Minnesota Historical Society



Militant

Council of State Office of Historical Affairs

Top: Workers successfully fend off cop attack during 1934 Teamsters strike that made Minneapolis a union town and began Midwest industrial union drive. From *Teamster Rebellion* by Farrell Dobbs. Above left: Socialist Workers campaign to win new *Militant* readers and introduce books with lessons of over 200 years of class struggle. Above right: meeting of Cuban revolutionaries, 1957. Central leader Fidel Castro (middle), flanked by Haydée Santamaría and Celia Sánchez (right), Ciro Redondo and Vilma Espín (left). From *Women in Cuba: The Making of a Revolution Within the Revolution* by Espín and others.

EXPLORE SUBJECTS

The Pathfinder Press website catalog is organized into **21 subjects** of interest to working people around the world. Visitors to the site can now search and browse these topics and — for the first time — cross-reference subjects with authors and languages using **faceted filters**, shown below.

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PATHFINDERPRESS.COM/SUBJECTS

'The fashion world became a capitalist gold mine'

Cosmetics, Fashions, and the Exploitation of Women by Joseph Hansen, Evelyn Reed and Mary-Alice Waters is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for March. This Marxist classic on women's emancipation began as a 1954 debate in the Militant over the relation of big-business marketing of cosmetics and fashions to the oppression of women. The excerpt is from the chapter "The Woman Question and the Marxist Method" by Evelyn Reed, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party. She joined the second wave of the fight for women's liberation in the 1960s and '70s, authoring several books on the origins of women's oppression. Copyright © 1986 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Painting by Avtandil Makharobidze; inset, Militant/John Cobby. Above, portrait of high society bourgeois soiree. Inset, members of United Steelworkers of America Local 8888 picket in February 1979 in successful battle for union recognition against Newport News, Virginia, shipyard bosses. "The woman question cannot be divorced from the class question," Evelyn Reed writes in *Cosmetics, Fashions, and the Exploitation of Women*.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY EVELYN REED

The class distinctions between women transcend their sex identity as women. This is above all true in modern capitalist society, the epoch of the sharpest polarization of class forces.

The woman question cannot be divorced from the class question. Any confusion on this score can only lead to erroneous conclusions and setbacks. It will divert the class struggle into a sex struggle of all women against all men.

Historically, the sex struggle was part of the bourgeois feminist movement of the last century. It was a reform movement, conducted within the framework

of the capitalist system, and not seeking to overthrow it. But it was a progressive struggle in that women revolted against almost total male domination on the economic, social, and domestic fronts. Through the feminist movement, a number of important reforms were won for women. But the bourgeois feminist movement has run its course, achieved its limited aims, and the problems of today can only be resolved in the struggle of class against class.

The woman question can only be resolved through the lineup of working men and women against the ruling men and women. This means that the interests of the workers as a class are identical; and not the interests of all women as a sex.

Ruling-class women have exactly the same interest in upholding and perpetuating capitalist society as their men have. The bourgeois feminists fought, among other things, for the right of women as well as men to hold property in their own name. They won this right. Today, plutocratic women hold fabulous wealth in their own names. They are completely in alliance with the plutocratic men to perpetuate the capitalist system. They are not in alliance with the working women, whose needs can only be served through the abolition of capitalism. Thus, the emancipation of working women will not be achieved in alliance with women of the enemy class, but just the opposite; in a struggle against them as part and parcel of the

whole class struggle.

The attempt to identify the interests of all classes of women as a sex takes one of its most insidious forms in the field of female beauty. The bourgeois myth has arisen that since all women want to be beautiful, they all have the same interest in cosmetics and fashions which are currently identified with beauty. To buttress this myth, it is claimed that fashion beauty has prevailed throughout all ages of history and for all classes of women. As evidence, they point to the fact that even in primitive society, women painted and decorated their bodies. To explode this myth, let us briefly examine the history of cosmetics and fashions.

In primitive society, where there were no classes, no economic and social competition, and no sexual competition, the bodies of both women and men were painted and "decorated," and it was not for the sake of beauty. It was a necessity that arose out of certain primeval and primitive conditions of labor, which I shall explain in detail in future articles.

It was necessary at that time for each individual who belonged to the kinship group to be "marked" as such. These "marks" were not merely ornaments, rings, bracelets, short skirts, etc., but actual gashes, incisions, tattoo marks, etc. as well as different kinds of painting. These marks indicated not only the sex of each individual but the changing age and labor status of each individual as he matured from a child to an elder.

These marks identified the kindred

members of the same group or labor collective. Since primitive society was socialist, these marks also expressed social equality. ...

Then came class society. The marks that signified, among other things, social equality under primitive socialism, became transformed into their opposite. They became fashions and decorations that signified social inequality: the division of society into rich and poor, into rulers and subjugated. Cosmetics and fashions became the marks of social distinction between the classes and the apex of this social distinction is found in the French Court before the French Revolution. ...

But as capitalism developed, there arose an enormous expansion of the productive machine and with it the need for a mass market. Since women represent half the population, profiteers in "beauty" eyed this mass and lusted to exploit it for their own purposes. ...

The fashion world became a capitalist gold mine with virtually unlimited possibilities. All a big businessman had to do was to change the fashions often enough and invent enough new aids to beauty and he could become richer and richer. That is how, under capitalism, the sale of women as commodities was displaced by the sale of commodities to women. Correspondingly, natural beauty became more and more displaced by artificial beauty; namely, fashion beauty. And that is how the myth arose that beauty is identical with fashion. ...

Beauty has no identity with fashions. But it has an identity with labor. Apart from the realm of nature, all that is beautiful has been produced in labor and by the laborers. Outside the realm of nature, beauty does not exist apart from labor and never will. For the beauty of all the products of labor, and of all the arts produced in and through labor, are incorporated within these products and these arts.

Humanity itself, together with the beauty of humanity, was produced in and through the labor process. As [Frederick] Engels pointed out, when the humans produced, they produced themselves as humans. They cast off their apelike appearance and became more and more beautiful. When the capitalist social disfigurement of exploited labor is removed, the true beauty of labor and of the laborers will stand forth in their true dimensions.

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US troops out of the Middle East!

Statement by Willie Cotton, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New York City public advocate, March 3.

Working people and our unions should demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. troops, warships and bombers from the Middle East. The Socialist Workers Party campaign condemns the Feb. 25 airstrikes Washington unleashed in Syria that killed at least 17 people.

At home and abroad, the U.S. rulers, like every other capitalist government, uphold the interests of the ruling capitalist families. From their military interventions to their trade conflicts and the punishing sanctions they inflict, everything they do abroad is an extension of their drive to defend their profits at home. They attack our jobs, wages and working conditions here. And it's our class they use as cannon fodder in their wars and military operations.

The working class needs our own program on every question, including our own foreign policy.

The starting point is the fact that workers and farmers around the world share the same class interests. Solidarity with the struggles of working people everywhere has to be our watchword, from the protests and strikes by the toilers in Myanmar to those in Iran and Iraq.

All the imperialist and capitalist governments intervening in the Mideast are an obstacle to work-

ing-class solidarity and organization there. The SWP demands not only Washington, but all outside capitalist powers — both Washington's allies and rivals, from London to Moscow, Tehran and Ankara — withdraw their forces now.

The only force capable of resolving the crisis confronting workers and farmers in Iraq, Syria, Iran and elsewhere in the region is working people. Only they can win their own emancipation.

Working people in the U.S. can help by acting to force the U.S. rulers to get their bloody hands off Iran now and end their punishing sanctions that hit workers and farmers hardest.

Successive U.S. administrations have used Washington's vast military might to brutally enforce their will. Both the Democratic and Republican parties are the parties of imperialist war. Workers need to build a party of our own, a labor party, that will say: Not one penny, not one person for the capitalist rulers' wars!

The way to stop imperialist wars once and for all is to lead the working class — the one great progressive class today — to overturn the rule of the capitalist warmakers here in the belly of the beast and replace it with a workers and farmers government. Such a government would join battles by fellow working people around the world to end capitalist rule — the source of all exploitation, oppression and war.

Iran: Hundreds protest gov't killings in Saravan

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Hundreds of protesters took to the streets and occupied government offices in Saravan, a city in south-eastern Iran, Feb. 23 in response to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps killing of at least 10 sukhtbars (fuel carriers) and injuring six more the day before.

The sukhtbars eke out a living taking diesel fuel from the Baluchistan region of Iran, one of the most impoverished parts of the country, across the border into Pakistan. The price of fuel in Iran is government subsidized at a price substantially lower than it sells for in Pakistan. The trade is large, estimated to be almost 20% of the diesel fuel supply there.

Sistan and Baluchistan is the second-largest of Iran's 31 provinces. Its population mainly consists of the Baluchi people, an oppressed nationality in Iran and a Sunni Muslim minority in that country. There are some 5 million in Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. At least three-quarters of the Baluch in Iran live under the government's official poverty line.

"The sukhtbars were stuck in the border area for two days," the London-based Baloch Campaign reported, "and when they protested at the IRGC base, the guards responded with bullets." According to a BBC Farsi report, security forces opened fire on those who began to open up the blocked highway at the border to carry the fuel through to Pakistan.

Transporting fuel to Pakistan by sukhtbars is not considered smuggling by the Iranian government. Some crossings were designated for this purpose "to improve the livelihood of people living along the border," Mohammad Hadi Marashi told the Islamic Republic News Agency in an interview on Feb. 23. However, recently the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps began to take over and instituted a family system of operation. A group of five families would receive one fuel ration card if they live within a strip of 20 kilometers (12.4 miles) along the border, and at least one member from any of the families joins the "Tribal Mobilization" corps and agrees to do guard duty at a border crossing near their village.

Iranian rulers fear spread of protests

The protests in Saravan continued for a number of days, the *Wall Street Journal* reported. The Iranian government, fearing the spread of these actions throughout the province and nationwide, shut down the internet in the region.

Iranian border guards also opened fire on the protesters at a police station in Taftan in northeastern Baluchistan, resulting in one death and several injured, reported Iranian state TV.

For the last few years there have been popular protests across Iran by workers, farmers and youth, demanding action against widespread unemployment, harsh living conditions and the effects of the Iranian rulers' military assaults abroad.

The tightening of Washington's economic sanctions over the past few years has deepened the crisis facing working people. The official annual inflation rate is now 46.2%, compared with less than 10% three years ago. The cost of chicken, rice and eggs has almost doubled over the past year, while the prices for beans and vegetable oil have increased by about three times.

The Iranian regime has also tried to intimidate working people through stepped-up use of the death penalty in recent months. At least 21 Baluchi prisoners were executed in Zahedan, Mashhad and Isfahan prisons since mid-December, the U.N. reported.

Molana Abdolhamid, leader of Sunni Friday prayers in Zahedan, the main Baluch city, issued a statement Feb. 23 pointing to high unemployment in Baluchistan and saying that thousands of families earn their living through sukhtbari. He called the shootings "a crime against religion and law" and called on the authorities for the "rapid trial and persecution of its perpetrators."

The Baluch member of parliament from the city of Chahbahar, in the south of Baluchistan, told the Iran Labor News Agency, "Put yourself in place of those people whose sons went out to earn an honest living, but in return they got their corpses." He said that those guilty have to be dealt with according to law, "no matter what position they occupy." Abdolhamid told ILNA that a delegation from the parliament is going to the Saravan region to investigate the events there.

In new military attack, US hits targets in Syria

Continued from front page

Kurdistan, which killed a civilian contractor and injured several others. U.S. officials say the airstrikes were conducted in collaboration with the Iraqi regime. Iraq's Ministry of Defense denies this.

To defend their interests in the strategic, oil-rich region the U.S. rulers deploy at least 60,000 troops at bases across the Mideast along with a massive arsenal of warplanes, missiles and other armaments.

Both Washington and Tehran are jockeying for control in Iraq. Their conflict is part of broader struggles between contending capitalist powers intervening in the region, including the rulers in Russia, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. All seek to defend their economic and strategic interests at the expense of their rivals.

The Iranian rulers have entrenched their armed forces and allied militias in Iraq and in Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. Their drive to extend their power has come at a deadly cost to working people in Iran and throughout the region. Fed up with plummeting living standards and the toll of the regime's wars, working people joined demonstrations across Iran in November 2019.

The most recent U.S. airstrikes took place as Biden looks for a way to return to the 2015 deal imposed on the Iranian government that's aimed at preventing it from acquiring nuclear weapons. Former President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from the pact in 2018. Iranian officials say they will only rejoin the accord after Washington lifts its sanctions — something the Biden administration refuses to do. The sanctions severely restrict the Iranian rulers' trade while their impact falls hardest on workers and farmers.

Tehran has begun producing uranium enriched to 20% purity. On Feb. 23 it began restricting access of international inspectors to some of its nuclear facilities.

The White House targeted Tehran-back militias on Syrian territory instead of those in Iraq to avoid destabilizing the weak Iraqi government.



Protesters in Baghdad, Iraq, Oct. 28, 2020, carry photos of some of 600 people killed by security forces during anti-government actions. Reuters/Saba Kareem

Daily protests in Iraq's southern city of Nasiriyah, which began Feb. 22, highlight the political challenges confronting the regime in Baghdad. Demonstrators are demanding the resignation of Dhi Qar Provincial Gov. Nazem al-Waeli and the arrest and prosecution of those responsible for abducting or killing participants in rounds of anti-government protests that began in 2019.

During these actions tens of thousands of working people and youth took to the streets demanding jobs, an end to rule by sectarian political parties and a halt to military interventions and plunder of the country's resources by Tehran and Washington. At least 600 people have since been killed by security forces.

During the recent protests in Nasiriyah, security forces fired live ammunition into crowds of demonstrators, killing 10 and wounding dozens.

But the deadly attacks did not deter protesters. "The demonstrations will not stop until our demands are fulfilled and the governor is dismissed," Salam al Ghazi told Rudaw Feb. 25.

On Feb. 26 governor al-Waeli resigned. Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi appointed a successor and set up a committee he said would investigate the killings of demonstrators.

Actions in support of the demonstrations in Nasiriyah were held in other cities, including Baghdad and the port city of Basra. Demonstrators in Nasiriyah halted their actions Feb. 28, giving the new governor three days to respond to their demands.

Correction

The article "Volunteers Expand Pathfinder Bookstore Placements" in issue no. 9 incorrectly said that during the fall sales efforts volunteers won the most bookstore and library orders ever. It was the most bookstore orders ever.