

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

**SWP: For recognition of a Palestinian state and of Israel**  
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 85/NO. 20 MAY 24, 2021

## *‘They try to hide the news about fights workers wage from us’*

BY SETH GALINSKY

“I’ve been a union worker since I was 18,” Paul Stettler told Joanne Kuniansky, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New Jersey governor, when she and campaign supporter Terry Evans knocked on his door in Jersey City May 6. His uncle had been a staunch member of the United Auto Workers decades earlier. Stettler said that past union struggles won improved conditions for working people.

When the retail store where he works “made me employee of the month I had to get this T-shirt,” Stettler said, pointing to the logo saying “non-employee of the month.” But Stettler said he is doubtful anything can be done to change the deteriorating conditions workers face today.

“They keep the real history of struggles working people wage hidden from us because they want us to believe our class is incapable of joining together to fight for what we need,” Kuniansky said. “Everything the SWP presents is aimed at unifying workers to struggle against the bosses and break from the

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## Get the word out! Support mine, steelworker strikes!



United Mine Workers of America

Striking coal miners and supporters join together at weekly rally May 5 in McCalla, Alabama.

### Striking coal miners rally, reach out for solidarity

BY SUSAN LAMONT

MCCALLA, Ala. — A third weekly solidarity rally for 1,100 United Mine Workers of America union members on strike at Warrior Met Coal in nearby Brookwood drew several hundred min-

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### Steelworkers stand up to ATI union-busting attack

BY TONY LANE

WASHINGTON, Pa. — Over 1,300 United Steelworkers members are locked in a strike battle against union-busting bosses at Allegheny Technologies Inc. at nine plants in five states. The strikers on the picket lines are standing tall and winning solidarity from other workers.

ATI bosses say they plan to shutter three of the union-organized facilities this year: in Louisville, Ohio; Waterbury, Connecticut; and the No. 3 Finishing Department in Brackenridge. They’ve closed down

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## *As hiring steps up, workers gain new fighting spirit and self-confidence*

BY TERRY EVANS

Hiring is edging up as government coronavirus lockdowns are lifted and growing numbers of vaccinated workers rejoin the workforce. Better conditions are being created for workers to come together on the job to beat back attempts by the bosses to defend their competitive position against rivals at home and abroad and boost profits at the expense of our wages, safety and working conditions.

More workers are organizing side by side in union struggles. Safety for workers in oil refineries and for nearby communities is at the heart of fights by workers at ExxonMobil in Texas and at a Marathon Petroleum refinery in Minnesota who are picket-

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## *Protests erupt in Colombia over jobs crisis, gov’t brutality*

BY RÓGER CALERO

In the face of mass demonstrations and nationwide strikes that broke out April 28, Colombian President Iván Duque withdrew a “reform” bill May 2 raising sales taxes that would hit working people the hardest. But the protests continued. Brutal police attacks on peaceful demonstrations are adding fuel to the fire.

Called by the National Strike Committee, which includes Colombia’s main union federations, farmer associations, organizations of indigenous peoples, student groups, independent truckers and others, the protests have become an outpouring of pent-up popular outrage over government and employer moves to make working people pay for the deep capitalist crisis.

Colombia’s economy contracted 6.8% last year, leaving 7.5 million people, out of a population of 50 million, eating less than three meals a day. Just under 8% of the population has received COVID-19 vaccinations as of May 7, lower than

**Continued on page 6**

## *‘Militant’ fights bans by prison authorities in Florida, Indiana*

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Prison officials are at it again! Five issues of the *Militant* have been banned in Florida and two in Indiana in violation of inmates’ constitutional rights and the right of the *Militant* to reach its subscribers behind bars.

On May 3 the paper received notices from the Century Correctional Institution in Florida that they had impounded five straight issues of the paper for March, nos. 8-12.

The articles prison officials say they

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## North Carolina protests say ‘Release video of cops killing Andrew Brown’



Reuters/Jonathan Drake

Protest in Elizabeth, N.C., May 2 against cop killing of Andrew Brown Jr. Holding hands together in the air in front are Brown’s son, Khalil Ferebee and his mother, Mia Ferebee.

BY DIANE SHUR AND PATRICIA TRAVIS

GREENSBORO, N.C. — Angered at the April 21 cop killing of Andrew Brown Jr., hundreds have joined daily peaceful protests in Elizabeth City, a majority-Black town on the North Carolina coast. Brown, an unarmed 42-year-old African American, was shot five times while he was behind the wheel of his car by sheriff’s depu-

ties who were attempting to serve a warrant for his arrest on alleged illegal drug activity.

According to a private autopsy report, Brown was killed by a gunshot to the back of his head. Of the seven deputies involved, three have been put on administrative leave and four were reinstated.

“Seventeen days and no one has

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### Inside

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—On the picket line, p. 5—

New Zealand Maritime Union fights deaths at Auckland Port

Striking Massachusetts nurses win solidarity



# Capitalist crisis weakens UK rulers’ hold on North Ireland

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

LONDON — Social and political turmoil came to the surface in Northern Ireland days before the April 28 resignation of Arlene Foster as its first minister. As is the case elsewhere in the United Kingdom, working people face the carnage of capitalist decline and joblessness that has intensified during the pandemic.

Forced out of office by members of the Northern Ireland Assembly, Foster’s resignation registers the deepening crisis of the parties that defend the province’s union with Britain. Her decision to quit was precipitated by sharpening conflicts within her Democratic Unionist Party, including over her acquiescence to London’s Brexit deal with the European Union, negotiated by Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

That deal led to customs checks on imports and exports between Northern Ireland and the rest of the U.K., but maintained an open border for trade between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. In January the ensuing trade disruption resulted in working people facing shortages in supermarkets, while cross-border Ireland trade, investment and border crossings continue to grow.

The effects of the Brexit agreement were one of the targets of days of rioting by youths in predominantly Protestant areas of Belfast, Derry, Newtownabbey and Carrickfergus in April. The bourgeois press blamed the rioting on state prosecutors’ decision not to charge Irish nationalists for flouting pandemic lockdown restrictions at a funeral. Events commemorating the 1921 incorporation of Northern Ireland into the U.K. have been cancelled.

Much-weakened pro-British former paramilitary forces in these areas foster sentiment that the province’s Protestants have been “betrayed” by the main unionist parties. The electoral base of the Democratic Unionist Party and the Ulster Unionist Party have eroded and new outfits have emerged.

The current crisis coincides with the 100th anniversary of the partition of Ireland, imposed by London after a war of independence liberated the majority of the country from British rule. Through partition, Britain’s rulers sought to minimize the loss of the Irish Republic, shore up their dwindling world role, and entrench their domination over the most profitable industries in the North. Through divide and rule, pitting Protestants against Catholics, London aimed to undermine working-class solidarity and struggle in both Ireland and the U.K.

Massive struggles in the Six Counties of Northern Ireland against anti-Catholic discrimination in employment, housing, education and political representation exploded at the end of the 1960s. The civil rights movement gained support of working people in the South and internationally.

### Failure to crush civil rights fight

In 1969 the U.K.’s Labour government sent troops to the North in an attempt to repress these mobilizations and prevent them threatening the British rulers’ hold over their prized possession. During the ensuing conflict, London interned thousands without trial, silenced Irish nationalist leaders and unleashed deadly violence against protesters demanding civil and national rights. Nonetheless,



In October 1968, Belfast University students joined Northern Ireland civil rights movement against anti-Catholic discrimination in jobs, housing, education and political representation. In 1969, London sent British troops to repress movement with deadly force.

the nationalists fought back and scored some victories.

The 1998 Good Friday Agreement between London, Dublin and political parties in Northern Ireland registered some of these gains. Through these battles most anti-Catholic discrimination was reversed and the British rulers dismantled much of their repressive apparatus across the province.

The agreement kept Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom. Divide and rule was perpetuated with so-called peace walls — some 100 physical barriers that still separate areas where Catholics or Protestants predominate in Belfast and other towns — and segregated education continued. But huge blows were dealt to sectarian divisions among working people.

At the same time the agreement marked the weakness of British imperialism and gave a boost to all-Ireland capitalist development. It established a Northern Ireland Assembly that would collaborate with the government of the Irish Republic on cross-border issues.

Much of the industry in the North, so precious to British capital a century ago, is in terminal decline. Foreign investment has sought new industries in the South and cross-border trade and investment has grown. The weighty agricultural sector has always had an all-Ireland character.

Sinn Féin, a bourgeois nationalist party that was a key force in the civil rights struggle, has made electoral gains in the Republic. These come at the expense of the Fianna Fail and Fine Gael parties, which are currently in a coalition government with the Greens.

“The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is looking anything but united,” opined the editors of the *Sunday Times* May 2 on the eve of the 100th anniversary.

“London’s rule over Northern Ireland should be ended now,” Andrés Mendoza, the Communist League candidate for London mayor, told the *Militant* May 3. For decades the CL has fought unconditionally for Irish self-determination. “This is in the interests of working people in Ireland and Britain. It should be fought for by the labor movement in the U.K., paving the way to unite workers and farmers in struggle, along the road to a workers and farmers government in each country.”

# THE MILITANT

*Back fight in Myanmar to end military rule*

*The ‘Militant’ has provided regular coverage of the protests and strikes by working people in Myanmar against Feb. 1 military coup and on-going repression. Mass upsurge has brought workers, farmers and ethnic groups together in struggle to overthrow the military junta.*

Tachileik News Agency  
March in Myanmar’s Shan state, part of May 2 protests against military rule, repression.

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Submissions to the *Militant* may be published in the newspaper in print and digital format. By submitting, authors represent that their submissions are original and consent to publication in this manner.

Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant’s* views. These are expressed in editorials.



‘News about workers’ fights’

Continued from front page parties that support them.”

She pointed to the importance of solidarity with fights going on today, including Steelworkers on strike at Allegheny Technologies Inc., United Mine Workers members on strike at Warrior Met Coal in Alabama, and Teamsters locked out by Marathon Petroleum in Minnesota.

Stettler took a flyer to learn more about the campaign and got a copy of *In Defense of the US Working Class* by SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters.

Socialist Workers Party candidates and campaigners are talking to working people on union picket lines, car caravans opposing the U.S. embargo against Cuba, and at their doorsteps in cities, towns and rural areas. They are getting a good response as they advance the nine-week international drive to sell 1,400 subscriptions to the *Militant*, 1,400 books by SWP leaders and other revolutionaries and to raise \$145,000 for the Militant Fighting Fund. Those funds are crucial for meeting the paper’s operating expenses.

By the end of the second week of the drive working people had picked up 463 subscriptions and 519 books! Over \$20,000 has already been sent in to the fund.

Their interest reflects the increased thirst among many working people for discussing how to stand up to the bosses’ attacks, as more people get vaccinated and get back to work.

Truckers protest gov’t interference

SWP campaign supporters from Louisville, Kentucky, and Chicago went to Indianapolis May 1 at the invitation of truck drivers Harry and Chelly Menkhoff. A dozen truckers gathered there for a “slow-drive” protest, decorating their rigs with signs against PRO-Act legislation, shorthand for the Protecting the Right to Organize Act that is before Congress. They also were warning against the dangers of driverless trucks.

The Menkhoffs had met Maggie Trowe, SWP candidate for mayor of Louisville in 2019 when they drove their truck to Cumberland, Kentucky, to support coal miners blocking the railway tracks at the Blackjewel mine. The miners’ resolute action forced the company to pay back money it had clawed from their final paychecks after

bosses declared bankruptcy.

“We saw we had a lot in common with those miners,” Chelly Menkhoff told SWP campaigner Jacquie Henderson at the Indianapolis action. “We own this truck but it’s hard to make enough money to run it. Now it seems the PRO Act will have regulations that will make it even more difficult.”

Democratic Party politicians and many labor officials are touting the proposed federal law as an advance for union rights. In fact the bill increases red tape and imposes reliance on government bureaucracy and compulsory arbitration, the opposite of organizing workers to fight the bosses by using union power.

Trucker Jeremy Johnson told Henderson the “PRO Act is a real problem for truckers. The government is trying to regulate us off the road. They want to take all us independent contractors and call us employees.” Many truck drivers worry that one consequence will be many of them will be forced to sell their rigs.

“It’s not right that the government will force all truckers to join a union,” said Johnson.

Owner-operators are fellow workers

“The government dictating workers into unions undermines building a fighting union movement,” Henderson said. Workers, including independent owner-operators, have to be convinced that fighting for a union is in their own interests, she added.

She showed Johnson the four-volume Teamsters series written by Farrell Dobbs, a leader of the organizing drives that transformed the union across the Midwest in the 1930s. Dobbs was a four-time presidential candidate of the Socialist Workers Party. Henderson described how the union approached independent owner-operators as fellow workers with interests in common with other drivers. The union championed their demands against companies that leased them trucks.

“When the companies attacked the income and working conditions of owner-operators, the Teamsters reached out to them and organized them into the union,” she said.

“I’d like to know more about this,” said Johnson, purchasing *Teamster Rebellion* and *Teamster Politics* by Dobbs along with a subscription to the *Militant*.

Other truckers at the action purchased two subscriptions, two books and four single copies of the *Militant*.

Fight cop harassment

Sarah Katz and Brian Williams, supporters of Róger Calero, the SWP’s candidate for New



Militant/Terry Evans  
“My boss made me employee of the month,” Paul Stettler told Joanne Kuniansky, SWP candidate for New Jersey governor, on his doorstep May 6, “so I had to get this T-shirt.”

York mayor, campaigned in the Middle Village neighborhood of the city May 9.

“We noticed a sign in one window that said: ‘No police beyond this point, without a warrant,’” Williams said.

“The person who lived there told us his relatives had been harassed by the police,” Williams told the *Militant*. “I told him the SWP joins fights against police brutality. At the same time, I said the trial of Derek Chauvin

for killing George Floyd was a blow to that fight and to the labor movement, because the Minneapolis cop’s right to due process was violated.”

“He agreed with that.”

“He told us, he doesn’t fit into a single category, because he defends abortion rights and is ‘conservative, gay, Hispanic and supports Donald Trump.’” He subscribed to the *Militant*, and bought the books *Are They Rich Because They’re Smart?* and *The Clintons’ Anti-Working-Class Record*.”

Socialist Workers Party candidates and campaigners joined actions across the U.S. and around the world in solidarity with the protests by workers, farmers and youth in Colombia (see article on front page). At the May 8 protest in Chicago, SWP campaigners sold four subscriptions to the *Militant*; three of the books on special, *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution* and *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*, and *The Turn to Industry: Forging a Proletarian Party* all by

SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes; and *Puerto Rico: Independence Is a Necessity* by Rafael Cancel Miranda.

To help expand the readership of the *Militant* and books on revolutionary working-class politics, and to contribute to the Militant Fighting Fund see page 8 for the distributor nearest you. Or visit themilitant.com to purchase a subscription and contribute online.

Correction

In the printed edition of last week’s *Militant* there is an error in the article “Chauvin Trial Was a Blow to Rights Workers Fought for and Need Today.” It says, “The ex-cop faces a combined 75 years behind bars. Prosecutors are calling for more.” But Minnesota law says the judge must only apply the sentence covering the most serious charge, in this case second-degree murder.

The sentence should have read, “Under Minnesota sentencing guidelines that would likely mean he would get a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison. Prosecutors say they will file motions for additional penalties to make the sentence longer.”



Militant/Kaitlin Estill  
Independent owner-operator trucker Jeremy Johnson picks up *Teamster Rebellion*, *Teamster Politics* and *Militant* subscription from Jacquie Henderson, right.

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April 24 - June 29 (week two)						
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UNITED STATES						
Albany	80	19	80	17	\$8,000	\$200
Atlanta	80	31	80	19	\$11,000	\$150
Chicago	115	34	115	35	\$13,200	\$3,050
Dallas	40	23	35	15	\$3,000	\$300
Lincoln	15	4	15	3	\$400	\$100
Los Angeles	105	51	105	55	\$13,250	\$0
Louisville	90	23	90	12	\$5,000	\$1,000
Miami	35	5	35	7	\$4,000	\$1,725
N. New Jersey	80	23	80	29	\$6,250	\$1,280
New York	100	34	100	62	\$16,000	\$2,071
Oakland	90	30	90	23	\$13,000	\$2,200
Philadelphia	30	4	30	5	\$3,500	\$1,490
Pittsburgh	50	10	50	7	\$3,000	\$400
Seattle	95	29	95	24	\$12,500	\$50
Twin Cities	50	23	50	19	\$4,500	\$700
Washington	65	19	65	15	\$6,000	\$805
Other						
Total U.S.	1120	362	1115	347	\$122,600	\$15,521
Prisoners	25	16				
UNITED KINGDOM						
London	45	17	45	20	\$4,000	
Manchester	40	14	40	12	\$2,000	
Total U.K.	85	31	85	32	\$6,000	
Canada*	95	27	115	41	\$12,200	\$1,840
New Zealand	30	18	30	14	\$3,500	\$2,100
Australia	30	9	30	11	\$2,000	\$900
Total	1,385	463	1,391	519	\$146,300	\$20,361
SHOULD BE	1,400	308	1,400	308	\$145,000	\$31,900
*Raised goal						



# What are the lessons from the fight for a union at Amazon?

BY SUSAN LAMONT

On April 9 the National Labor Relations Board released the results of the union vote at Amazon’s fulfillment center in Bessemer, Alabama, where a union drive had been underway since last year.

Of the 5,876 workers eligible to vote, 738 workers voted for the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union to be recognized as the union at Amazon, 1,798 voted against the union, and 2,759 didn’t participate at all. The union has challenged the outcome, saying the

## AS I SEE IT

company intimidated workers and corrupted the vote. The NLRB has agreed to hear the challenge.

Workers in the Birmingham-Bessemer region had followed the organizing drive with interest and, for many, with support. There is a long history of union struggles in coal mining, steel and other industries in the area. Even with the severe contraction of these industries in recent decades, union ties remain stronger than in many places.

Socialist Workers Party campaigners went door to door in working-class areas of Bessemer and nearby Hueytown in the months leading up to the vote. We spoke with workers in all kinds of jobs — from coal miners to fast-food workers to other warehouse workers and more — who were hoping for a union win.

Amazon workers and others we met, some of whom had worked there and quit, confirmed the difficult work conditions, long hours, inadequate pay, and disrespect from the bosses that fueled the organizing drive.

Other workers weren’t so sure a union would help and voiced concern that Amazon might shut down if the union won. Some, especially younger workers, didn’t really know what a union was. Bessemer, like many other working-class cities, has long faced high unemployment, so when Amazon opened in

March 2020 the company’s offer of a \$15-an-hour wage with health insurance drew workers from far and wide.

A group of workers inside the Bessemer warehouse got together within a few months after it opened, determined to fight for a union, and got a positive response from the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union. Over the next few months they got several thousand workers to sign union cards asking the NLRB to authorize an election, a sign that the union effort had struck a chord.

The decision to try to organize was a bold one. They were taking on one of the largest U.S. corporations, whose bosses had fought tenaciously to keep unions out of all its U.S. facilities. For this reason, the drive drew attention in the media.

A union victory in Bessemer would give a boost to workers organizing at other Amazon facilities, as well as by workers at Walmart, where I work. It would impact Target, and all kinds of other companies where workers face similar grueling, unsafe conditions and inadequate wages — more and more the norm for workers nowadays.

### What is the road forward?

Since the vote, there have been articles in the capitalist media about why the union lost, and by such a large margin. Some pundits say the vote was a “major defeat” for building the labor movement. Workers discussing what happened and trying to draw some lessons for the future should reject this view.

The organizing drive in Bessemer showed that hundreds of workers were ready and willing to stand up to the company’s anti-union campaign of lies, threats and intimidation and to fight to change conditions there.

They didn’t get defeated because wages and working conditions are so great under capitalism today. Rather it’s



Militant/Osborne Hart

Rally in Philadelphia Feb. 20 backs Amazon workers’ fight to win a union in Bessemer, Alabama. Key is to rely on the strength of the workers themselves, backed by working-class solidarity.

because the union officialdom all too often forgets the lessons of what it took to organize the CIO industrial unions in the 1930s.

For decades the union movement has been in decline. Today only 6% of workers in private industry are union members.

The officialdom has become increasingly tied to class collaboration, relying on “common interests” with the bosses and help from “friends of labor” in the Democratic Party. Today they are hailing President Joseph Biden and the Protecting the Right to Organize Act he’s promoting, which would tie organizing workers to government regulations, not to their own fighting capacities. The officials less and less look to rely on the workers themselves as the source of the unions’ power.

There was no serious effort to organize the Amazon workers themselves to help lead in winning support in the plant, or in organizing workers in Alabama and across the country to build the kind of social movement powerful enough to win.

Reliance on “social media” and support for the union drive from “celebrities” and a handful of Democratic Party

politicians couldn’t substitute for this.

Workers and our unions will learn from our struggles to rely on ourselves, not the capitalist government, their parties and more red tape and labor legislation. We will be able to use our unions to organize and fight effectively again.

There are stirrings in the working class today, with workers on strike or locked out by bosses at Warrior Met coal mines in Alabama, at ATI steel, Marathon Petroleum in Minnesota, and more.

For every worker looking to learn from the experiences of the mass working-class mobilizations that organized the CIO in the 1930s, there is no better place to go than *Teamster Rebellion* by Farrell Dobbs. He was a participant and leader in those struggles. This book “is not a ‘manual’ or a handbook,” Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, writes in his introduction. “It is the record of a concrete experience in the class struggle — one that can be studied and absorbed by class-conscious workers and farmers who find themselves in the midst of other struggles, at other times, in other conditions.”

Experiences like the one in Bessemer show that potential and can be built on to take the next steps forward.

# ‘Militant’ fights bans by prisons in Florida, Indiana

### Continued from front page

object to show their blatant bias against the *Militant*’s political point of view. Many offer solidarity with strike struggles and union-organizing efforts widely covered by the media nationwide.

Articles that particularly irked prison authorities report on the success that the *Militant* and Socialist Workers Party have had in getting contributions from readers’ government “stimulus” checks.

Articles from issue no. 8 deemed “inadmissible” are: “Page 5 — On the Picket Line; Page 4 — Victory! Pennsylvania Prison Ban on ‘Militant’ Reversed; Page 2 — Stimulus Fund for ‘Militant’ Climbs over \$75,000.” And for this last one, the notice adds, “... inmate funds going to support socialism,” though there is no mention of this in the article.

All these articles, the rejection notice alleges, are “dangerously inflammatory in that it advocates or encourages riot, insurrection, rebellion, organized prison protest, disruption of the institution, or the violation of the federal law, state law, or Department rules” and “threatens physical harm, blackmail or extortion.”

Other articles that were banned are: “Amazon Workers Organize in Fight for a Union,” referring to the recent organizing drive by the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union in Besse-

mer, Alabama; “Manchester Bus Drivers Strike Against Attack on Hours, Pay,” and “Steelworkers at ATI Vote to Authorize Strike.”

Also listed for impoundment were articles with headlines that read, “Protest: ‘Indict the Police Who Killed Breonna Taylor Now!’” and “Volunteers Expand Pathfinder Bookstore Placements.” The latter reported that several prison librarians planned to make Pathfinder brochures available so prisoners can order literature by Socialist Workers Party leaders and other revolutionaries online.

“These bans are preposterously far-reaching and an outrageous attack on the constitutional rights to freedom of speech and of the press,” said *Militant* editor John Studer. “Workers behind bars have the same right as anyone else to read, study and form their own opinions about how to deal with today’s deepening economic, social and political crisis in the U.S. and worldwide.”

*Militant* attorney David Goldstein has informed the Florida Department of Corrections Literature Review Committee that unless it overturns these bans itself, he is preparing an appeal demanding they be reversed.

The *Militant* received a notice May 7 from Wabash Valley Correctional Facility in Carlisle, Indiana, that issue no. 18

had been confiscated from *Militant* subscriber Kevin “Rashid” Johnson.

### Indiana prison bans

The reason given? “Images of guns” on page 12 “not allowed.” The offending photo, part of an article in Spanish about the Cuban Revolution, shows a celebration by Cuban militia members after their defeat of the U.S.-organized mercenary invasion at the Bay of Pigs in April 1961. A similar article appeared in the previous issue in English that a close friend of Johnson informed the *Militant* was also banned.

Johnson is a well-known political activist who has faced previous attempts by prison authorities to impound issues of the *Militant* and other publications. Last November the *Militant* won a victory reversing Indiana prison officials’ banning of one of his papers.

“With all the wars that have been fought, and been covered in photo spreads in the press — from Afghanistan to Iraq, Vietnam, Korea, and others of Washington’s wars for decades,” said Studer, “you’d have to ban just about every newspaper coming into the prison.

“The *Militant* will challenge all these impoundments, as it has with all previous ones, a fight that in most cases we’ve won,” Studer said.

## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### ILLINOIS

#### Chicago

Viewing of Video *Sankara’s Orphans about Burkinabe Youth Who Were Students in Cuba When the Revolution in Burkina Faso Was Overthrown*. Speaker: Ilona Gersh, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., May 22, 6 p.m. Donation: \$5. 1858 W. Cermak Road. Tel: (312) 792-6160.

### GEORGIA

#### Atlanta

Washington’s Debacle in Afghanistan: Working People Need Our Own Foreign Policy. Speaker: Sam Manuel, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Atlanta City Council president. Fri., May 21, 7.30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 777 Cleveland Ave. SW, Suite 103. Tel: (678) 528-7828.

### CALIFORNIA

#### Oakland

Solidarity with Workers Resisting Bosses’ Attacks: Defending Trade Unions and Democratic Rights. Speaker: Andrea Morell, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., May 21, 7 p.m. Donation: \$5. 675 Hegenberger Road, Suite 250. Tel: (510) 686-1351.



# —ON THE PICKET LINE—

## New Zealand Maritime Union fights deaths at Auckland Port

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — “It’s what we said would happen. Bonus chasing, productivity chasing, it was all going to lead to disaster, and it has,” Carl Findlay, vice president of Local 13 of the Maritime Union, which organizes dockworkers at the port here, told the *Militant* May 6. Two stevedores have been killed at the port in the past two years and others seriously injured.

Laboom Dyer died in 2018 after the giant straddle carrier he was using to move containers tipped and fell. In 2020 Amo Kalati was crushed to death when a container fell on him. In the past eight years, 13 workers have died working on ships or at ports nationwide.

Under growing pressure from the union, a health and safety review of Ports of Auckland, commissioned by the company’s owner, Auckland Council, was released in March. It found “systemic” problems and recommended that the company begin to “prioritise safety over productivity and profitability.”

The report is “a vindication of why we were fighting in 2012,” said Findlay. That year the union carried out a five-week fight against the company’s demands for “flexible” work schedules and contracting out union jobs, including bringing a contract labor-hire firm onto the port. Though the workers initially forced the company to back off from its plans, the bosses kept pushing.

“The bonus system was expanded, eight-hour shifts were replaced by 12-hour shifts with mandatory overtime,” said Russell Mayn, secretary-treasurer of Local 13, May 6. “And they began an aggressive campaign to remove the Maritime Union from the port.”

The report said bosses viewed workers who raised health and safety issues as “troublemakers.” “We’ve reported near misses and accidents and when we do a lot of that’s ignored,” one stevedore, who wasn’t named because he feared losing his job, told Radio New Zealand March 4. “Sometimes guys get punished, get a reduced number of shifts, and that’s the culture of management, that’s how they treat us.”

“The systemic and repeated safety failures resulted in the deaths of two stevedores which the union believes were totally preventable,” Mayn told the *Militant*.

Bosses at the Auckland port have been battling their larger rival in Tauranga to attract shipping. While the Auckland port remains the biggest port for imports, Tauranga is the major export outlet, and can handle larger ships. The company’s net profit dropped in 2019 and 2020.

Port CEO Tony Gibson tried to put the blame elsewhere. He told Radio New Zealand that Maori and Pacific Island staff were “shy in coming forward to address issues.” Since 2014 the company has faced several prosecutions and paid hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines over injuries and deaths.

Jo Bower, whose husband Neil was severely injured in 2014 when he fell off a ship, slammed Gibson’s response. “It’s productivity, profitability comes over safety,” she told Radio New Zealand. “Why else would you have a productivity bonus?”

Membership in the union is growing.

— *Felicity Coggan*

## New Zealand bus drivers fight demands to cut overtime pay

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — Over 50 bus drivers in a 24-hour strike against NZ Bus staged a spirited picket outside its Kilbirnie depot here April 23. The company responded by locking workers out.

The drivers voted 204-2 at an April 14 meeting of their union, the New Zealand Tramways Union, Wellington Branch, to strike in protest against company demands to eliminate overtime pay.

The company is offering a pay raise of up to 4 New Zealand dollars an hour (\$2.88), to NZ\$23.75, but wants to cut overtime premiums, which include double pay for working after midnight and on Sundays, and time and a half on Saturdays. This would eliminate the pay raise and much more. Bosses also want to eliminate one week of drivers’ annual holidays.

Australian investment firm Next

## Striking Massachusetts nurses win solidarity



Militant/Jacob Perasso

WORCESTER, Mass. — A group of workers from Albany, New York, came to bring solidarity to Massachusetts Nurses Association members on strike at St. Vincent Hospital here May 5 on the 60th day of their walkout. Over 700 nurses are fighting against unsafe working conditions and understaffing — dangerous for both medical workers and the patients. At far left is Mike Fitzsimmons, a member of the New York State Nurses Association and of the union’s bargaining committee at Albany Medical Center fighting for their first contract. The delegation included Kathie Fitzgerald, far right, who brought \$60 she and her co-workers collected at the Walmart store where she works as a cashier, as well as a card they all signed. Fitzgerald is the Socialist Workers Party candidate for Albany Common Council president.

— **JACOB PERASSO**

Capital bought NZ Bus in 2018. On its website Next Capital says, “We will typically take an equity position in a business that can generate value over three to five years,” and “the expectation is that returns of 25% per annum can be achieved for all stakeholders.”

“I love the job. I wouldn’t be doing it if I didn’t,” Tearai Pureau, a driver for 18 years, told the *Militant*. “But we have the conditions we have because we fought for them for a long time. We don’t want to lose them.” Driver Ruth Baldwin told Stuff News she would lose NZ\$7,000 per year if the overtime pay is eliminated.

New Zealand Council of Trade Unions President Richard Wagstaff told picketing drivers the CTU is appealing to the public to contribute to a support fund. There is widespread sympathy for the drivers’ fight.

The pickets signed a greeting card sending solidarity to fellow bus drivers

on strike in Manchester, England.

The Employment Court ruled that the company lockout was illegal April 24. Drivers went back to work as negotiations continue.

— *Terry Coggan, bus driver, member Tramways Union in Auckland*

## UK bus drivers push bosses back, continue strike as talks start

MANCHESTER, England — Some 400 Unite union members at the Queens Road bus depot here are continuing their strike after making some headway when Go North West bosses agreed to end threats to fire workers and to start talks. The bosses had previously demanded workers sign contracts that included longer hours with no pay increase and less sick pay, or be fired. The drivers have been on strike since Feb. 28.

Hundreds attended a solidarity rally for the strikers organized by the Manchester Trades Union Council as part of May Day activities May 3. Colin Hayden, chairperson of the Unite branch at the depot, said that Go Ahead, which owns Go North West, had agreed to withdraw “fire and rehire” and declared individual contracts some drivers had signed under threat of losing their jobs null and void. Two drivers who had been fired were reinstated.

“This is a sign of things to come,” Hayden said. “But the deal isn’t done yet.” Once there is a proposed contract it will be fully presented to the members “and only then will we return to work if our members decide to vote yes for the deal.”

A contingent of shop stewards from Stagecoach, which also runs buses in Manchester, joined the rally to support the strike.

On a visit to the picket line April 29, a group of rail workers from Manchester Piccadilly presented solidarity cards signed by 150 of their co-workers.

“No matter what job you are in we have to give support to each other,” Muhammad Qasim, one of those who brought the card, told the *Militant*. “That’s the way we get a bigger union.”

— *Ögmundur Jónsson*

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



May 27, 1996

MIAMI — “How come they didn’t even know that one day this was going to happen? They wait until after this happens and then figure out what to do?” Dionne McClain raised these questions following the crash of ValuJet Flight 592.

Her fiancée was killed in the May 11 crash. All 105 passengers and 5 crew members died in the plunge of the 27-year-old DC-9. In the last two years ValuJet planes have returned to the airport of origin 68 times.

ValuJet is one of 20 “low-cost” airlines operating; some 20 more are waiting to start up. In two years the non-union airline has grown from 2 to 51 planes. One way ValuJet cuts costs is by farming out maintenance to nonunion contractors, who pay workers much less and require them in some cases to work on many different types of aircraft for quick turnarounds.



May 28, 1971

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — The April 30 New Zealand-wide anti-Vietnam-war demonstrations involved far greater numbers than ever before in opposition to the Indochina war. Protests took place in every major city and many smaller towns, more than 35,000 marched in the streets. The central demand was for the immediate withdrawal of all New Zealand, United States, and allied armed forces from Indochina.

Several trade unions and prominent unionists endorsed the mobilization, and the Seamen’s Union held a national strike in support. This is the first time such action against the war has been taken by unionists in New Zealand.

The mobilization was launched at the highly successful National Antiwar Conference of more than 600 persons in Wellington March 13-14. In many centers entirely new coalitions were built after the conference.



May 25, 1946

The second great strike wave in the post-war upsurge of American labor reached a climactic point last week as the assault against the coal miners and railroad workers mounted in ferocity. President Truman first put pressure upon the UMW leaders to call off their strike for a two-week period and then threatened to issue a government order seizing the mines in the event that the strike was resumed.

The demonstrative walkout of the railroad workers in the face of the truce order tied up the entire transportation system for several hours. Over 25 percent of mine workers in the key Western Pennsylvania area refused to return to the pits without a signed contract.

The most important lesson of the strike struggles is the urgent need of the unions to sever their ties with the capitalist-dominated Republican and Democratic machines.



# Protests erupt in Colombia

Continued from front page

hard-hit Brazil. There are nearly 500 deaths a day on average, a higher per capita rate than in India.

The official unemployment rate is more than 17%, and over 20% in some cities. It's estimated that half a million businesses closed in the last year as a result of government lockdowns.

Protests swelled across the country after police brutally attacked demonstrators. At least 25 people have been killed since the protests started, hundreds injured, more than 800 arrested and dozens are "missing." The government deployed army tanks, firing live rounds, in an attempt to quell the protests.

Protesters have set up roadblocks on major highways, cutting off supplies into Bogotá, Cali and other cities. The government threatened to seize the trucks and vehicles used to build the blockades. These "termination of ownership" measures were introduced by the Colombian rulers earlier, allegedly to combat "terrorism" and drug trafficking.

While most of the protests have been peaceful, government propaganda has focused on participants who burned down police kiosks and public buildings, and some looting that took place. Trade union leaders and other members of the National Strike Committee condemned the acts of vandalism.

In Cali, on the first day of the protests, demonstrators recovered stolen items and marched to the stores to return them. They chanted, "We the good people are the majority," a strong response to the government's violence-baiting of them.

## Toilers' response to attacks

"The companies are using the pandemic as an excuse to fire workers, including some who are ill. Despite the government giving them subsidies to not lay off people, the companies lay workers off anyway and keep the money," Daniel Morón, from the Sintracarbón mineworkers union, told the *Militant* by phone from Riohacha. Starting May 6, some 220 fired mine-workers blocked roads leading to the El Cerrejón mine, demanding their jobs back, he said.

"The government favors the agricultural monopolies and highly subsidized multinationals from the U.S. and the European Union. We can't compete with them," Oscar Gutiérrez, of Dignidad Agropecuaria Colombiana, a federation of small farmer groups, told the *Militant* from Manizales. "Small farmers don't get loans, and costs of fertilizer, seeds and pesticides keep going up. Many rice, corn, and milk farmers have gone bankrupt.

"We had a big mobilization planned last year, but then the pandemic hit," said Gutiérrez. "The situation has only gotten worse."

A motorcade of trucks, and delivery and passenger van operators joined the protests May 1 in Bogotá. They face similar pressures with the high cost of fuel, insurance, tolls, and other costs. "It can't be that we, who don't even make enough to cover operating expenses, have to carry on our backs the country's budget," freight truck driver Andrés Betancourt told *El Tiempo*.

Duque insisted the tax increases were necessary to continue an emergency pandemic dole scheme rolled out in April 2020 that provides monthly pay-

ments of \$43 to about 3 million people.

The measure, demagogically dubbed the "Sustainable Solidarity Law," increased the sales tax from 16% to 19% on electricity, water and gas consumption. To make it appear equitable, it also would have raised taxes on those earning above \$663 a month, in a country where the minimum wage is \$260.

The sales tax hike was like "rubbing salt on the wound," say many demonstrators. Now the government has raised a health "reform" law that many workers believe would attack their access to medical care.

## An impending crisis

Latin America registered the sharpest economic contraction in the world in 2020. Tens of millions have been left without jobs, facing conditions similar to those in Colombia.

Governments in the semicolonial world have borrowed heavily from foreign and domestic capitalist lenders to try to keep their economies afloat. Many of these countries, which depend on raw material exports, tourism or remittances, were already deeply indebted before the pandemic slowdown. The International Monetary Fund and World Bank have suspended payments or restructured debts for some of the countries.

# Witch hunt against Trump, political rights continues

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Liberals — in Congress and media editorial offices — backed by local prosecutors, cops and more, continue to search for ways to silence and punish former President Donald Trump, his family and former administration allies, even though he left office several months ago. They're looking for indictments, crippling financial levies against their businesses and much more.

They've maintained a ban on his views on Facebook and other "social media," in hopes of preventing him from running for president again in 2024. But in their blood lust, their real targets are the workers who voted for Trump, as well as freedom of speech and political rights crucial for working people.

Trump, as well as all other Republican and Democratic Party politicians, defends to the hilt the interests of U.S. imperialism. But Trump also presented himself as an outsider who would work to end the carnage working people face and take on the "swamp" of politicians in Washington.

What liberals fear most is the working class, the "deplorables" as Hillary Clinton famously termed them, especially in smaller cities and the countryside. This includes over 74 million who voted for Trump in 2020, and the 80 million who didn't vote for either capitalist candidate.

On May 5 Facebook's so-called oversight board upheld the edict by company CEO Mark Zuckerberg to ban Trump from Facebook, where he had more than 35 million followers.

The action came after a few hundred conspiracy theorists and wannabe paramilitaries, followed by some supporters of Donald Trump, entered the U.S. Capitol Jan. 6. This action was depicted by the incoming Democratic administration of Joseph Biden and liberal media pundits as an example of



Militant/Dan Fein

1,500 people march in Chicago May 8 backing Colombia protests against government attacks. Sign says, "Fight so you don't have to emigrate for a better future for you and your children."

The protests in Colombia portend unrest across Latin America as the capitalist rulers move to impose cuts in health care, education and other social spending as the debts loom.

On May 6 the Colombian government ordered the expulsion of Omar Rafael García, first secretary of the Cuban Embassy in Bogotá, claiming that he was "carrying out activities in the country that are incompatible" with diplomatic relations.

"This unjustified action is an attempt to divert the attention of the international community and Colombian society

from the violent repression by military and police forces against the protesters," the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.

The real fear of the Colombian rulers is not that Cuban diplomats will intervene in the country's internal affairs — a charge the Cuban government categorically denies. It's the living example of the Cuban Revolution, which shows it's possible to make a revolution to replace capitalist rule with a government of workers and farmers.

Seth Galinsky contributed to this article.

a growing threat from "white supremacist domestic terrorists."

Instagram, another Zuckerberg outfit, also barred Trump, where he has more than 24 million followers. Twitter then placed a permanent ban on the former president, moving to shut him off from his over 88 million followers. Trump was also blocked from Snapchat and YouTube, where his channel had almost 3 million subscribers.

Bosses at these privately run big tech companies are exempted from being held liable for what is posted on their sites, based on their claim they are just a vehicle for others to speak. But their increasing moves to ban people who disagree with the liberal world outlook belie their "neutrality." They are part of the poisonous spread of "cancel culture." The casualty is free speech.

Twitter, for example, has frequently blocked accounts of organizations and political leaders in Cuba who defend the revolution. Last October, Facebook "deactivated" for 24 hours the account of Cheryl LaBash, a co-chair of the National Network on Cuba, and 14 others for posting information on a Nov. 14-15 conference organized to fight against the U.S. rulers' economic war on Cuba.

Facing growing criticism over censorship, Facebook's Zuckerberg, in a public-relations scam, set up his "oversight board" of "experts" last October to review company rulings. While backing Facebook's January decision to block Trump, the board said Zuckerberg has to decide for himself whether to maintain the ban indefinitely.

In a recent U.S. Supreme Court case, Justice Clarence Thomas suggested that these tech platforms should be regulated like the gas and electric utilities. This would circumscribe the censors at Facebook, Google and Twitter.

In a highly unusual move, FBI agents raided the New York office and apartment of Rudolph Giuliani, former mayor of New York and personal attorney for Donald Trump, at 6 a.m. April 28. They seized his cellphones and computers, claiming they're investigating Giuliani's dealings with individuals in Ukraine during Trump's presidency. Newly confirmed Attorney General Merrick Garland himself gave the green light to conduct the raid.

## Giuliani raid is 'legal thuggery'

"What they did today was legal thuggery," Robert Costello, Giuliani's lawyer, told the media. Costello said the object of the search was to smear Giuliani as a criminal, in the face of the fact his client had twice offered to answer any prosecutors' questions.

FBI agents also executed a search warrant at the Washington-area home of Victoria Toensing, a lawyer who worked closely with Giuliani. They seized her cellphone.

The liberal media — *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and NBC News — rushed to get the "news" in print so fast that they reported it inaccurately. Each had to retract false claims in their coverage saying Giuliani had received FBI warnings on "Russian disinformation."

At the same time, federal Judge Amy Berman Jackson is going after former Attorney General William Barr, claiming he had "misled" her and Congress about former FBI Director Robert Mueller's nearly two-year-long witch hunt against Trump on baseless charges he had secret ties with Russia.

The goal of the liberals isn't just to ruin, and imprison if possible, Trump and those around him. It's to send a message to anyone who doesn't think "correctly" — that is, as they do — of what can be done to them.



# As hiring steps up, workers gain confidence, fighting spirit

Continued from front page  
ing against boss lockouts.

“These attacks by the bosses have stakes for all working people and solidarity is crucial,” Joel Britton, Socialist Workers Party candidate for California State Assembly, told the *Militant*. “Bosses at both plants are determined to keep production going with scab labor. Working people and our unions need to build the widest possible support for these labor struggles.”

Workers confront attacks from employers and their governments across North America. This includes steelworkers at ATI, coal miners at Warrior Met in Alabama, nurses in Worcester, Massachusetts, and packinghouse workers at Olymel in Quebec.

Port workers in Quebec walked out over intolerable and dangerous work schedules, but were ordered back to work by the federal government. Using anti-labor laws, Ottawa ended the strike, claiming the unionists’ fight for safety was disrupting “essential” work, including distribution of medical supplies. But it is the Canadian government itself that is responsible for the crisis in medical care and vaccination there. They admit only 2.68% of Canada’s population has been fully vaccinated as of May 7.

## Bosses, gov’t look to squeeze workers

All of these fights deserve widespread publicity and support.

Even with a spurt in hiring, the unemployment rate in the U.S. actually *rose* last month to 6.1%, after falling since the beginning of the year.

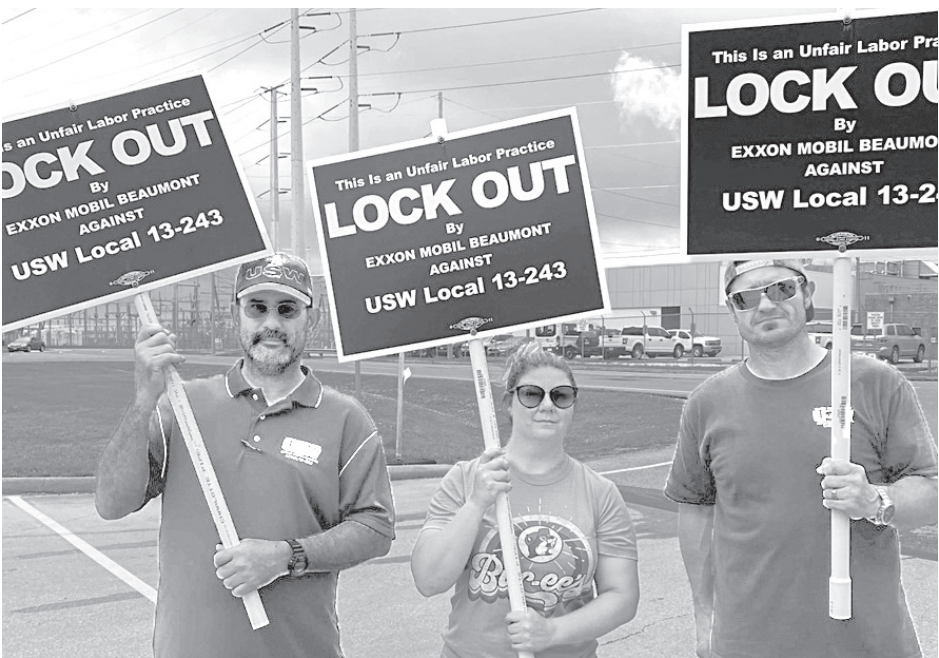
Since these figures came out, the bourgeois press has been full of articles with headlines like the *Wall Street Journal*’s “Millions Are Unemployed. Why Can’t Companies Find Workers?”

The fact is, workers see that many of the jobs available today — at McDonald’s or Walmart and the like — are low paying. They feel capable of waiting for something that pays more. This makes bosses furious. Their idea is that wages and conditions everywhere should be more like Walmart — and without troublesome unions.

The Chamber of Commerce and some politicians say the problem is unemployment pays too well, especially with pandemic-motivated extra payouts and longer terms. These measures were adopted both by Joseph Biden and Donald Trump. A growing number of state governments are canceling the extra \$300-a-week federal payouts.

Some liberal commentators worry that leaving workers in the lurch without jobs or a handout may make them rebellious. Throwing money at people who “have been left out and are most distrustful” is necessary, *New York Times* columnist David Brooks wrote May 6, in order to “reduce the sense of menace and threat” from millions who have “seceded from the cultural, political and social institutions of national life.” Brooks sees handouts as essential to controlling working people he loathes and considers dangerous.

President Biden has climbed on the bandwagon of those insisting workers take whatever job they’re offered or suffer the consequences. “The law is clear: if you’re receiving unemployment benefits and you’re offered a suitable job, you can’t refuse that job and just keep getting the unemployment



Members of United Steelworkers Local 13-243 picket outside ExxonMobil in Beaumont, Texas, after being locked out by bosses May 1 in attack on seniority rights, safety and job security.

benefits,” he said May 10. “No one should be allowed to game the system.”

Biden used April’s rise in unemployment to claim his trillions-dollar “American Jobs Plan” infrastructure scheme is needed. This is built around bailouts for state governments and spreading largesse to construction and other bosses,

in hopes they’ll hire. The plan itself doesn’t actually provide a single job.

“The Socialist Workers Party says we need to fight for a government-funded public works program to create millions of jobs at union-scale pay building schools, hospitals, day care centers, housing and other things workers need,”

## Anti-labor group attacks workers and our unions

BY SETH GALINSKY

Workers on strike have been running into an anti-labor outfit that calls itself the Socialist Equality Party. The group — which maintains the so-called World Socialist Web Site — claims to back the fight for better wages and job conditions. In reality everything it does is aimed at weakening the working class and our unions.

The World Socialist Web Site has been quick to write in their online-only publication about many of today’s strike battles and lockouts. But every article calls on workers to quit their unions — claiming that all unions are wretched and corrupt — a call that is music to the ears of every boss in the country.

An April 30 article on the strike and tentative contract at Volvo’s truck plant in Virginia claims that the United Auto Workers “is not a ‘union’ at all, but a well-financed arm of management.”

Steelworkers in a bitter strike against Allegheny Technologies Inc., and members of the United Mine Workers union on strike at the Warrior Met mine in Alabama, are getting the same treatment.

The uptick in hiring coming out of the COVID-19 lockdowns is increasing the confidence of workers to stand up to the bosses’ attempts to make us pay for today’s capitalist crisis. We’re seeing more strikes, resistance on the job, and rejection of takeback contracts.

Other unions, workers, farmers and young people are walking picket lines, contributing money and food, and joining solidarity rallies. That’s exactly what’s needed to strengthen our unions and our fights.

It’s no surprise that amid growing opportunities for real solidarity, the Socialist Equality Party has gone into overdrive to attack our unions. The group boasts that it has set up an international network of “rank-and-file committees” to target our unions, but

there is little indication they exist anywhere but the pages of their website.

Working people face serious challenges. We have taken big blows over the last several decades, a consequence in part of union officials fostering reliance on capitalist politicians to “help” us, instead of mobilizing our own strength through our unions.

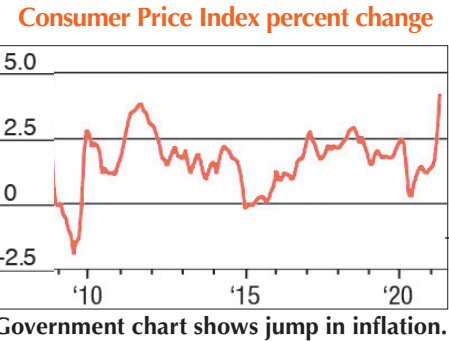
The Socialist Equality Party takes advantage of these real challenges, not to point a road forward that can build the unions, but to demoralize workers and undercut union power.

After learning what the group is up to, on some occasions strikers have told the Socialist Equality Party to leave the picket line. This anti-labor

Britton said. “The program should be run under workers control, to make sure what is built is done safely.

“Our unions need to fight to cut the workweek with no cut in pay, to share the work available around,” he said. Fighting for these steps would unite employed and unemployed workers in common struggle.” Alongside persistent unemployment, workers face a 4.2% rise in inflation over the past 12 months, the biggest hike since 2008. Gas prices have risen 22% over the past year.

“Tied to fighting for jobs, our unions need to organize workers to struggle for cost-of-living adjustments in every contract, and in unemployment and retirement benefits,” Britton added. “Every time prices rise so must our wages.”



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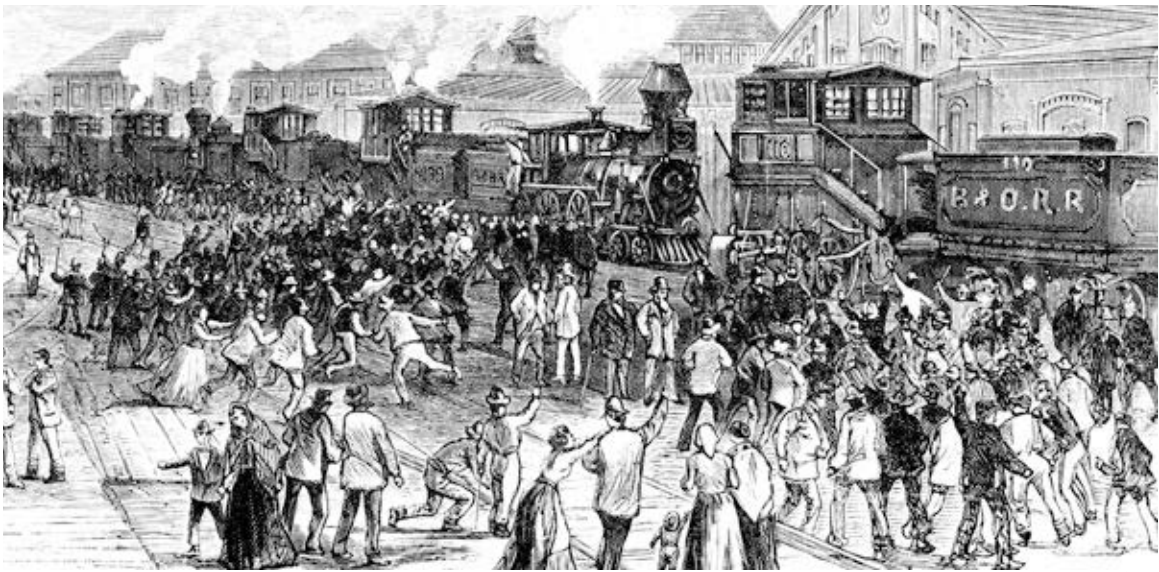
# First US general strike in 1877 showed power of labor

The “Great Strike” of 1877, sparked by starvation wages and brutal working conditions, started among rail workers and then drew in more than half a million others. It alarmed the capitalist rulers. Federal, state and city governments unleashed troops, cops and gangs of thugs on strikers, cheered on by the bosses’ press. Karl Marx wrote that this mighty class battle “could very well be the point of origin for the creation of a serious workers’ party.” The excerpt below is from “The Railroad Uprisings of 1877,” in American Labor Struggles 1877-1934 by Samuel Yellen. It is one of Pathfinder’s Books of the Month for May. Copyright © 1974. Reprinted by permission from Pathfinder Press.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY SAMUEL YELLEN

The great railroad strikes which broke out spontaneously and spread with the speed of a plague in the summer of 1877 were the expression of a deep and accumulated discontent. Labor outbreaks had been common in the United States before this time, but had been confined to separate localities. Never before had



Rail strikers blockade engines at Martinsburg, West Virginia, in 1877. Karl Marx called their strike “the first uprising against the oligarchy of capital which had developed since the Civil War.” The working class together with oppressed toilers who are Black and exploited farmers would be the class forces of revolution in the U.S., he said.

industry and commerce been confronted with a nation-wide uprising of workers, an uprising so obstinate and bitter that it was crushed only after great bloodshed. The militia of the several states did not suffice; for the first time in the history of the country the federal troops had to be called out during a period of peace in order to suppress strikes. More than a hundred workmen were killed and several hundred badly wounded. For a full week the strikes crowded from the front pages of the newspapers all reports of the war between Russia and Turkey, then in progress, and of the campaign against the Sioux Indians in the Idaho territory. The general public, both workers and employers, became aware that a national labor movement had been born.

Although the strikes were primarily a protest against reductions in wages, they had a more profound origin in the depression that resulted from the panic of 1873. Stimulated by the Civil War, industry and commerce had prospered. For a number of years all kinds of business enterprise had been confidently undertaken. The first transcontinental railroad had been opened in 1869. In the cities, factories had replaced home industry. Immigration had been encouraged and the population had increased. Corporations had sprung up and the foundations for vast fortunes had been laid. This hectic development, however, had been too rapid and was based too often on the wildest gambling and most corrupt scheming. ... When the inevitable crash came, hundreds of thousands were thrown out of employment, and

many thousands lacked food, clothing, shelter, medical attention. ...

The railroads, which had cut wages steadily, prepared for another reduction, in order that freight rates might be lowered. The Pennsylvania Railroad led the way with a 10 per cent cut to take effect June 1. On many other lines — the Erie; Lake Shore; Michigan Southern; Indianapolis and St. Louis; Vandalia; New York Central and Hudson River — a similar reduction was announced for July 1. These notices threw the men, already earning barely enough to support their families, into despair. When they protested against the cuts, their committees were summarily discharged and their small unions dissolved. With thousands of jobless men begging for places, the railroad officials felt certain that the workmen, no matter how intense their dissatisfaction, would be afraid to walk out.

But the railroads failed to calculate the sharp popular feeling against them. Farmers throughout the country resented the high, almost confiscatory freight rates. ... Workers were sullen because of continued wage cuts and unemployment, and the railroads, as employers of the largest number of men, stirred up great ill-will. Besides, scandals like that of the Crédit Mobilier and the Union Pacific had disclosed to the public a fraction of the bribery, corruption, and financial thieving that had gone into the building of the railroads. ...

From the Baltimore and Ohio, the Pennsylvania, the Erie, and the New

York Central roads the “striking mania” rolled westward. Once this stimulus was present, the discontent of railway labor everywhere disclosed itself. Within a week after the first walkout at Camden Junction near Baltimore, strikes had occurred on the Lake Shore; Michigan Central; Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne and Chicago; Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and St. Louis; Vandalia; Ohio and Mississippi; Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati and Indianapolis; Chicago, Alton and St. Louis; Canada Southern; and many lesser roads. A few railroads averted strikes by rescinding the orders for wage reductions, but most of them met the strikers’ demands by calling for police and troops. In all sections of the country the people proclaimed their sympathy with the strikers. ...

Practically all the strikes had been defeated after the two weeks’ struggle from July 16 to August 1, but not before society saw plainly that the land of opportunity, with its traditions of the sanctity of private property and of freedom of contract, had been converted into the battleground for a bitter war between two essentially hostile economic classes. As the early stages of capitalism, in which numerous small competitive industries flourished and the relations between employer and employee were personal and individual, yielded to a more mature stage, that of the combination and monopolization of industry and finance, fundamental changes occurred in the economic structure of society and in the principles on which it was erected. For the first time in its history the country had been swept by a general-strike movement, and workmen had challenged their employers not as discrete local groups, but as a nation-wide mass. ...

[The] strikes in their final stage had to contend against all the military and legal force of the nation.

Nevertheless, the moral effect of the strikes upon the working class was invigorating. A new spirit of labor solidarity was born and made national. The workers understood that the failure of the railroad strikes was due to their want of organization and to the refusal of all branches of railroad labor to act in unison.

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8 The Militant May 24, 2021



# Recognize Palestinian state and Israel

*Róger Calero, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New York mayor, released this statement May 12.*

The latest violence in East Jerusalem, Israel and the Gaza Strip highlights the necessity for the Israeli and Arab governments and the leadership of Palestinian organizations to begin immediate talks, both to end the deadly Gaza-Israel fighting and for recognition of both an independent Palestinian state and of Israel.

The spark for today's crisis is the refusal of the Israeli government to halt attempts to evict 300 Palestinians from 13 households in Sheikh Jarrah, in East Jerusalem. Regardless of who "owns" the homes, Palestinians have lived in them since the 1950s.

While the Israeli government portrays this as a private landlord-tenant dispute, Palestinians rightly fear that allowing the evictions would open the floodgate to more, and to Israeli government refusal to ever accept East Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian state.

The Israeli police's heavy-handed attack with stun grenades and "skunk" water following Ramadan services at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque on Muslim protesters outraged by the threatened evictions only made matters worse. More than 200 were injured.

Arab citizens of Israel protested the evictions and the police repression at the mosque. At the same time, small groups of Arab youth rioted in Lod, Ramle and other cities where Arab and Jewish citizens have lived together for years. They attacked a Jewish synagogue, a Yeshiva, Jewish homes and individual Jews.

Hamas, the reactionary Islamist group that rules Gaza, then fired hundreds of rockets targeting residen-

tial neighborhoods in Israel, killing at least six Israelis — two of them Arab citizens of Israel. The Israeli army retaliated, killing 56 people in Gaza, including 14 children. Shelling back and forth has continued.

My party, the Socialist Workers Party, has explained that if talks on recognizing Israel and an independent Palestine are to succeed, "there is no question that Palestinian representatives would insist on East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine."

The party also insists that successful negotiations must recognize the right of Jews everywhere to take refuge in Israel in face of the global rise today of Jew-hatred and anti-Semitic violence.

Agreements in the last year of the Trump administration in which the governments of Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates established diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv provide an opening to advance this perspective.

The proposed evictions, police attacks on protesters, the anti-Semitic rioting, the deadly attacks by Hamas and Islamic Jihad and Israeli retaliation are setbacks for working people in Israel, Palestine and the region, and a threat to steps toward broader discussions.

Workers and toiling farmers in Israel, Palestine and across the Middle East need to fight for a different course. To organize and defend the class interests and solidarity of working people — whether Palestinian, Jewish, Arab, Kurdish, Turkish, Persian or otherwise, and whatever their religious beliefs — independent of all the capitalist parties and governments. The current crisis shows this course is needed more than ever.

## Andrew Brown Jr.

**Continued from front page**

been arrested? Something is wrong," Glenda Brown, Andrew's aunt, told a May 9 rally.

Demonstrators have called for the arrest of the deputies involved in the shooting and the release of their body camera footage. Protesters have traveled to Elizabeth City from Virginia and other parts of North Carolina to take part in the actions. There have been smaller solidarity actions in other parts of the state.

Authorities allowed Brown's family to view only 20 seconds of the cops' body camera footage last month. On May 6 a judge ruled they would be allowed to see just under 20 minutes.

After seeing that excerpt May 11, Brown's son, Jha'rod Ferebee, said that his father "did not deserve to get killed. In any way, shape, or form, he did not pose any threat at all."

"Twenty seconds, not enough. Twenty minutes, not enough," Glenda Brown said May 9. "We want to see the whole tape."

Under North Carolina law a judge has to order the release of footage from body-worn cameras. In this case Judge Jeffrey Foster refused the Brown family's request after authorities argued it would jeopardize their investigation. Since then the family has called for the law to be changed.

Under pressure from ongoing demonstrations, various politicians, including Gov. Roy Cooper, have backed those calls. Changing the law would effect other cases in the state involving African Americans who died in police and prison custody.

Despite the lack of looting, arson or violence at demonstrations, a curfew was imposed by city authorities. Classes at Elizabeth City State University were shut down and students were left to study online. Students at one dormitory were made to leave so 13 police officers from out of town could be housed there. That arrangement was ended when it became public.

During one demonstration against Brown's killing, legal observers were arrested after being pulled out of their car. Charges against them were later dropped.

The curfew has since been lifted, but a state of emergency is in place ahead of possible release of the body camera footage. Permits are now required for each demonstration. National organizations opposing these restrictions include the NAACP and the American Civil Liberties Union. Clergy led a demonstration May 8, with over 100 representatives from around the region.

Protesters say they'll continue marching.

## Steelworkers stand up to ATI union busting

**Continued from front page**

other mills over the last decade. As part of their attacks on the union, bosses locked out the union workers in 2015-16.

At the same time, they've opened a large nonunion complex in North Carolina, with over 4,500 workers in the Charlotte area alone. Workers say the majority of ATI plants are nonunion today.

The union met with ATI May 6 and presented a revised offer, but instead of negotiating, the company withdrew to "caucus," and hours later notified the union they didn't plan to return. They did explain, the union said the next day, that "one of their main objectives was not about the cost of health care, but it was about making sure bargaining unit employees were paying an increased portion of the cost of health care."

The bosses insist they are offering good wage increases. But they also say these offers are "based upon savings generated from other proposals," including increasing the workers' costs for health care.

"This is just nothing but corporate greed," striker Steve McCullough, a laid-off laborer, told the *Militant* at the picket line here. "They are literally sitting on almost a billion dollars and they're crying hard times."

"They want these jobs to be just like Walmart, with no stable workforce, just high turnover," he said. "Imagine if you're young" and ATI gets its way, "you face a job with no vacation, no pension, and high health care costs."

Scott Nye, a slitter-operator with 28 years at the Louisville plant, told the *Militant* on the picket line that health care was a key issue. "They want a two-tier system. They want new hires to go into a higher premium," he said, adding the company refuses to agree to put a cap on what workers have to pay.

"If there's no cap on the cost," striker Steve Benematti said, "we'll stand out here till the cows come home."

At the Washington picket line, Randy Denman said, "The company says I don't pay my share. But I have to pay \$6,000 a year" in deductibles.

The company claims the reason they don't want fixed-cost health care is "so employees will benefit from any reduction in overall health care costs."

Denman said it's a fiction health care costs will drop, "Health care costs go up 7% every year, on average."

Solidarity for the strike is crucial. Local 1046 at the Louisville plant has called a solidarity rally there for

May 15. Strikers from other locals are planning to attend. ATI has refused to set severance and retirement packages for workers facing the looming shutdown at Louisville unless and until the contract is settled.

Strikers are determined to help each other and build solidarity with other struck plants. During the 2015-16 lockout, "each week we took a different local, and visited them," Karl Brendle, the former local president at Louisville, said. "We made it to nearly all the locked-out plants. It was very uplifting."

Send messages of support or strike fund contributions to USW Local 7139 at 1505 Jefferson Ave., Washington, PA 15301, or USW Local 1046, 925 W. St. Louis Ct., Louisville, OH 44641.

## Striking miners rally, reach out for solidarity

**Continued from front page**

ers, family members, union retirees and other supporters to Tannehill State Park here May 5. The strike has entered its second month.

UMWA coal miners who work at Warrior Met's two underground mines, coal preparation plant and central shop struck April 1 when their contract expired. They're fighting to regain ground lost in 2016 when major concessions in wages, benefits and working conditions were forced on the union. Jim Walter Resources, the former owner, went belly up and its creditors used a federal bankruptcy court to demand union concessions or they would close the mine.

UMWA President Cecil Roberts spoke, along with William Londrigan, president of the Kentucky AFL-CIO; West Virginia American Federation of Teachers President Fred Albert; and others.

"Stay strong," Seth Skalnit, from United Steelworkers Local 1013 at U.S. Steel's pipe mill in Fairfield, told the strikers. Other unions "in this community have labor contracts coming up and we know [the bosses] are watching like sharks — hoping there's blood in the water. We're standing with you." Members of Local 1013 have been visiting the Warrior Met picket lines to show solidarity and gather food and other supplies to aid the strike.

"It means a lot to us when other union members come to the picket lines," Lawrence Green, who works underground at Warrior Met's No. 7 mine, told the *Militant* May 8.

Some strikers are having to get other jobs, while continuing to staff the picket lines for at least two shifts a week. "I work on cars, so I can do that while still picketing, to bring in some extra income," Green said. A few people have gotten jobs at the UMWA-organized Oak Grove Mine, in nearby Bessemer.

"The company is doing their best to starve us out," UMWA member Steve Mote told the *Militant* May 8. He works at the coal preparation plant as a washer control room operator.

Some miners' families have formed a support group to help deal with medical bills and other problems workers face during the strike. Chelsea Prestridge, whose husband is on strike, told WVTM TV in Birmingham that her family had a dental emergency that left them owing thousands in medical bills. The UMWA is paying for major medical insurance for strikers and their families, but that doesn't cover many medical expenses families face.

The UMWA has set up a Strike Aid Fund to back the miners, who also receive weekly strike benefits. All donation checks should be made out to UMWA 2021 Strike Aid Fund and sent to UMWA Strike Aid Fund, P.O. Box 513, Dumfries, VA 22026. Messages of support can also be sent to UMWA District 20, 21922 Hwy. 216 (Miners' Memorial Parkway), McCalla, AL 35111. Email: umwadistrict20@bellsouth.net. Tel.: (205) 477-7500. Fax: (205) 477-0004.

*Maurice Williams contributed to this article.*