

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Protests demand:  
End US embargo of Cuba!  
— PAGE 6

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 85/NO. 34 SEPTEMBER 20, 2021

## ‘Workers need to organize our own party, a labor party,’

BY BETSEY STONE

PLACERVILLE, Calif. — Dennis Richter, Socialist Workers Party candidate for governor of California, and SWP campaigners visited towns in the north of the state hit by wildfires Aug. 23. Since it began in July, the Dixie Fire has laid waste to nearly 900,000 acres, destroyed 1,200 buildings and wiped out the town of Greenville.

Campaign supporters knocked on doors and distributed a statement pointing to the culpability of Pacific Gas & Electric and the capitalist profit system for the devastating toll of this and other fires.

“We need to organize, strengthen our trade unions, and fight to nationalize PG&E and Southern California Edison under workers control,” Richter told *Militant* subscriber Julie Whited when they met over coffee in Chico.

Whited lost everything in the Camp Fire in 2018, the deadliest fire in California history and one of many PG&E admits it caused. She is working with  
**Continued on page 3**

## Organize to back Nabisco, Warrior Met coal strikes!



Militant/Dan Fein

Chicago unionists, Nabisco strikers rally Sept. 4 to spread word about national labor battle.

### Winning back wages, gains lost in 2016 key to miners

BY KAITLIN ESTILL

BROOKWOOD, Ala. — Over 1,100 members of the United Mine Workers of America have been on strike against Warrior Met Coal here since April 1, fighting to regain historic wages and working conditions  
**Continued on page 4**

### Nabisco strikers in 5 states resist boss takeback drive

BY ILONA GERSH

CHICAGO — Chanting “What do we want? A contract!” and “No contract! No cookies,” 200 strikers, members of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union Local 1, their supporters and fellow unionists rallied outside Nabisco’s flagship bakery here Sept. 4. The action was initiated by Chicago Jobs With Justice. At times honks of support from passing-by drivers on Kedzie Avenue drowned out speakers. Workers have been on the picket line 24/7 since the strike began Aug. 19.

Striking Bakery Workers union mem-  
**Continued on page 6**

## Social disaster from hurricane is a product of capitalist greed

BY SETH GALINSKY

The deaths and social disaster left in the wake of Hurricane Ida in Louisiana, New York, New Jersey and elsewhere are the result of the workings of capitalism and the class-divided realities it imposes on working people.

The liberal media, “progressive” politicians and middle-class radicals claim the disaster was caused by “climate change.” But that has nothing to do with the negligence and lack of preparation by government at all levels or the deadly consequences of wretched housing; inadequate flood protection; lack of generators, shelters and storm-resistant electric grids; and virtually nonexistent transportation and evacuation procedures.

The greed, profit drive and scorn for working people by the capitalist class and its government — Democratic and Republican politicians alike — is what prepared the way for the still-unfolding catastrophe.

President Joseph Biden briefly visited  
**Continued on page 7**

## Build protests to defend women’s right to abortion, repeal Texas law



NurPhoto via AP/Reginald Mathalone

Houston protest Sept. 5 hits new gov’t attack on women’s right to choose to have an abortion.

BY GEORGE CHALMERS

DALLAS — The U.S. Supreme Court voted 5-4 to reject a temporary injunction requested by abortion providers to block a Texas law that went into effect Sept. 1. The law bans most abortions after six weeks of pregnancy. Unlike similar “heartbeat” laws adopted in other states, the Texas law authorizes

any individual who chooses, as well as the state, to take steps to enforce it.

The unprecedented law allows anyone to seek damages of \$10,000 or more from doctors, nurses, clinic volunteers and counselors, family members or *anyone* who they deem helped a woman obtain an abortion or raise funds to cover

**Continued on page 4**

## Back Toll truckers strike in Australia! Organize to fight boss, gov’t attacks

BY BOB AIKEN

SYDNEY — Over 7,000 truck drivers went on a national 24-hour strike Aug. 27 against Toll Group, one of the major trucking companies here and internationally. They are fighting for a new contract that will defend jobs from the bosses’ plans to contract out more work and win a much-needed wage raise. The members of the Transport Workers Union voted by 94% to strike.

Thousands of workers at other major trucking companies are also preparing for strike action. Toll bosses claim the truckers are “playing politics with people’s lives and jobs” by striking during the COVID-19 pandemic. The TWU is just trying

**Continued on page 2**

## What is driving the employers to attack working people today?

BY TERRY EVANS

The disastrous impact of the worldwide capitalist crisis of production and trade accelerated sharply at the start of the pandemic when government lockdowns led bosses to throw millions out of work.

With competition among workers for jobs still severe today, employers are moving to attack wages and working conditions of those seeking to get back to work. More two-tier contracts,

**Continued on page 9**

### Inside

Massive rally demands India gov’t repeal anti-farmer laws 3

US military exits Afghanistan, Taliban forms government 4

SWP: Oppose US military assaults cuts on democratic rights 9

—On the picket line, p. 5—

Quebec meatpackers approve contract, end four-month strike

Nurses strike in Denmark broken by state intervention

# Australia: Back Toll truckers!

Continued from front page to “show off in front of their union mates,” Alan Beacham, head of Toll subsidiary Global Express, told ABC News.

“Toll workers have been forced to take the last resort option to go on strike this week because their jobs are being smashed,” TWU National Secretary Michael Kaine responded. “It is no coincidence that workers across several major transport companies are facing the same attacks.”

Bosses’ cost-cutting is hammering workers across the whole transport supply chain.

Struggles like that of the truck drivers “deserve the support of all workers,” Linda Harris, Communist League candidate for Canterbury-Bankstown Council, said in a statement supporters are distributing. “They set an example for how we can unite, strengthen our unions and defend ourselves.”

Working people in Australia as else-



Militant/Baskaran Appu

Linda Harris, Communist League candidate for Canterbury-Bankstown Council.

where today face a deepening economic and social crisis caused by capitalism. Wages are stagnating as prices skyrocket and employers step up their assault on jobs and working conditions.

At the same time, Australia’s imperialist rulers are pressing their class interests worldwide, in relation to China and across the South Pacific. Canberra’s troops have backed Washington’s forces in Iraq and on military exercises in South Korea. Australian soldiers were deployed in the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan from its outset in 2001, with bipartisan support of successive Liberal-National and Labor Party governments.

With the collapse of the government in Kabul and withdrawal of Australian troops from Afghanistan, “a spotlight has been put on the course of Australia’s imperialist rulers,” Harris said. “The 20-year war has been a disaster for working people.” This has been a major discussion among workers on the job and elsewhere. “The Communist League’s explanation that the working class needs our own foreign policy gets a good response,” Harris said.

## Different class response to pandemic

There are two different class approaches to the pandemic, Harris said. Growing numbers of workers are losing their jobs or being forced to stay home with the latest Delta variant spread. “It is the criminal failure of the Australian government to prepare a massive vaccination effort from the beginning that has resulted in the devastation of the lives of working people,” she said.

The Communist League “calls for



Australian Broadcasting Corporation News/David Weber

Toll Group truck drivers strike to defend their jobs, as thousands more truckers plan strike action. Union battle takes place as Australian military withdraws from Afghanistan, and soldiers, police patrol in Sydney to enforce workers’ “compliance” with COVID quarantines.

our unions to lead a fight to get workers back to work and for a government-financed public works program to provide jobs at union-scale wages,” Harris said. “Only by getting back on the job are we able to work together to defend working conditions. Our unions should organize for all workers to be vaccinated and fight to share vaccines with toilers worldwide.”

When the Delta strain first appeared in May, less than 3% of the Australian population over 16 years old was vaccinated against the virus. With Canberra’s backing, state and territory governments have imposed lockdowns and state border restrictions to try and contain the new outbreak. Payroll numbers dropped by 5% in New South Wales in the first three weeks of July after the lockdown here, a loss of some 210,000 jobs.

## Rulers target working class

The rulers’ “targeting working class neighborhoods,” Harris said, is “part of a relentless offensive against us. They blame ‘deplorable’ workers for not complying with their health orders, and for not getting vaccinated, even as supplies are still inadequate.”

As the federal government belatedly tries to expand the vaccine rollout, only 38% are fully vaccinated as of Sept. 5. The capitalist rulers have set a national goal of 70% fully vaccinated by November, and only then do

they say draconian restrictions and interstate travel controls will begin to be lifted.

Australian Defence Force soldiers, now totaling 800, have been deployed in Sydney since Aug. 2 to help the police enforce “compliance,” and are now being deployed in western New South Wales, where Aborigines are a high proportion of the population. The troops work with police to patrol streets, parks and shopping centers and to monitor workers who have been ordered to isolate at home. ADF troops are also being used to help enforce Queensland state government restrictions at the border with New South Wales.

Twelve predominantly working-class areas in west and southwest Sydney, including Canterbury-Bankstown where Harris is running, have been placed under harsher “stay-at-home” orders. Thousands of fines levied, a 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew imposed, and permits are required for workers “authorized” to go to work.

“Workers need to break from the bosses’ parties — both Liberal and Labor,” Harris said. “We need to build a fighting working-class party that can chart a course to take political power out of the hands of the capitalist rulers, as the Cuban people have done, to form a workers and farmers government to carry out a socialist revolution in the interests of all those who are exploited and oppressed.”

# THE MILITANT

## Stewardship of land, labor falls to working class

Amid hysterical predictions of imminent catastrophe from “climate change,” the *Militant* tells the truth. It is capitalism’s profit-driven disorder that threatens toilers, land, air and sea. Only the fight for workers and farmers governments can save both the environment, humanity.



Militant/Tony Lane

Malcolm Jarrett, who ran as SWP vice presidential candidate, speaks at 2019 hearing on U.S. Steel poisoning in Allegheny County.

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

# 'Workers need our own party'

Continued from front page

a lawyer to get compensation, but has yet to receive anything.

The air in Placerville, a town of 10,000, is filled with smoke from the nearby Caldor Fire that has burned over 214,000 acres and threatens towns around Lake Tahoe.

"The working class has the power to make a revolution and replace the rule of the rich," SWP campaigner Leslie Dork told Kevin Haines, an assistant nurse who talked with Dork and campaigner Eric Simpson at his home.

Haines said the evacuation of co-workers has increased the workload on remaining hospital staff. "The pandemic has revealed the problems with the for-profit system of 'health care' in this country," said Dork, who is also a nurse. "Nurses using their unions to fight for increased staffing elsewhere in the country should be supported."

Haines subscribed to the *Militant* and purchased five books by Socialist Workers Party leaders.

## Conditions facing farmworkers

Richter and supporters campaigned in Salinas, a town in the agricultural valley south of San Francisco Aug. 24. When he knocked on the door of Socorro Arreola, she responded with a big smile. Arreola said she is a retired farmworker and still gets called by farmworkers with problems fighting the conditions they face, including workers forced to labor 12 hours with only one break.

"Those of us who work in the cities are treated the same," Richter said. "Workers everywhere need to organize to defend ourselves."

"Amnesty is what we need!" Arreola responded.

"Yes," said Richter, "Amnesty for all undocumented immigrants in the U.S. is needed to unite the working-class movement and to cut across divisions the bosses use. It would put us in a stronger position to fight together with small farmers for a workers and farmers government."

Arreola told him she had been to Cuba where she witnessed the shortages caused by Washington's economic embargo. "My party supports Cuba's socialist revolution," Richter said, "and opposes the economic and political war being waged against Cuba."

After more discussion Arreola subscribed to the *Militant* and got the Spanish edition of *In Defense of the US Working Class* by SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters.

On Aug. 25 Richter and campaign supporters talked with oil refinery workers, members of the United Steelworkers, at the gate of the Martinez Refining Company. They explained that more solidarity is needed to be organized with the locked-out refinery workers, members of the Steelworkers union in Beaumont, Texas, and striking coal miners in Alabama. A dozen workers got issues of the *Militant*, often pitching in a few extra dollars.



Militant/Rachele Fruit

Working people face "a crisis of a social system that defends the interests and profits of the wealthy class," Sam Manuel, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Atlanta City Council president, said during Sept. 1 candidates' debate at Clark Atlanta University.

Mary Martin reports that the SWP in the Twin Cities took another step in reaching working people in Minnesota with the opening of a new campaign headquarters in Minneapolis Aug. 28.

## SWP opens new hall in Minnesota

Party members and supporters from Chicago joined a weekend of campaign activities and attended the first campaign forum at the new hall, featuring SWP candidates Doug Nelson for mayor and David Rosenfeld for City Council, Ward 12.

Dennis Cherry Sr. was one of several people in the workers' district near the hall who had helped get the SWP candidates on the ballot. When Rosenfeld and Martin returned to visit him, Cherry congratulated the party on getting its new hall. Rosenfeld explained workers needed to develop habits of solidarity and to back each other's struggles against our common enemy, the ruling capitalist class.

Cherry, who is African American, recalled that when he was growing up in the 1960s there was more unity of purpose among African Americans but today he sees destruction and preying on each other from within the Black community all too often.

"How will we overcome this?" he asked. Rosenfeld pointed to Malcolm X's insistence that to be effective and disciplined fighters, workers need to clean themselves up. Malcolm had to reject and put behind him his life as a petty street criminal before becoming a revolutionary. He said he was not trying to wake people up to their oppression but to their self-worth and fighting capacities.

## Candidates debate

"My campaign calls for a break from what is presented as 'politics.' I will be organizing solidarity with the struggles of working people that are going on, not only in this city, but across the country. That's where real change can take place," Sam Manuel, SWP candidate for Atlanta City Council president, told an audience at a Sept. 1 candidates' debate sponsored by the Department of Political

Science at Clark Atlanta University.

Manuel said he joined a rally at the picket line of Nabisco strikers in Norcross, Georgia, Aug. 30 and would be walking with picketing coal miners in Brookwood, Alabama, Sept. 3-4.

Asked how he would address the gap in wages and wealth between Blacks and Caucasians, Manuel explained how the Black-led working-class civil rights movement showed people were transformed in struggle as they fought to change the system. "Those victories were won in the streets before President Johnson, or any other politician, signed some legislation 'giving us' these rights."

He was also asked about the incompetence and failures of city government.

"The crisis we face, whether it's clean water or garbage collection or housing, is a crisis of a social system we live under that defends the interests and profits of the wealthy class," Manuel said. He pointed to what workers and farmers in Cuba accomplished after they made a socialist revolution, and began exerting increasing control over all aspects of their lives.

Two students picked up subscriptions to the *Militant* and one got a copy of *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* by Jack Barnes, SWP national secretary.

To find out more or to join the SWP or Communist League campaigning, contact the party branch nearest you in the directory on page 8.

## Massive rally demands India gov't repeal anti-farmer laws



Reuters/Adnan Abidi

More than half a million Indian farmers rallied Sept. 5 in Muzaffarnagar in the state of Uttar Pradesh, above, calling for Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government to repeal three agricultural laws that will open them up to deeper exploitation by large corporations and threaten to destroy their livelihoods.

For almost nine months, large numbers of farmers and their supporters have been fighting these laws. Tens of thousands rotate from their villages to attend protest encampments on the main highways into the capital, New Delhi.

Some demonstrators in Muzaffarnagar chanted "Farmer-laborer unity!" Farm leaders are urging unionists to join a one-day nationwide strike against the laws Sept. 27.

The Supreme Court ordered the indefinite suspension of the laws in January, but that hasn't stopped farmers and their supporters continuing to fight for their repeal.

The new laws would dismantle protections working farmers have had for decades through a government-guaranteed minimum price for some staple grains. Modi's directives would allow corporations to buy farm produce at much lower prices, which will drive many working farmers deeper into debt or off their land altogether.

Under the old scheme a government agency buys rice and wheat from farmers and sells it at subsidized prices to 67% of the country's 1.38 billion people. But millions who have lost their jobs during repeated pandemic shutdowns are excluded from the food subsidies, because they're not included in the long outdated 2011 census. And millions of migrant workers aren't eligible for a ration card.

— ROY LANDERSEN

## Socialist Workers Party Candidate Stops in San Leandro

By Jim Knowles

San Leandro Times

The Socialist Workers Party candidate for governor of California made a campaign stop in San Leandro last week. Dennis Richter talked with voters by going door-to-door and at a stop in front of the Walmart on Davis Street on Aug. 22.

"We had a great time talking for a couple of hours, talking to people with all kinds of opinions," Richter said about his stop in San Leandro. "We talked about the issues working people face. Everybody has something they're facing and they wanted to know about solutions, what we can do."

Richter blames PG&E for some of the wildfires and calls for the nationalization of the company under workers' control. He's campaigning for a federally financed public works program to build housing, hospitals, schools and mass transportation to bring millions back to work at union wages.

Richter said his position on the recall election is that he's not telling people to vote for or



Socialist Workers Party candidate for governor Dennis Richter (right) talks with a voter in front of the Walmart store on Davis Street in San Leandro on Aug. 22.

Reprinted from Sept. 2 edition of the *San Leandro Times*.

# Back Alabama miners strike

Continued from front page

they won in past battles. The strike occurs amid a pro-boss media blackout and fierce resistance by the anti-union bosses. Solidarity from unions and workers in the area and beyond has been crucial to their resolve to fight until they are successful.

“We’ll be here one day longer than the company will,” Haeden Wright, a leader of the UMWA auxiliary organizing support and relief efforts for striking miners’ families, told ABC News Aug. 6. “I don’t think we’re giving up. We’re already planning a toy drive for Christmas.”

The union miners are fighting to win back much of what they lost when Jim Walter Resources, the former mine owner, went bankrupt in 2015. Under court proceedings, the largest outstanding company creditors, led by BlackRock and other New York hedge funds, told workers they would close down the company’s mines and processing centers unless they agreed to significant concessions.

This included up to a \$6-an-hour pay cut, higher health care costs and a significant reduction in paid holidays. The new bosses imposed a draconian attendance policy of four strikes and you’re fired. The only “valid” reason for missing work was an immediate death in the family.

## Miners resist concession demands

The bosses told workers that after production resumed and income came in, they would restore some of what miners gave up. The mine is now turning a considerable profit, but when new contract talks began, the bosses instead demanded new concessions. The miners said no and went out on strike.

The coal mined out of Warrior Met is metallurgical coal, used in the production of steel, in high demand in the U.S. and abroad as steel bosses jockey for markets and profits.

In addition to bringing bottled water and ice to the picket lines and solidarity from our co-workers, this *Militant* worker-correspondent and others visited with area workers on their doorsteps to discuss the importance of supporting the strike.

## — CALENDAR —

### NEW YORK

**New York**  
**No to Statehood! Yes to Decolonization! In Solidarity with the March in Puerto Rico. In the Spirit of Don Pedro Albizu Campos.** Speakers, poets and music. Sun., Sept. 12, 2-5 p.m. Lower East Side, corner of 12th St. and Ave. C.

## — MILITANT LABOR FORUMS —

### ILLINOIS

**Chicago**  
**Afghanistan: The Weakening of U.S. Imperialism. The Working Class Needs Its Own Foreign Policy.** Speaker: Dean Hazlewood, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Sept. 17, 7:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 1858 W. Cermak Rd., 2nd floor. Tel.: (312) 792-6160.

### TEXAS

**Dallas**  
**Fight New Law That Restricts Women’s Right to Choose Abortion!** Sat., Sept. 18, 7 p.m. Donation: \$5. 1005 W. Jefferson Blvd., Suite 207. Tel.: (469) 513-1051.

“I realized a long time ago, if I don’t stand up for and with my fellow countrymen, no one will be left to stand up with me,” Bryan Shields, a Chick-fil-A worker and handyman in nearby Cottdale, told me. He said he hadn’t heard about the miners’ fight, a reflection of the news blackout. He asked what he could do to help.

“People need to learn their story,” I said. “These miners need solidarity, not only financial support but to know other working people appreciate their example of strength and stand with them.” I showed him coverage of the fight in the *Militant*. He got a subscription and *Are They Rich Because They’re Smart?* by Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes.

We stayed at a small hotel, where we met La Toya Henson, who works there. “I know a lot of people who are coal miners. Being asked to take a wage cut to save a company, that’s a hard decision to make. But the miners did it and now they just want what they had back,” she said. “And these corporate types would never dream of taking a cut. They just don’t care about workers. And if they can push these coal miners around that sets a bad precedent for all of us.”

Along with workers, coal bosses around the country are following this labor struggle closely. Peabody Energy is currently in contract talks with the UMWA over reopening their nearby Shoal Creek mine.

Peabody bosses are looking for workers. Strikers said they’ve visited some of the picket lines looking to hire. They hope this local competition will put pressure on Warrior Met. A tentative contract agreement between Peabody and the UMWA will be vot-

# Build protests to defend women’s right to choose abortion

Continued from front page

the procedure. The only exceptions are in cases of life-threatening medical emergencies, but not rape or incest.

Most women aren’t even aware they’re pregnant until after the sixth week.

The court’s majority decision not to block the law explicitly made no ruling on its constitutionality, saying its ruling was made only on procedural grounds. It also says women have access to legal protection in Texas state law. While some liberal media and politicians claim this decision means the fight for abortion rights is over, in fact the new Texas statute poses the need to step up the defense of women’s rights.

In a dissent joined by Justices Stephen Breyer and Elena Kagan, Chief Justice John Roberts agreed there were complicated procedural questions involved, but said the court should have suspended the Texas statute. He added that the court’s decision “is emphatic in making clear that it cannot be understood as sustaining the constitutionality of the law at issue.”

Protests against the law were organized around the state as it came into effect, including in Austin, Houston, Dallas, Edinburg and San Antonio. “We’re not going to stop fighting for our rights and for our bodies,” Valerie Beck told the press at the action in Austin.

“You aren’t stopping abortions, just making them unsafe,” read signs held at a protest of 60 in Austin.

“More actions are needed,” Socialist Workers Party campaign state chair Aly-

## US military exits Afghanistan, Taliban forms gov’t



Mukhtar wafayee

The last U.S. troops and planes flew out of Afghanistan Aug. 30, leaving the Taliban in control of the country. Two decades of war by the U.S. rulers and their allies left hundreds of thousands of Afghans killed or injured and millions displaced, as well as some 2,500 U.S. soldiers killed. The U.S. war created worse conditions for workers and farmers to fight for their interests against the capitalists and landlords who exploit them.

Some 7,000 U.S. and British troops occupied Kabul’s airport to cover a hurried flight from the country. An Islamic State suicide bomber killed at least 169 Afghan civilians and 13 U.S. troops outside the airport Aug. 26. Three days later U.S. forces unleashed a retaliatory drone strike in Kabul, which killed a civilian family of 10 nearby. Showing the U.S. rulers’ contempt for the Afghan people, Joint Chief of Staffs Chair Gen. Mark Milley called the attack “righteous.”

Demonstrations by opponents of the Taliban’s rule have broken out, including by women’s groups demanding rights trampled under during the Taliban’s previous despotic rule. They’ve faced attacks by Taliban forces.

The Taliban government rules over a war-battered economy deprived of most overseas financing. Food prices are rising sharply.

— ROY LANDERSEN

ed on soon, the union said.

Support and solidarity are needed! Help spread the word about the strike! All checks should be made out to UMWA 2021 Strike Fund and sent to

UMWA Strike Fund, P.O. Box 513, Dumfries, VA 22026. Messages of support can be sent to District 20, 21922 Hwy. 216, McCalla, AL 35111. Email: umwadistrict20@bellsouth.net.

son Kennedy told the *Militant*. “SWP candidates across the country fight to defend clinics that provide family planning, including the right to safe and secure abortion. Defending this right is fundamental to a woman’s control of her own life and to the fight for full social, economic and political equality.”

“We need to organize independently of the Democratic and Republican parties who have done nothing to organize to fight growing attacks on women’s right to choose,” Kennedy said.

A “sanctuary for the unborn” campaign organized by East Texas Right-to-Life has resulted in almost 30 Texas towns adopting ordinances banning abortion. Planned Parenthood in Lubbock closed its abortion services in June after a judge ruled he did not have any legal grounds to stop a so-called sanctuary ordinance there.

In 1973 the Supreme Court, in its *Roe v. Wade* decision, legalized abortion, allowing the procedure up to the point when a fetus can sustain life outside the womb, then considered to be around 24 weeks. But from the moment the law was passed opponents of women’s rights have pushed new laws and legal challenges seeking to restrict that right, close family care clinics, harass health care providers and enact more and more limits on women’s access to exercise their right to choose.

Restrictions were made easier because of the character and content of the *Roe v. Wade* decision. It was based on medical criteria centered on “fetal

viability,” and required a “doctor’s consent.” This limited abortion to a “health issue”— not a fundamental right based on women’s “equal protection of the law” guaranteed by the Constitution’s 14th Amendment.

Some 90% of U.S. counties had no abortion provider as of 2017. Since then several more clinics have been forced to close, hitting working-class women and women in rural areas especially hard.

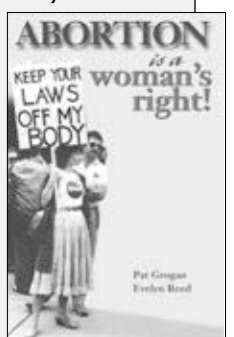
“The road forward today is to mobilize supporters of women’s rights in a sustained educational and action campaign to expand support for women’s right to choose,” Kennedy said. “This fight is in the interests of the entire working class.”

Nationwide protests have been called for Oct. 2 by Women’s March and over 90 other organizations in defense of reproductive rights.

## Abortion Is a Woman’s Right!

by Pat Grogan, Evelyn Reed

Why abortion rights are central not only to the fight for the full emancipation of women, but to forging a united and fighting labor movement.—\$5



pathfinderpress.com

# —ON THE PICKET LINE—

## Quebec meatpackers approve contract, end four-month strike

VALLEE-JONCTION, Quebec — After a hard-fought, four-month-long strike here, the 1,000 members of the Union of Olymel Workers at Vallee-Jonction voted by 78% to accept a new contract Aug. 31. They have seen their union strengthened through the battle and made some well-deserved gains. Olymel is the biggest pork producer in Canada.

The strike began April 28 when the packinghouse workers walked out. They were fighting to get back concessions given up in 2007 — including a 38% wage cut, elimination of their pension plan, and reduced sick days — when bosses threatened to close the plant.

A key demand was a major wage increase.

Another central issue was the bosses' attempt to get the workers to accept the introduction of 10-hour afternoon shifts without overtime pay. Workers rejected that one by 82% Aug. 9.

During the strike the union organized protests in this town and in Quebec City, 40 miles north of here. They brought solidarity to striking workers at the nearby Exceldor poultry plant. And won support from other workers and area unions.

The boss media waged an anti-union campaign centered on the possibility that tens of thousands of pigs would be euthanized because the strike idled the factory and they couldn't be processed.

The workers rejected a tentative agreement negotiated between Olymel and the union executive by 57% Aug. 14.

The company then threatened the entire afternoon shift of 500 workers would be shut down if a settlement wasn't reached by Aug. 29. "The company makes threats like this every time," Louis Laforest, who works in slaughter with 25 years in the plant, told the *Militant*. This time some workers took the threat seriously.

A tentative agreement, which included more flexibility for scheduling summer vacations, was accepted by the union membership. Workers will receive a 26.4% increase over the six years of the agreement, including 10% the first year, as well as a signing bonus of 65 Canadian dollars (\$52) for each year of seniority. This comes after 14 years where a majority of workers' wages increased only CA\$1.13 an hour.

The company agreed to introduce a new pension plan and to contribute more to workers' health insurance.

An important component of the strike was participation by immigrant workers, many from Mauritius and Madagascar, who work on two-year contracts that deny them the right to look for other work. "Everybody was really united to have better conditions," one worker from Madagascar told the *Militant*.

"I think the union is stronger compared to the 2015 negotiations," Etienne Vachon, who works in the cutting room, told the *Militant*. "This time the union stuck it out. Confidence in the union has been strengthened."

—Joe Young

## British Columbia hospital union wins end to contracting out

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — "We never gave up hope," said Ratna Tithh, a dietary aide at St. Paul's Hospital here. Her union, the Hospital Employees' Union, had just succeeded

in reversing the bosses' contracting out of food provision and cleaning jobs at British Columbia's public hospitals. On Aug. 30 the provincial government announced that by March the 4,000 workers doing these jobs will all have been hired directly by public hospitals, with raises over CAS3 and improved benefits.

The union had carried out a series of roadside demonstrations at five major hospitals in this city's region and on Vancouver Island July 20, following earlier protests at offices of elected officials.

Some 8,000 hospital cleaners, kitchen, laundry and other workers were fired in 2004 by the provincial government, which replaced or rehired them as contract workers. "I went from earning \$18.10 an hour with benefits and pension to \$10.15 an hour. I lost all my benefits," said Catalina Samson, a dietary aide at Vancouver General Hospital.

Melanie Allen, a member of the Hospital Employees' Union local at Vancouver General, told the *Militant*, "Organizing a fight was a huge factor" in winning this victory. She said she looked forward to the return of cleaners and dietary workers to her local.

—Michael Barker, Hospital Employees' Union member

## Nurses strike in Denmark broken by state intervention

After 10 weeks on the picket line, and with the number of strikers growing, thousands of nurses in Denmark were ordered back to work by the government. The workers, members of the Danish Nurses Union, walked off the job June 19, demanding higher wages and increased staffing. The strike began after nurses voted by a 2-1 margin to reject an unsatisfactory wage deal negotiated by union officials. It was the longest strike in Denmark in 50 years.

The government, a coalition led by the Social Democratic Party, pushed an emergency law through parliament Aug. 27, ending the strike and implementing the 5.02% wage agreement over three years that the unionists had rejected.

The strike won widespread support and solidarity from working people,



Union of Olymel Workers at Vallee-Jonction was strengthened and the 1,000 packinghouse workers won hard-fought gains during four-month strike. Above, rally July 7 in Quebec City.

even in the face of a concerted media campaign blaming nurses for postponement of thousands of procedures. "Most people understand why we are on strike, have wished us luck, and said 'Good fight!'" Malin Theilmann, a home care worker, told the media. But, she said, winning our demands is hard because the law says, "We are not fully allowed to strike."

The majority of nurses are women, and their pay is less than for other government workers whose jobs require similar levels of education.

—Emma Johnson

## Quebec ferry workers strike for pay, jobs, time off

SOREL, Quebec — Hundreds of ferry workers went on strike at five Saint Lawrence River crossings in Quebec on the Labour Day weekend. From here, northeast of Montreal, to Matane near the Atlantic coast, members of the United Steelworkers and Association of Ferry Workers set up lively pickets at the terminals for two days. The ferry workers are an affiliate of Quebec's Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN).

"We deserve a good wage," Annie Lévesque, who has worked as a seaman for six months, told two Communist League campaigners who brought

solidarity to the strikers here Sept. 4. "I haven't seen my kids all summer. We do lots of overtime because there aren't enough staff. This summer I had one weekend off."

These workers "are among the least well-paid of all the public sector," Nathalie Arguin, president of the CSN's public-sector workers federation, told the press. Marine engineering and navigation officers, the Steelworkers-organized strikers, earn an average of CA\$8-\$10 an hour less than their private-sector counterparts.

The ferry in Sorel brings commuters across the river, as well as freight for construction and other industries. Strikers said they take very seriously their responsibility for the safety of passengers and others. Several described recent life-saving rescues of a man suffering a severe allergic attack in the parking lot, and a water rescue of a man drowning after falling from his surf board.

While some issues have been settled, conflicts over overtime pay, shift premiums and increased benefits remain. Strikers are also looking to make full time a job in Matane that bosses have classified as "temporary" for years. Negotiations have dragged on for 18 months without a contract.

—Katy LeRougetel

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



September 23, 1996

Picket lines, demonstrations and educational meetings are needed now to protest the Clinton administration's escalating war moves against Iraq. The rulers of the United States — loyally represented by the Democratic White House and the Republican-led Congress — are bombing Iraq not to defend Kurds or the Iraqi people but to protect their own profits and imperial power in the region.

Iraq is a sovereign country. It belongs to the Iraqi people, not to Washington, London or Paris, whose warplanes are acting as military enforcers over almost half of Iraq's territory.

Clinton has been a consistent war president, from the bombing of Iraq in January 1993 to recent threats against Cuba, Iran and Libya.

Washington should get all its troops, warplanes and warships out of the Middle East and lift the economic sanctions against Iraq, Iran and Libya.



September 24, 1971

"We are men. We are not beasts, and we do not intend to be beaten or driven as such" — from the Sept. 9 statement of the Attica rebels.

From Attica, New York, last week the rebellion shook this country to its very marrow. Within hours after the brutal slaughter of dozens of helpless victims of ruling-class "justice" in America, the selfsame rulers were exposed. The hostages had all been killed by bullets fired by troopers attempting to retake the prison with naked force.

Responsibility for the unspeakable atrocity of the Attica prison massacre lies squarely on the shoulders of the highest government officials, from Gov. Nelson Rockefeller on up to President Richard Nixon himself.

Despite the gruesome price the brothers of Attica paid in standing up for their own identity as human beings, they struck a blow for all of humanity.



September 21, 1946

Maritime labor's militancy and solidarity tied up every port in the United States so completely that the AFL seamen have won a smashing victory against the government. Within eight days the Truman Administration was forced to capitulate.

But the seamen face a great danger. After every upsurge of the seamen, the capitalist government has opened up a counter-offensive. Wall Street's politicians will redouble their efforts to whittle away maritime labor's latest gains.

Wall Street monopolizes the political field. Labor has no effective independent political weapon — no party that is really its own.

Organization on the political field, free of all capitalist ties, is the only effective means of combating the government's anti-labor moves. The need to organize an independent Labor Party is the main lesson to be drawn from the strike.

# Protests demand: End US embargo of Cuba!

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Car and bike caravans along with pickets and rallies protesting Washington's more than 60-year-long economic war against Cuba's socialist revolution took place in at least half a dozen U.S. cities, as well as in Canada, the United Kingdom and other countries Aug. 29. These monthly caravans, which began last year, have won new support to the fight to overturn the U.S. government embargo.

The actions take on greater importance as the Joseph Biden administration has been ratcheting up the U.S. rulers' economic and political assault against Cuba, claiming they are defending democracy. They build on and expand measures imposed by Donald Trump's administration and all others before him since workers and farmers took power in Cuba in 1959. And the effects of the punishing embargo are exacerbated by today's worldwide capitalist economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Miami, reports Nelson Gonzalez, more than 50 people joined in a caravan of 50 cars to demand an immediate end to the embargo. In a show of solidarity with the Haitian people, the caravan ended up at a Little Haiti neighborhood park. Caravan participants donated \$438 to Haiti's earthquake relief effort. "Both Cuba and Haiti have been oppressed by the U.S. government," Adriana Ruiz, a caravan participant, told the *Militant*. "Cuba has always supported the Haitian people, including sending doctors and medicines."

In Chicago, reports John Hawkins, 30 people in 21 cars caravanned on the city's South Side. Among those joining for the first time were members of the United Steelworkers and the National Association of Letter Carriers.

## 'Guantánamo belongs to Cuba'

In Seattle, reports Rebecca Williamson, some 35 people held a lively picket on a busy street at Green Lake Park. The U.S. rulers "don't care about democratic rights, like they told us we were fighting for," said Dan Gilman, a retired U.S. Army veteran who joined the action as part of a delegation from Veterans for Peace. "They need to close Guantánamo and give it back to Cuba!"

These monthly actions have won new individuals and groups to join in protesting the U.S. rulers' assaults on Cuban

sovereignty.

In Schenectady, New York, reports Laura Anderson, a dozen people participated in a caravan through a working-class neighborhood. Participants included members of Albany-Cuba Solidarity and two young workers joining a caravan for the first time. "The U.S. embargo against Cuba is inhumane," said Charlie Bechtold, participating on his second caravan. "We drive through the community with our message on our cars and get a lot of positive reactions."

"We need to continue educating working people in this country about the socialist revolution in Cuba, which is what Biden and every other president that came before is seeking to destroy," said Róger Calero, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of New York,



Militant/Chuck Guerra

Caravans, rallies and meetings took place in U.S., Canada, U.K. and elsewhere Aug. 29, protesting Washington's economic war against Cuba. Above, protesters at Toussaint L'Ouverture park in Miami donated to Haiti earthquake relief.

at an Aug. 29 speakout against the embargo in East Harlem. Some 35 people gathered at the site of the "Dos Alas" mural depicting Puerto Rican independence fighter Pedro Albizu Campos and Cuban revolutionary leader Ernesto Che Guevara. Opponents of Cuba's socialist revolution have been leading a charge to remove the mural, and it was recently defaced by right-wingers.

"We're beginning to see more strikes going on," said Calero. "It's among these workers engaged in struggle that we will find allies for the fights in defense

of Cuba's socialist revolution and Puerto Rico's independence: from coal miners in Alabama and Nabisco workers on strike to truck drivers and others fighting in Puerto Rico."

Actions also took place in Washington, D.C.; Los Angeles; Dallas; and New Haven, Connecticut.

From Montreal, Katy LeRougetel reports that 17 carloads of people set off from a downtown park Sept. 5. They drove to the U.S. Consulate with signs demanding an end to the

Continued on page 9

## Nabisco workers in 5 states resist boss takeback drive

Continued from front page

bers at six plants in five states are determined to push back attacks on work schedules, seniority and overtime pay, increasing health insurance costs and cuts to pensions. Bosses are demanding 12-hour or longer shifts, with no overtime pay until after a 40-hour week, instead of after eight hours a day. They want to eliminate time-and-a-half pay for Saturdays and double time for Sundays, and use more temporary workers.

Workers at the bakery in Portland, Oregon, walked out Aug. 10. In the following days they were joined by workers at the company's bakeries in Richmond, Virginia, and Chicago, and at distribution centers in Norcross, Georgia; Addison, Illinois; and Aurora, Colorado.

Elvira Sosa, a 27-year veteran at Nabisco's Chicago plant, told this reporter that most of the lines are run by computers. They bag up to 70 bags of cookies a minute. "And we have to keep up with quality checks, computer entries on productivity, loading the line, and boxing and palletizing the product. Around 2005 these lines were automated. Many old-timers quit, and they weren't replaced.

"Not too many people are trained on these lines," she said. "If someone calls off, someone else has to work. Some of us had been working 16-hour shifts every other day for many weeks in a row. Overtime is mandatory."

Sosa said there are a lot of repetitive-work injuries like carpal tunnel. "The lines are not set up for normal people. To set them up to run after a jam-up, sometimes you have to crawl on the floor under the machines.

"We used to have a nurse on duty for every shift," she said. "Now we have none. Some of us have to use the Family and Medical Leave Act to get a little time off because we're exhausted from the overtime. Then the company blames those workers for everyone else working so hard. They pit us against each other."

"That's why they need to hire more people," Sosa said. "Overtime can be

eliminated. We can all take vacations."

"I came to the rally to give solidarity and support to our brothers and sisters," Rich Leschina, a member of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers/Brotherhood of Teamsters who works for the Union Pacific Railroad, told the *Militant*. He described how bosses at rail companies are carrying through similar attacks on working conditions. "We have smaller crews too, to do the same amount of work," he said.

Chicago strikers were joined at their rally by representatives of the Association of Flight Attendants and the Transport Workers Union, which also organizes flight attendants. Others participating were Communications Workers of America, Teamsters union, Service Employees International Union Healthcare, Painters union, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Illinois Nurses Association, Workers United, Chicago Teachers Union, and the International Association of Machinists.

Donald Woods, president of Bakery Workers union Local 1, chaired the rally. "We are fighting for the workers of the world," he said. "As long as the brothers and sisters stick together, we can win."

Several thousand dollars was raised for the strike fund.

## Georgia Nabisco workers rally

BY SUSAN LAMONT

NORCROSS, Ga. — "We appreciate all the unions' support and help on our picket line," Edwin Martin told a crowd of 100 union members and others gathered outside the Nabisco warehouse Aug. 30 to back some 45 strikers from Bakery Workers union Local 42. Martin is Local 42's chief steward.

Local 42 members walked off the job Aug. 23 to join fellow BCTGM strikers around the country. The Norcross strikers are appealing for help in staffing their round-the-clock picket lines, since they are a small group of workers.

"We're fighting to maintain what we've fought for over the years," Martin said, "so we can pass what we've won to

the next generation of Nabisco workers."

Members of at least 14 unions, including United Auto Workers, United Food and Commercial Workers, and International Association of Machinists, came to the rally, as did representatives of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, the Atlanta-North Georgia Labor Council and the Georgia AFL-CIO.

Nabisco is owned by Mondelez, a Chicago-based food conglomerate that manufactures a wide variety of snacks and other products, from Oreo cookies to Ritz crackers and Hall's cough drops and Trident chewing gum, with 79,000 employees worldwide.

After being told they were "essential" workers and forced by the bosses to put in massive amounts of overtime throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, workers are angered to be told that they are supposed to make major concessions in wages and working conditions for the next four years. The previous contract expired in May.

"The company stopped our health insurance Sept. 1," Demetrius Byrd, 53, who has worked as a driver at the distribution center for eight years, told the *Militant*. "With COVID this is a big worry for union members and their families." Bosses also told workers that any loans taken on their 401(k) retirement plans must be repaid immediately.

The company is trying to keep the Norcross depot open with scab labor brought in by shuttle from a hotel where they are being housed, fed and handsomely paid by Mondelez.

"We are holding strong," said Byrd. "We want a contract we can vote for."

The union is appealing for solidarity. They are asking other workers and unionists to join their picket lines, drop off donations of food and drinks, send letters of solidarity and spread the word about the strike. You can get more information at the union website [www.bctgm.org](http://www.bctgm.org). Messages of support can be sent to: BCTGM Local 42, 1030 Dill Ave. SW, Atlanta, GA 30310 or BCTGM Local 1, 7310 W. 39th St., Lyons, IL 60534.

## Cuba and the Coming American Revolution

by Jack Barnes

This is a book about the example set by the people of Cuba that revolution is not only necessary — it can be made. It's about the class struggle in the U.S., where the potential of workers and farmers are today as utterly discounted by

the ruling powers as were those of the Cuban toilers. And just as wrongly. \$10

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# Disaster result of capitalist greed

Continued from front page

some of the damaged areas in Louisiana, New Jersey and New York. He used his trip to tout his so-called infrastructure bill as the way to confront climate change and to promote the illusion that “we’re all in this together.”

At least 71 people died from the storm, the majority in New York and New Jersey, and tens of thousands lost their homes, mostly in Louisiana. More than a half-million homes and businesses there were still without electricity as of Sept. 7 — and many without running water. The vast majority were in working-class areas or farm communities.

Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards captured government officials’ disdain for working people when he announced “the first 72 [hours] are on you.” More than a week later it was still “on you,” despite Edward’s boast that he had mobilized 5,100 members of the Louisiana National Guard with 177 high-water vehicles, 74 rescue boats and 34 helicopters.

## ‘We are on our own’

“We are on our own,” retired worker Irina McAlister told the *Militant* from New Orleans Sept. 6. She said friends and neighbors have been checking up on and helping each other. Her neighborhood is higher up and mostly suffered wind damage.

There had been no mail service and no garbage collection since the storm, she said. “It’s 90 degrees out and the trash is just sitting there. The rats are having a field day.”

“The National Guard is out guarding property,” she said. “I saw one with a ri-

fle guarding a closed gas station. But no one has come by from the government to see how I’m doing.”

Prioritizing protecting businesses, local governments have imposed curfews and thrown in jail those people out on the streets.

Unlike in the 2005 Hurricane Katrina when the levees burst inundating low-lying working-class neighborhoods of New Orleans, this time they held, after being fortified since. But no such improvements were made in the rest of the state. Farms and homes in small towns and rural areas were flooded out.

While thousands left the area ahead of the storm, with no government-organized evacuation, roads out of the hurricane’s path became gridlocked.

Eight hundred residents from seven nursing homes owned by a Baton Rouge businessman, including some in New Orleans, were evacuated days after the storm to a warehouse in Independence, one of the hardest-hit areas in Louisiana. There was no air conditioning despite the extreme heat and humidity. They were given a mattress to sleep on the floor and a five-gallon bucket to go to the bathroom. Family members weren’t told where they had been taken. Many hadn’t eaten or received medication in 24 hours. By the time the local officials raised alarms seven residents had died.

“I feel like they herded my mom and these poor people like cattle,” Melissa Barbier, whose mother, Madeleine Bergeron, was there.

A week after the storm destroyed their homes, some families were still living inside their vehicles because of bu-



Cajun Navy 2016

Volunteers organized by Cajun Navy group travel through flooded LaPlace, Louisiana, Sept. 2. Groups aided people, distributed food and supplies, showing power of working-class solidarity.

reaucratically slow federal housing aid, booked up hotels, and a lack of money.

Hurricanes are endemic on the Gulf Coast, regardless of climate change. The government’s neglect simply reflects their class outlook.

## Cajun Navy volunteers

The United Cajun Navy — working people and small-business owners who first came together to rescue people by boat during Hurricane Katrina, 16 years ago to the day when Ida hit — organized yet again in the face of government inaction. They headed to the hardest-hit areas of Louisiana, including Houma and LaPlace. They sent crews with rafts, tractors and chainsaws to clear roads and to aid as many people as possible. In the absence of adequate shelters, the Cajun Navy has not been evacuating people. “We tell them to keep hunkering down,” the organization’s president, Todd Terrell, told the media. “We don’t have any place to put them.”

The group has distributed truckloads of food, water, other necessities and even hay for ranchers to feed their cattle. Their actions show the power and potential of working-class solidarity.

Working people have organized to help each other out. In Metairie, a western suburb of New Orleans, workers and small businesses pooled their resources and set up barbecue grills, cooking meals for hundreds of their neighbors.

Entergy Louisiana, the electric company, said some areas won’t get power back until the end of September. Little has been done for decades to strengthen the electric system in the hurricane-prone state.

“I hear those officials on my radio saying that it’s a complicated process,” said McAlister. “They think we’re too stupid to understand.”

She noted that power was restored rapidly in the French Quarter, the heart of New Orleans’ tourist industry, because the power lines there are underground. “They say it costs too much to do it everywhere. Well, what is it costing working people right now?”

Entergy pledged after Katrina and hurricanes in 2008 that it would take measures such as using concrete and steel poles for electric lines, instead of wooden ones. Even without going underground, lines can be reinforced to withstand 140-mile-an-hour winds.

But that would lessen profits. In 2018 an Entergy executive admitted that the company cut funds for strengthening the power grid. They “didn’t want to spend

money,” she claimed, when the system “was performing extremely well.”

By the time Ida reached the Northeast, it was no longer even a tropical storm. But the three inches of rain it dropped at times in an hour left more dead there than in Louisiana, many of them drowned in their basement apartments in New York City or vehicles caught in floodwaters in New Jersey. Others barely escaped rapidly flooding New York subway stations.

A few days after the flooding, the *Gothamist* spoke to more than a dozen residents of one block in the borough of Queens where almost every home was damaged. “No one has come by. My house is destroyed,” Antonio Mayo said.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio washed his hands of all responsibility when touring a heavily damaged Queens neighborhood with Democratic Socialist Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez a week after the storm. He said blame for the disaster should be placed on inaccurate weather forecasters.

Some area residents let de Blasio have it. Isabella Lizad, a physical therapist whose basement was flooded, told the *Daily News*, “They swore they would fix the sewers” after flooding in 2008. “And here we are again. Nine people died in this neighborhood.”

In fact, city officials are well aware that tens of thousands of people are living in wretched basements and have done nothing to build decent, affordable housing. And they have been discussing for well over a decade the need to fix the city’s sewer system, parts of which are more than 150 years old.

## Cuba’s socialist revolution: ‘No one is left on their own’



Periódico Guerrillero

No one died in Cuba when Hurricane Ida tore over the island, compared to more than 71 in the United States. That’s not because the storm increased in destructive force before landfall in Louisiana. It’s because in Cuba — unlike the U.S. — the government and mass organizations of workers, farmers and youth planned ahead and led working people to minimize the loss of life and damage to agriculture and industry. The morality of the socialist revolution is that no one is left on their own, the opposite class approach of the capitalist rulers in Washington.

Nearly 3,000 people were evacuated from the highest risk zones before the storm hit the Isle of Youth Aug. 27 and then Pinar del Río province, above. In Pinar del Rio 22,000 head of cattle were moved to safer ground. Special efforts were taken to maintain health services, including to continue supplying oxygen to medical facilities.

As soon as the storm passed the Union of Young Communists mobilized students, young soldiers and workers to clean streets, parks and schools. Brigades of electrical workers sprung into action to restore electricity.

Working people in Cuba face real challenges today because of Washington’s stepped-up economic war against their socialist revolution, exacerbated by the pandemic. “Now we must mount a hurricane ourselves, of effort and determination” to repair the damage, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel said during a walking tour in the hardest hit areas.

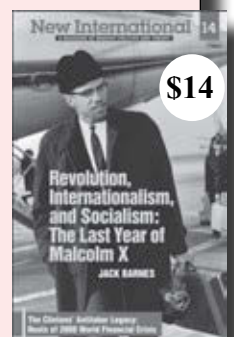
— S.G.

## The Stewardship of Nature Also Falls to the Working Class: In Defense of Land and Labor

“Under capitalist social relations, human hardship from natural occurrences falls in starkly different ways on different social classes. In New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, life or death, a home still habitable or forced diaspora — a few feet above or below sea level marked the class divide.”

Socialist Workers Party statement in *New International* no. 14

pathfinderpress.com



# Building a proletarian party on the eve of imperialist war

This excerpt is from *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party* by James P. Cannon, one of *Pathfinder's Books of the Month* for September. A companion volume to *In Defense of Marxism* by Leon Trotsky, it records the fight in the Socialist Workers Party to build a party deeply rooted in the working class as the U.S. rulers were moving to enter World War II. At issue was a party that can lead working people to take power and replace capitalist rule. Both were written as part of the political battle against a petty-bourgeois opposition in the Socialist Workers Party that recoiled from the party's proletarian course under the patriotic pressure. Cannon was a founder of the communist movement in the U.S. and national secretary of the SWP. Copyright © 1972 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Walter Reuther Labor Library

Sit-down strike in 1937 by United Auto Workers at General Motors plant in Flint, Michigan. When political pressures came down on the Socialist Workers Party on eve of the second imperialist world war, James P. Cannon led the fight to deepen the party's proletarian orientation.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY JAMES P. CANNON

Political struggles in general, including serious factional struggles in a party, do not take place in a vacuum. They are carried on under the pressure of social forces and reflect the class struggle to one degree or another. This law is demonstrated in the most striking manner in the development of the present discussion within our party.

At the present time the pressure of

alien class forces upon the proletarian vanguard is exceptionally heavy. We must understand this first of all. Only then can we approach an understanding of the present crisis in the party. It is the most severe and profound crisis our movement has ever known on an international scale. The unprecedented tension in the ranks signalizes a conflict of principled positions which is obviously irreconcilable. Two camps in the party fight for different programs, different methods, and different traditions. ...

For those who understand politics as an expression of the class struggle — and that is the way we Marxists understand it — the basic cause of the crisis in the party is not hard to find. The crisis signifies the reaction in our ranks to external social pressure. That is the way we have defined it from the outset of the crisis last September, immediately following the signing of the Soviet-Nazi pact and the beginning of the German invasion of Poland. More precisely, we say the crisis is the result of the pressure of bourgeois-democratic public opinion upon a section of the party leadership. That is our class analysis of the unrestrained struggle between the proletarian and the petty-bourgeois tendencies in our party. ...

[The minority] is concerned first of all with "democratic guarantees" against degeneration of the party after the revolution. We are concerned first of all with building a party that will

be capable of leading the revolution. [Their] conception of party democracy is that of a perpetual talking shop in which discussions go on forever and nothing is ever firmly decided. ...

Our conception of the party is radically different. For us the party must be a combat organization which leads a determined struggle for power. The Bolshevik party which leads the struggle for power needs not only internal democracy. It also requires an imperious centralism and an iron discipline in action. It requires a proletarian composition conforming to its proletarian program. The Bolshevik party cannot be led by dilettantes whose real interests and real lives are in another and alien world. It requires an active professional leadership, composed of individuals democratically selected and democratically controlled, who devote their entire lives to the party, and who find in the party and in its multiform activities in a proletarian environment, complete personal satisfaction.

For the proletarian revolutionist the party is the concentrated expression of his life purpose, and he is bound to it for life and death. He preaches and practices party patriotism, because he knows that his socialist ideal cannot be realized without the party. In his eyes the crime of crimes is disloyalty or irresponsibility toward the party. The proletarian revolutionist is proud of his party. He defends it before the world on all occa-

sions. The proletarian revolutionist is a disciplined man, since the party cannot exist as a combat organization without discipline. When he finds himself in the minority, he loyally submits to the decision of the party and carries out its decisions, while he awaits new events to verify the disputes or new opportunities to discuss them again. ...

Our movement, the movement of scientific socialism, judges things and people from a class point of view. Our aim is the organization of a vanguard party to lead the proletarian struggle for power and the reconstitution of society on socialist foundations. That is our "science." We judge all people coming to us from another class by the extent of their real identification with our class, and the contributions they can make which aid the proletariat in its struggle against the capitalist class. That is the framework within which we objectively consider the problem of the intellectuals in the movement. ...

In the *Communist Manifesto*, in which the theory and program of scientific socialism was first formally promulgated, it was already pointed out that the disintegration of the ruling capitalist class precipitates sections of that class into the proletariat; and that others — a smaller section to be sure, and mainly individuals — cut themselves adrift from the decaying capitalist class and supply the proletariat with fresh elements of enlightenment and progress. Marx and Engels themselves, the founders of the movement of scientific socialism, came to the proletariat from another class. The same thing is true of all the other great teachers of our movement, without exception.

Lenin, Trotsky, Plekhanov, Luxemburg — none of them were proletarians in their social origin, but they came over to the proletariat and became the greatest of proletarian leaders. In order to do that, however, they had to desert their own class and join "the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands." They made this transfer of class allegiance unconditionally and without any reservations. Only so could they become genuine representatives of their adopted class, and merge themselves completely with it, and eliminate every shadow of conflict between them and revolutionists of proletarian origin. There was and could be no "problem" in their case.

**September**  
**BOOKS OF THE MONTH**

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# Oppose US military assaults, curbs on democratic rights!

This issue marks the anniversary of two events that impacted the class struggle in the U.S. — the al-Qaeda attacks in New York and Washington, D.C., in 2001 and the social catastrophe unleashed on working people following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. We are reprinting major excerpts from the statement by Martin Koppel, then candidate for mayor of New York, released Sept. 11, 2001, by the Socialist Workers Party.

Waving the banner that “America is under attack,” that it has sustained “a second Pearl Harbor” in the wake of today’s assault on New York’s World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the U.S. government will seek to advance its “right” to launch military assaults on other countries, as it has done over the past few years against the peoples of Yugoslavia, Iraq, Sudan, and Afghanistan. [Within a matter of weeks, the U.S. imperialist rulers launched a massive bombing campaign and ground invasion in Afghanistan, a war that lasted 20 years with devastating consequences for working people. — Ed.]

The Socialist Workers Party calls on workers, farmers, and all defenders of democratic rights to speak out against the U.S. rulers’ demagogic efforts, in the name of preempting “terrorism,” to rationalize restrictions on political rights. We must oppose the campaign by the U.S. government — Democrats and Republicans alike — to curb the constitutionally guaranteed space for political organization and activity and to legitimize the use of the U.S. armed forces at home and abroad.

On September 11 the U.S. government placed U.S. armed forces worldwide on hair-trigger war alert. It called out an army regiment of light infantry onto the streets of Washington, D.C.; mobilized the New York National Guard; and deployed heavily armed FBI “counter-terrorism squads” and other special federal police units in Los Angeles, along the borders with Mexico and Canada, and elsewhere across the country.

In coming days, as the administration acts on Bush’s vow “to hunt down and punish those responsible,” the labor movement and all democratic-minded organizations and individuals must be on the alert to protest government frame-up trials and oppose its trampling on the presumption of innocence; the right to due process; Fourth Amendment protections against arbitrary search, seizure, and wiretaps; and freedom of association without spying and harassment by government informers and agents provocateurs. The last four years of the Clinton administration, and the opening months of the Bush White House, have been marked by stepped-up bipartisan efforts to strengthen the federal death penalty, erode the rights of the accused and convicted, and increase the room for commando-style operations by the U.S. Border Patrol and other Immigration and Naturalization Service cops, the FBI, and other federal assault agencies.

Whoever may have carried out the September 11 operations, the destruction of the two World Trade Center towers, and the air attack on the Pentagon — with the resulting deaths and injuries of thousands of

men, women, and children — these actions have nothing to do with the fight against capitalist exploitation and imperialist oppression. Revolutionists and other class-conscious workers, farmers, and youth the world over reject the use of such methods.

The U.S. government and its allies for more than a century have carried out systematic terror to defend their class privilege and interests at home and abroad — from the atomic incineration of hundreds of thousands at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to the 10-year-long slaughter in Indochina, to the war against the Iraqi people in 1990-91, to the burning to death of 80 people at Waco on its home soil, to other examples too numerous to list.

The U.S. rulers know that as they press their assault on the living and working conditions of workers and farmers in the United States, they will meet growing resistance, as working people organize to defend their livelihoods and their rights. That’s why Washington is systematically strengthening its hand against the battles it knows are coming.

The Socialist Workers Party calls on workers and farmers in the United States and worldwide to speak out against all the ways in which the world capitalist order presses humanity toward fascism and war. We must oppose U.S. military intervention anywhere in the world. We must oppose efforts by Washington to escalate an assault on the political rights of working people and the organizations of our class and its oppressed and exploited allies.

## What drives employers to attack workers today?

Continued from front page

job combinations, speedup, subcontracting and draining work schedules are demanded by bosses trying to hold down wages while prices rise at their fastest rate in 30 years.

This is exacerbated in the U.S. by the shutdown of special pandemic relief programs. Over 10.5 million workers saw the elimination of federal pandemic unemployment payouts Sept. 6, backed by both Republicans and by the White House. A few weeks earlier, government restrictions on evictions expired.

Underlying these attacks is an intensification of capitalists’ competition worldwide as some markets begin to open up. Bosses’ profit rates worldwide were expected to drop by 8% this quarter, Reuters says. Declining factory output in China, coronavirus infections across Asia and overwhelmed ports deepen their problems. Blaming parts shortages, bosses at Toyota, the world’s largest automaker, announced the closure of 14 plants in Japan last month, with more to come, Volkswagen, General Motors and Ford all say they’re scaling back production, at a time when there is growing demand for cars.

The Port of Los Angeles broke container handling records for each one of the last 13 months, but hasn’t dented the rising number of vessels idling outside the port waiting for a berth. Shortages and disruption like this are not caused solely by the pandemic. They are built into the anarchy of capitalist production as bosses seek to maximize profits, with no thought to production, distribution and planning to meet human needs.

As new waves of coronavirus spread across Southeast Asia, manufacturing contracted last month in Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines and Malaysia, countries where fewer than one-fifth of the population are vaccinated. U.S. pharmaceutical bosses obstruct the production of vaccines — and defend superprofits — by keeping their patents secret.

Instead of increasing investment in plant and equipment that could expand hiring, capitalists have instead poured \$3.9 trillion into mergers and acquisitions worldwide so far this year. Such deals will soon overtake the record set in 2007, just before the financial

crash, predicts the *Financial Times*.

Wherever bosses do enter into production, they’re determined to profit off workers’ backs and confront workers standing up to defend hard-fought gains made in previous union struggles.

At the same time, prices for basic necessities are rising much faster than government-reported inflation rates. Over the last year, chicken has risen 13% and fish 11%. The Senior Citizens League reports millions of the elderly are skipping meals, visiting food pantries or attempting to get food stamps.

### Growing willingness to fight boss attacks

“In the face of these conditions the strikes by miners at Warrior Met Coal in Alabama, bakery workers at Nabisco and others fighting to raise wages and defend working conditions set an example to all workers,” Joanne Kuniansky, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New Jersey governor, told the *Militant*. “Organizing union solidarity with these fights is essential.”

Union membership is only 6.3% in the privately employed workforce. At the same time, the Gallup poll shows approval of unions is running at 68% today, the highest since 1965. This shows more workers are looking for a weapon to hold off bosses’ attacks.

“The biggest single challenge workers and our unions face is organizing a fight for jobs,” Kuniansky said. In addition to the 8.4 million officially unemployed today, some 4.5 million people work part time but would prefer full-time work, and millions more have given up looking for work altogether and are no longer counted as unemployed by the government.

“Unemployment and inflation must be met by unions leading a fight for 30 hours work for 40 hours pay to spread the work around and prevent layoffs, and cost-of-living adjustments so that every time prices rise our wages and benefits go up,” she said.

SWP candidates call for unions to fight for a federally funded public works program to put millions back to work at union-scale wages, to build the hospitals, housing, schools and more that working people need.

“We need to break from the dead end of backing the bosses’ Democratic and Republican parties, and build our own party — a labor party based on the unions — that can centralize the struggles of all those exploited and oppressed by capital,” Kuniansky said. “It would unify and lead millions of working people to bring an end to capitalist rule, establish a workers and farmers government and reach out a hand to workers worldwide to join in carrying through a socialist revolution.”

## End US attacks on Cuba

Continued from page 6

U.S. economic war on Cuba.

“I led a most beautiful childhood in Cuba. Cuba deserves to live without the blockade,” said Ailin Serano, who was participating in her first caravan.

The previous weekend, a similar number joined a caravan in Vancouver, British Columbia. There was also a caravan in Ottawa, Ontario. “The sanctions punish the Cuban people — farmers, workers, children and old people that need care,” Luis Peral, originally from Cuba and now living in Vancouver, told the *Militant*. “It’s the common people of Cuba that made the revolution. The U.S. doesn’t want us to know that.”

In the working-class area of Brixton, in south London, reports Jonathan Silberman, 20 people organized a protest with colorful banners reading “Hands off Cuba — End the blockade — End British complicity.” Among those stopping by to talk was Alexis Cobian, a doctor, originally from Guantánamo in Cuba, who said he was “delighted” to see the protest.

In Hyde, England, 100 people participated in a meeting and fiesta at The Sportsman pub Aug. 28, reports Ögmundur Jónsson. It was organized by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign and Cubanos en Manchester. Among those attending were workers from the Pilgrim’s Pride meat factory in nearby Dukinfield, from the Piccadilly train station and local residents who frequent the pub. Trade unionists included Unite union members at bus company Go North West who had fought a three-month strike earlier this year, as well as members of Unison, Community and the Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers union.

Cuban Ambassador to the U.K. Bárbara Montalvo Álvarez described how the Cuban government has organized to resist the stepped-up U.S. economic and political offensive and conditions imposed by the pandemic. “We had to develop our own vaccines,” she said. U.N. program Covax “would only have covered 20% of the population. And we don’t have the money to buy vaccines on the world market.”

The government reports 90% of Cuba’s population will be fully vaccinated by the end of November.

“I hadn’t realized how serious the embargo was and how long it’s gone on for,” bus driver Carl Walmsley said after the program. “I was impressed by what I learned about the resilience of the Cuban people.”

To find out about future caravan actions, contact the National Network on Cuba at nnoc.info or *Militant* distributors listed on page 8.

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