

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

The murder of Thomas Sankara:
a popular revolution overturned
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 85/NO. 37 OCTOBER 11, 2021

‘The working class needs a class-struggle newspaper’

BY SETH GALINSKY

Branches of the Socialist Workers Party across the U.S. are stepping up campaigning among working people as they begin the fall seven-week drive to sell 1,300 subscriptions to the *Militant*, 1,300 books by SWP and other revolutionary leaders, and to raise \$130,000 to finance the work of the party. The Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom are also participating. The drive ends Nov. 23.

In the face of the worldwide capitalist economic and social crisis today there is increased interest in the *Militant*, which explains all political questions from the point of view of the working class and champions labor and social struggles being waged today. Lessons from previous union and revolutionary movements, in books by authors like Fidel Castro, Malcolm X, Thomas Sankara, Karl Marx, Frederick Engels and SWP

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As US, Chinese rulers face off, rivalries among imperialists rise

BY ROY LANDERSEN

The AUKUS military pact signed by the governments of the U.S., Australia and the U.K. has thrown into sharp relief conflicts with other imperialist powers, especially Paris. The deal is aimed at curbing Beijing’s growing economic clout and military ambitions in the Pacific. The U.S. rulers have long considered the region their “prize” to exploit for coming out on top in the imperialist slaughter of World War II.

A week after signing the AUKUS pact, President Joseph Biden hosted the first in-person meeting of the prime ministers of key capitalist allies Australia, India and Japan. They attended the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue in Washington Sept. 24. “The challenges of the 21st century will largely play out in the Indo-Pacific,” a senior White House official said.

Beijing denounced the partnership
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Kentucky distillery strike wins widespread support

Workers fight shifts that wreak havoc with family life



JCAESP AFSCME Local 4011

Strikers and supporters picket Heaven Hill bourbon plant in Bardstown, Kentucky, Sept. 11.

BY KAITLIN ESTILL

BARDSTOWN, Ky. — Some 400 members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 23D have been on strike fighting contract attacks by the bosses at bourbon maker Heaven Hill distillery here since Sept. 11. Strikers’ picket signs saying, “Family-owned not family oriented towards our families” reflect the major issue in the fight. The company demands workers accept “nontraditional” work schedules, especially for new hires, who would be

forced to work weekends at straight-time pay. Overtime pay would only kick in after 40 hours, instead of eight. Bosses also want to get rid of limits on workers’ health care premiums.

“We’ll picket day and night, sun, rain, snow. We’re going be out here as long as it takes to win,” Larry Newton, the plant

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How unions rose in the 1930s, why we need a movement like that today



Eric Mortenson/Minnesota Historical Society

Teamsters Local 574 before May 1934 Minneapolis strike battle. Leaders forged union democracy, discipline and solidarity, won backing of unemployed, farmers to build union movement.

BY TERRY EVANS

More workers are joining together, standing up to employer attacks and demands for concessions, and discovering what we are capable of when we use our unions to defend ourselves. Most strikes today are aimed at preventing bosses from destroying vital gains won in previous union struggles and from deepening their offensive against our wages and working conditions.

United Mine Workers of America members at Warrior Met Coal in Ala-

bama and Massachusetts Nurses Association members at St. Vincent Hospital in Worcester have sustained strikes for several months. United Food and Commercial Workers members at Heaven Hill Brands distillery in Bardstown, Kentucky, set up picket lines Sept. 11.

Over 650 members of the United Steelworkers are fighting a lockout at ExxonMobil in Beaumont, Texas, where bosses are trying to divide workers by imposing separate contracts at the

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A woman’s right to choose to have an abortion is fight of all working people

BY JANET POST

The right to choose whether or not to bear children, including how many, has to be a private, personal matter for all women. This is fundamental for women being able to control and plan their own lives. Fighting for that right — including access to easily available family plan-

ning services and safe and secure birth control and abortion — is essential for winning women’s equality, uniting the working class and building our unions.

But after the U.S. Supreme Court decriminalized abortion in 1973 in the Roe v. Wade decision, this right has been pushed back year after year. Today there is no abortion clinic in 90% of U.S. counties.

The nonstop propaganda campaign
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Cuba speaks at UN, demands: ‘End US economic, political war on our country’

BY SETH GALINSKY

The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the existing “global structural inequities and crisis,” Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel told the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly Sept. 23. “The most vulnerable have been left unprotected,” while pharmaceutical compa-

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Quebec hotel workers strike, rally in fight for new contracts

Military barbers strike after bosses raise prices but not pay

AS I SEE IT

Back women’s right to abortion

Continued from front page
and erosion of women’s right to choose has had an impact on the consciousness of working people. Millions are convinced that life begins at conception or soon after, even if they do not support restricting all abortions. This has occurred in the absence of any answer from the union movement clearly explaining that winning support for the right to choose is a working-class issue. This is a political debate within the working class that must be taken on.

The latest attack is the Texas “heart-beat” law, which prohibits abortion after “cardiac activity” is detected, usually after six weeks of pregnancy. It went into effect Sept. 1. Three months later the Supreme Court will hear the state of Mississippi’s appeal of lower court decisions that ruled its 2018 law that outlawed abortion after 15 weeks unconstitutional.

After World War II growing numbers of women entered the workforce and solidarity between working men and women grew. More women got jobs in what were traditionally men-only positions.

Standing on the shoulders of the fight for Black rights, which overthrew Jim Crow segregation and inspired the mass movement against the U.S. war on Vietnam, thousands of women began organizing to advance the fight for women’s rights, including the right to choose abortion.

But when the Supreme Court decriminalized abortion the debate on the right of a woman to control her own body had not been fought out and decisively won. Unlike the fight for Black rights, which involved millions of people over more than a decade, the women’s movement was just beginning.

The year after Roe v. Wade, leaders of middle-class women’s groups argued the battle had been won and further action would just rile up the right wing.

A flawed, premature decision

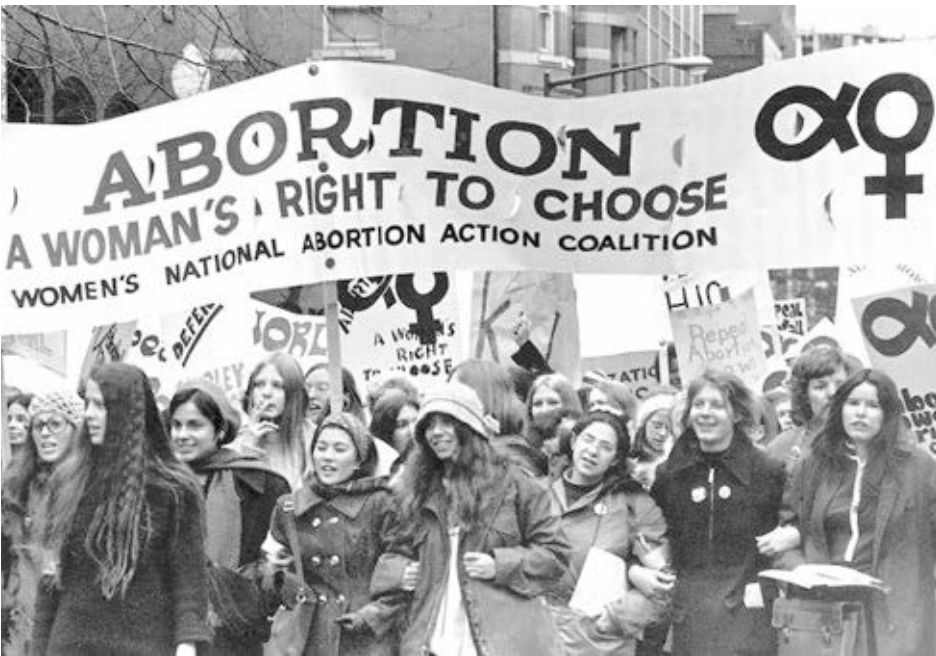
Not only was the court decision premature, the decision itself “was based not on a woman’s right ‘to equal protection of the laws’ guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, but on medical criteria instead,” wrote Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, in *The Clintons’ Anti-Working-Class Record: Why Washington Fears Working People*.

“During the first three months (‘trimester’), the court ruled, the decision to terminate a pregnancy ‘must be left to the medical judgment of a pregnant woman’s attending physician’ (not to the woman herself, but to a doctor!). At the same time, the court allowed state governments to ban most abortions after ‘viability,’” Barnes said, “something that medical advances inevitably make earlier and earlier in the pregnancy.”

Opponents of women’s rights try to convince working people that abortion is murder. That’s why the Texas law is called “fetal heartbeat” — with no basis in science. An embryo at six weeks does not have anything resembling a human heart.

When abortion was illegal hundreds of women died in the U.S. from unsanitary abortions every year. In 1965 17% of all maternal deaths occurred because of botched abortions. The deadly consequences fell overwhelmingly on working-class women, who were far less able to pay for safe procedures.

Like men, women must have the right to make their own decisions about their own bodies, including all medical deci-



Militant/Mark Satinoff

Some 3,000 joined first national march for abortion rights in Washington, D.C., Nov. 20, 1971.

sions. Fighting for this is a precondition to winning women’s full emancipation.

Instead of educating and mobilizing to win a majority to defend the right to choose, organizations like the National Organization for Women and the National Abortion Rights Action League have for decades urged women not to rock the boat and to rely on Democratic Party officials. This course has been a disaster.

What is needed is to clearly answer the arguments that opponents of wom-

en’s rights use, and to mobilize in the streets to win a decisive majority among working people. Our unions should be at the forefront of this fight.

Without a fight for women’s equality, the solidarity the working class needs to fight the bosses, and to wage a revolutionary struggle to take political power out of the hands of the capitalist class, is impossible. Without the right to decide when or whether to bear a child, women cannot participate as equals in economic or political life.

ACLU rewrites history, undermines fight for women’s rights under banner of ‘gender’

Under the banner of opposing “gender oppression,” middle-class left and liberal groups are dealing blows to the fight for women’s emancipation.

In response to recent attacks on women’s right to choose abortion, the American Civil Liberties Union Sept. 18 tweeted out a 1993 quote by former Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who had said that the “decision whether or not to bear a child is central to a woman’s life.” But everywhere that Ginsburg said “woman,” the ACLU replaced it with “person” and every reference to “she” was replaced with “they.”

To most working people that’s just absurd. Only women get pregnant. Regardless of how you dress, what surgeries you have had, or how you “self-identify,” it’s a scientific fact that there are just two sexes — male and female.

Under capitalism women remain an oppressed sex, despite important advances won over the last several decades, with more women working in all kinds of jobs. But today women still earn less money on average than men and the bulk of child-rearing and domestic chores falls on their backs.

But the ACLU falsification of the Ginsburg quote is not a joke. It’s part and parcel of the anti-scientific views being promoted in middle-class and liberal circles. Claiming “people without uteruses” need the right to abortion, and “edits” like those made by the ACLU, are part of a deadly counterrevolution against the fight for women’s rights and an attack on the interests of the working class, men and women alike.

— SETH GALINSKY

THE MILITANT

Amnesty for undocumented workers in the US!

Thousands of Haitians faced inhumane conditions and summary deportations imposed by the Joseph Biden administration from Del Rio, Texas, last month. Others fled back into Mexico. The ‘Militant’ backs amnesty for all immigrants living in the U.S.



AP Photo/Eric Gay
Haitian workers crossing Rio Grande into Texas in September seeking asylum.

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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 paper’

Continued from front page

National Secretary Jack Barnes, are being offered at discount so workers can dig deeper into what we face today and how we can fight successfully.

Party members and supporters of SWP candidates will take the three intertwined drives to working people in small towns and rural areas as well as cities large and small; to picket lines of workers on strike; to protests to defend women’s rights to make their own decisions on family planning, including contraception and safe abortions; to actions demanding an end to the U.S. rulers’ economic and political war on Cuba.

“There is no other newspaper like the *Militant*,” says *Militant* editor John Studer. “The working class needs a class-struggle paper that points a road forward, that champions the battles of all those exploited and oppressed by capital, that explains the need to break with the bosses’ parties — the Democrats and Republicans — and to fight in our millions to take political power out of the hands of the capitalist class.

“We want to increase the number of workers, farmers and young people who are reading the *Militant* and these books. Who begin to see the *Militant* as *their* paper and the Socialist Workers Party as *their* party,” Studer said. “These are the ones who will want to join in assuring the party continues its invaluable work.

“Getting contributions, large and small, from working people is the only way to build a workers’ party,” Studer said. “The SWP has no other place to turn to for income.”

Solidarity with workers’ battles

Rachele Fruit, SWP candidate for Atlanta mayor, and campaign supporter Marklyn Wilson met Anthony Gillis, who works on household appliances, after knocking on his door in Decatur, Georgia, Sept. 25. “I used to work for Sears, but I left nine months ago,” he said. “Conditions were bad, and everything is worse with COVID. At least they have a union up north, but we

didn’t. I really agree with you that we need a union in every workplace.”

“We have to start with solidarity with the struggles that exist today to begin to build the kind of working-class movement that can make a revolution to get rid of the capitalist system,” said Fruit.

“People are very upset about the conditions, but we are not being heard,” Gillis said. “We need to support each other to make change and not sit and wait for the fire to spark. Everyone needs this information,” Gillis said as he got a subscription.

While campaigning in the Mount Airy neighborhood of Cincinnati Sept. 18, Socialist Workers Party members Kaitlin Estill and Ned Measel met nurse Pamela Edwards.

They showed her the *Militant*’s coverage and support of the nurses strike at St. Vincent Hospital in Worcester, Massachusetts. “Their fight for better staffing ratios is a glaring example of how the for-profit health care system isn’t meant to meet the needs of working people,” Estill told her.

“You can also see that with the insurance system too,” Edwards said. “The kind of insurance people have dictates what kind of care they get.” Edwards was interested when she heard SWP candidates run in the elections to explain the need for working people to organize themselves to take power out of the hands of the capitalist class.

Workers need a labor party

“When you talk about working people taking power, you mean voting workers into office?” she asked.

Fundamental changes won’t come



Militant/Marklyn Wilson

Rachele Fruit, SWP candidate for Atlanta mayor, spoke to Anthony Gillis in Decatur Sept. 25. He got a subscription, said, “We are not being heard. Everyone needs this information.”

through elections, Estill explained. “There’s plenty of examples of people from working-class backgrounds running for office but they just become a cog in the capitalist machine and nothing changes for working people.” Workers and their allies need to break with all the capitalist parties and organize their own party, a labor party.

“You say we need to become the government but it’s not about getting elected, so how do we do it?” asked Edwards.

“We need a mass working-class movement,” Measel said. He pointed to how the fight for Black rights in the 1960s and ’70s was able to overturn Jim Crow segregation and transform social relations all across the country.

“We need to replace capitalism,” Measel said. “It’s going to take a revolution to do it.” Edwards subscribed to

the *Militant* and got *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*, one of the many books on special during the drive. (See ad on page 6.)

Communists in the U.S. and around the world will have thousands of discussions like these as part of the international propaganda drive and raise tens of thousands of dollars to build the party. They will get back with many of the people they meet to continue and deepen the discussions, and to involve all who are convinced of the importance of what the party is doing to join in.

The first scoreboard with subscription, book and fund goals for each area will be printed in next week’s *Militant*. To get more information on how you can help make the drive a success, see page 8 for the Socialist Workers Party or Communist League branch nearest you.

Kentucky distillery strike wins widespread support

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union chair, told the *Militant*.

Strikers and supporters picketed at the popular Kentucky Bourbon Festival held here, taking advantage of an opportunity to expand their pickets, hand out flyers and explain their struggle to a broader audience of workers and tourists from around the country.

Newton has worked for Heaven Hill for 20 years. “I ran for plant chairman after seeing what happened during the contract negotiations in 2016,” he said. That year bosses successfully pushed through a divisive two-tier contract with a three-dollar-plus wage differential for new hires, a step many workers oppose. “I said this is not right, I’m going to be in the room next time. And this is the first time in over 30 years Heaven Hill has gone out on strike.”

Many workers on the picket line were wearing bright orange union T-shirts. Striker Frankie Callico told the *Militant* the union had the shirts made three months prior to the strike, and workers had been wearing them on the job.

The company got Nelson Circuit Court Judge Charles Simms to issue an order that prohibits pickets from blocking plant entrances, stopping people crossing the picket line or following any trucks entering and exiting the facilities.

The company’s lawsuit demanding court action relied on an affidavit from an unidentified private security company they hired that claimed a whole series of union infractions. The bosses urged the court to impose a long laundry list of restrictions on pickets. But the judge denied most of them, saying strikers’ constitutional rights have to be protected.

The union denied any unlawful action on the part of the pickets.

Charles Clarke, a 10-year distillery worker, said the company accusations weren’t true. “We’re not chasing or touching the trucks coming in. And for those crossing the picket line, coming in to work our jobs, they don’t realize that this strike affects this whole town.”

“The bosses at all the distilleries are watching this fight,” he said.

“Fights like this aren’t just happening in Bardstown,” responded Amy Husk, a Socialist Workers Party campaign supporter who drove down from Louisville to show her support for the strike. “This fight is important for the entire labor movement, it shows people can come together and stand up for themselves.”

Clarke agreed. “Organizing all workers is ahead of us, union or nonunion,” he said. “We’re all creating their wealth and we’ve all got to stick together.”

Strikers are winning widespread support in Bardstown and the area. *The Kentucky Standard*, Bardstown’s local paper, ran an editorial titled, “Now Is Not the Time to Be Union-Busting.”

“The distillery industry is booming,” the editorial argues. It explains that throughout the current pandemic-exacerbated economic downturn, the distillery industry — Heaven Hill included — has been going gangbusters and making soaring profits.

“In that light, the impression that Heaven Hill is hurting financially and needs these concessions from its workers to survive makes it hard to feel sorry for the plight of the industry giant,” the editors say.

Workers from many distilleries in

the area have joined the picket line, including from Maker’s Mark, Jim Beam, Four Roses and others, pickets said. Union iron workers, electrical workers and United Auto Workers members have come to bring solidarity to the line.

Campaigning in support of the strikers in a Bardstown neighborhood near the distillery, Socialist Workers Party campaign supporter Ellen Brickley met Deborah Peake, a retired unionist, and construction worker Brian Hunt on their doorstep.

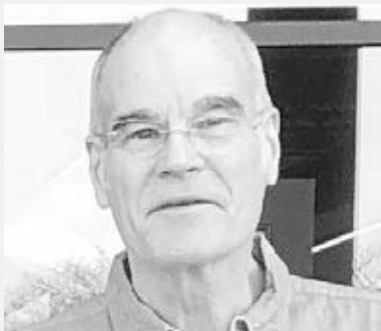
“You all are here to bring solidarity to the strike? That’s great. We support the strikers 100%, honk like crazy every time we pass by,” Peake said. “They’re selling whiskey for God knows how much, making a ton of profit, and then first thing they do is take the strikers health insurance away.”

“Heaven Hill might have the infrastructure and the recipes but they ain’t the ones doing the work,” Hunt said. “Without the workers they’d have nothing, they literally make their profit off of the workers’ backs.”

Heaven Hill told WDRB News the company was planning to resume discussion with union negotiators Sept. 27, the first talks since the workers walked out. “The company is prepared to reconvene with union leadership to work toward ratification of a quality workforce package,” a spokesperson said.

The picket lines are up 24/7 and all who want to help are welcome. Contributions to the strike fund can be sent electronically via Venmo to @ufcwlocal23d, messages of support can be emailed to mattaubrey.ufcw23d@yahoo.com.

Celebrate the political life of Tim Craine



Militant/Leslie Craine

Tim Craine, a longtime member and supporter of the Socialist Workers Party for five decades, died of leukemia Sept. 25 in Hartford, Connecticut, at the age of 77. He was the party’s candidate for governor of Michigan in 1982 and until shortly before his death a leader of the Greater Hartford Coalition on Cuba, which organizes activities in opposition to Washington’s economic war on Cuba. A meeting will be held in Albany, New York, to celebrate his life and political contributions on Sunday, Oct. 10 at 2 p.m., location to be announced. Please send messages for the meeting to albanyswp@gmail.com.

— JACOB PERASSO

US, Chinese rulers face off

Continued from front page
and growing alliances against it as “doomed to fail.”

To advance their interests in the Indo-Pacific, the U.S. rulers need allies. Contrary to their illusions, they did not emerge victorious from the Cold War after the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, which had helped to crush revolutionary struggles worldwide in hopes of “de-tente” with Washington. U.S. imperialism now finds itself in a world without the same buffers to rely on, forced to confront workers and toilers everywhere with the threat of military intervention.

Unable to impose its authority in wars in the Middle East and Afghanistan, Washington now faces sharpening competition from imperialist rivals, alongside the rapid rise of Beijing.

The AUKUS pact centers on a plan to build eight nuclear-powered submarines in Australia to strengthen the military armada facing Beijing. A week after the deal was unveiled, U.S. aerospace giant Boeing announced plans to build an Australian-designed military drone near Toowoomba in Queensland. The Loyal Wingman will use artificial intelligence to fly in tandem with manned aircraft.

Deepening relations with, and dependence on, Washington, the world’s dominant imperialist power, are at the heart of the foreign policy decisions of the governments of Australia and the U.K.

Imperialist rifts widen

Most of the capitalist powers in the European Union see Washington as a rival, even though they depend upon U.S. military might for their own defense.

As part of the signing of the AUKUS pact, the Australian government scrapped a 2016 contract with Paris to build 12 French-designed conventionally powered submarines. In protest, the French government withdrew its ambassadors to Washington and Canberra while suspending high-level meetings.

The French rulers planned to use their multibillion-dollar contract with Canberra to boost their military presence in the Indo-Pacific, where they hold colonies, including New Caledonia and French Polynesia. That plan is now in tatters.

Paris has reverted to calls for “European strategic autonomy,” hoping to persuade other governments in Europe to build up their own military forces and to depend less on Washington. French officials accused the U.K. government of being a “vassal state” of Washington.

In fact, the rulers in France and Germany were weakened as London quit the EU. The bloc continues to be torn apart by the competing interests of its various national ruling classes. Paris received

only lukewarm support within the EU when it urged the bloc to halt talks with the Australian government over trade in the wake of the AUKUS pact.

London hopes to use its historic connections with the U.S. and Australian rulers to deepen military and economic collaboration with them. Having signed a trade deal with Canberra, it continues to seek one with Washington.

Despite the German rulers’ position as the most dominant economic force in the EU, German politicians said little about the signing of the AUKUS pact. The German press criticized the French government for its response to the deal. Rivalry between Berlin and Paris is at the center of conflicts within the EU.

“The European Union is far from being taken seriously in a security partnership beyond its own continent,” noted the Berlin *Der Tagesspiegel*.

For years the German rulers have tried to advance their place in the world imperialist pecking order by using the EU to squeeze the weaker nations in southern Europe. They act under the illusion that they can compete without reinforcing their own military power as tensions with rivals mount. Berlin is dependent on the presence of U.S. forces based in Germany under the NATO pact.

Rifts between Washington and Berlin sharpened after the German government joined with Moscow to build the Nord Stream 2 pipeline between the two countries, making Berlin dependent on the Russian rulers for supplying half of its economy’s natural



U.S. Navy/Scott Taylor

U.S. carrier leads Pacific Ocean naval exercises. Since victory in second imperialist world war, Washington has viewed Pacific as its prize. U.S. rulers are determined to meet Beijing threat.

gas. That dependency is likely to rise as coal and nuclear power are phased out by the German government.

Only days after the AUKUS announcement, both the Chinese and Taiwanese rulers made rival bids to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership. The administration of Donald Trump withdrew Washington from that Pacific-rim trade deal set up by the Barack Obama administration to try to hinder Beijing’s growing influence in the region.

Since then the 11-state pact has been revived at the initiative of the Japanese government. It includes the governments of Australia and Canada. Under its rules existing members have veto power over new members.

Alabama miners: ‘Whatever it takes to win this strike’

BY SUSAN LAMONT

ATLANTA — “We are going to do whatever it takes to win this strike,” United Mine Workers of America union member and Warrior Met Coal striker Steven Smith told the *Militant* Sept. 23. “We’re not going to give up the picket line, no matter what.”

Smith is one of some 1,100 UMWA members who have been on strike at the mine complex in Brookwood, Alabama, since April 1. He was working day shift at the No. 4 mine when the strike started, loading trucks and trains with coal. He first met *Militant* correspondents on the picket line April 2 and was glad to give *Militant* readers an update on the strike.

Strikers staff picket lines 24/7 at the No. 4 and No. 7 mines, the central shops, preparation plant, and several railroad crossings. Brookwood is in central Alabama, near Tuscaloosa.

Like many other strikers, Smith is working another job now, as well as picketing every week. “Some strikers who had enough time in have retired and won’t go back,” Smith told me by phone. When he can, he also attends the union’s weekly solidarity rallies at nearby Tannehill State Park.

“At the rally last night, UMWA President Cecil Roberts told us the company wants to keep the scabs on the job ahead of the union members and start calling us back ‘as needed’ when the strike is ended,” Smith said. “We can’t accept that.” Roberts reported that the company hasn’t budged on wages or holidays. “So we have to keep the strike going.”

“We have been getting lots of support, even from workers at Walmart!” Smith said, adding that in addition to biweekly strike pay, union members each got an extra \$150 this week because so many donations had been sent into the union

strike fund, which continues to receive contributions from other unions, community organizations and individuals.

Strikers can pick up their checks at the Tannehill rallies, as well as food and other necessities collected by the UMWA Auxiliary, led by miners’ wives. They gather food, diapers, sanitary and other items, as well as cash donations, to distribute to strikers and their families.

The Alabama miners are fighting to regain ground lost in 2016 when they were forced to take major concessions after the mines’ previous owner, Jim Walter Resources, went bankrupt. The company’s biggest creditors, hedge funds like BlackRock from New York, organized Warrior Met Coal to take over the mines and told union members they would close operations unless the miners agreed to big cuts. They also promised to restore the workers’ losses when the company regained profitability.

The miners agreed to a \$6-an-hour pay cut, and health care costs increased from a \$12 co-pay to a \$1,500 deductible. Extra overtime pay for Sundays and holidays was ended, along with no limit on forced overtime but with no overtime pay until after 40 hours; 13 annual paid holidays were cut to three; a draconian attendance policy was implemented; and other concessions.

The union estimates that these concessions cost workers \$1.1 billion over the last five years — money that went straight into the bosses’ coffers.

This is the first UMWA contract strike in Alabama since the early 1980s. “It’s now the longest UMWA strike in Alabama’s history,” Smith said.

Smith and other miners follow recent strikes around the country, including at Nabisco, Frito-Lay and Volvo Truck. Workers there were able to push back

Beijing claims self-ruling Taiwan as part of its territory And has threatened military action to back up its claim. Some governments fear economic reprisals by Beijing if it is refused entry or if Taiwan is allowed to join.

“The working class needs its own foreign policy,” Róger Calero, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New York mayor, told the *Militant*. “The capitalist rulers’ foreign policy defends their class interests — their exploitation of workers and farmers, here *and* overseas. Our foreign policy starts with solidarity with working people in their struggles for better conditions — from China to Mexico and around the world.”

against some of the bosses’ takeback demands by sticking together and fighting. This shows “why our strike is so important for everyone,” Smith said.

Pickets face boss attacks, state cops

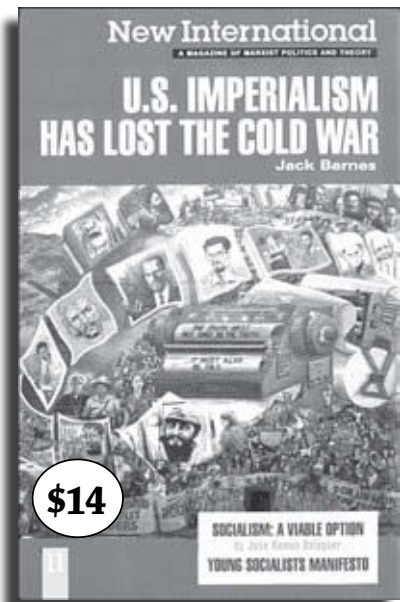
On several occasions, Warrior Met management personnel have purposely struck with their cars miners or family members peacefully picketing at No. 7 mine entrances. Local, county and state police have refused to take any action.

The union filed charges against these company attacks with the National Labor Relations Board, but the board dismissed the union’s charges Aug. 25, despite the union submitting unmistakable film footage showing strikers being hit and eyewitness reports. (Videos are posted on the Mine Workers Facebook page.) Several assaults resulted in injured strikers being sent to the hospital.

Meanwhile, Alabama state troopers have been assigned to escort scabs past the UMWA picket line into Warrior Met Coal’s No. 7 mine. This “just looks like they’re working for the company,” UMWA spokesman Phil Smith told the media Sept. 17. “There hasn’t been any reason to be concerned about the buses [of scabs] going back and forth. It just looks like the company doesn’t need to hire its own security guards.”

The company hopes the scabs will keep No. 7 mine operating to meet outstanding coal orders and demoralize strikers and weaken their resolve.

Help spread the word about the strike! Donations should be sent to UMWA 2021 Strike Fund at P.O. Box 513, Dumfries, VA 22026. Messages of support can also be sent to District 20, 21922 Hwy. 216 (Miners’ Memorial Parkway), McCalla, AL 35111. Email: umwadistrict20@bellsouth.net.



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—ON THE PICKET LINE—

Are you involved in a union organizing drive or strike? Brought solidarity to fellow workers on the picket line? Let us know! Send articles, photos and letters to themilitant@mac.com or through our website, or mail them to 306 W. 37th St., 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Quebec hotel workers strike, rally in fight for new contracts

MONTREAL — Some 2,000 workers at a score of hotels organized by the CSN (Federation of National Trade Unions) held a one-day strike in Quebec Sept. 17. Three big rallies took place here, in Quebec City and in Sherbrooke.

“On the one hand the hotel owners tell us they have a drastic shortage of workers, and on the other they do everything to lengthen the conflict, presenting us with insulting offers that attack the buying power of our members,” said CSN President Caroline Senneville at the Montreal rally.

Faced with deadlocks at the negotiation table, workers at a dozen hotels voted to authorize 72-hour strikes whenever they choose. Workers at the Hilton in Quebec City and the DoubleTree in Montreal began an open-ended strike earlier this month.

“We have settled on wages, but we need to be treated with respect and acknowledgement of the difficulty of our work — the workload is horrific,” Mimi Bilic, a housekeeper at the DoubleTree, told the *Militant* on the picket line Sept. 18. “There’s a lot of injuries from repetitive strain. We make 24 beds a day, bending, reaching, etc. We get 30 minutes a room. It’s like Christmas when someone doesn’t use the shower or sleep in a bed.”

“If you don’t fight and stick together then they get away with their attacks — these companies have billions. There are human beings behind this story,” she said.

“They’re combining jobs. You have to be on the phone, reply to texts from customers, and talk with people at the front desk all at the same time,” reception worker Yuri Schmalhaus said. “You lose your focus and we workers suffer as well as the customers. This is supposed to be the *hospitality* industry!”

Doorman Karim Dahmani said, “With COVID-19 we weren’t demanding anything new, but they want to take things away. We can’t go backward.”

Send solidarity messages to info@csn.qc.ca and checks to CSN, 1601 De Lorimier Ave., Montreal, QC H2K 4M5.

— Beverly Bernardo

Quebec: Thousands of child care workers begin series of strikes

MONTREAL — Eleven thousand workers at 7,000 child care centers (CPEs) across Quebec carried out the first of 10 one-day strikes Sept. 24. They are demanding the Quebec government agree to a 20% wage increase over four years to bring them to the same pay level as other government education workers. Government negotiators have offered only 12%.

The workers, the vast majority women, are members of the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN) and have been working without a contract for 18 months.

Chanting “So, so, so, solidarity!” over 1,000 strikers gathered in Saint-Louis Square here in the pouring rain, following early morning picket duty at child care centers across the city. Then they marched to the downtown offices of the Quebec Ministry of the Family.

“We appreciate your solidarity,” striker Kahdja Taoui told Philippe Tes-

sier, Communist League candidate for mayor of the Montreal borough of Ville Saint-Laurent, who joined the rally along with this *Militant* worker-correspondent. “The CPEs are short-staffed because the wages aren’t high enough and people keep leaving for other jobs,” she said. “Because of that the children can’t get the care they need.”

The workers are demanding higher staff-to-child ratios for safety, to assure that children with special needs are properly cared for, and to have more time for preparation of the day’s activities and to put meals together.

The series of strikes was adopted by a vote of over 97% in union meetings across the province. “Out of respect for the parents, who support us in large numbers, we are committed to informing them in advance so they can make the adjustments they need,” CSN representative Stephanie Vachon told the media.

Several days earlier, 13,000 additional child care workers, organized by the Confederation of Quebec Unions (CSQ), voted by 95% to hold six days of strikes. They also have been without a contract for 18 months, with similar demands to those of the CSN-organized workers.

— John Steele

Kaiser Operating Engineers strike 24 hospitals in California

SAN LEANDRO, Calif. — The 700 members of International Union of Operating Engineers Local 39 are on strike at 24 Kaiser hospitals across Northern California.

“We have been on the front-lines in these hospitals throughout the pandemic,” striker Jose Banta told the *Militant* as he picketed here Sept. 21. “Kaiser is offering us less than is being paid at other hospitals and below inflation.”

Kaiser rejected the union’s wage and benefit proposals and did not make a counteroffer until the last day of the contract, Sept. 17. Workers rejected it



Militant/Carole Lesnick

Sept. 22 picket at Kaiser hospital in Oakland, California, one of 24 where operating engineers are on strike. This fight “is bringing our crew together,” said striker Michael Salas.

and went on strike the next day.

Among their responsibilities, stationary engineers maintain cooling, heating and water systems and ventilation in the rooms where COVID patients are treated to ensure those treating them are safe.

Stationary engineers at Eden and Sutter hospitals, who are not on strike, joined the picket lines in San Leandro. “Whatever is decided in this strike will affect workers at the other hospital systems,” Sutter worker Rick Fiery said.

“The strike is bringing our crew together. No matter what we are able to win we will go back more united,” striker Michael Salas said. “I used to talk about Kaiser being ‘us.’ Now it’s clear it’s the workers against Kaiser. It’s a battle.”

— Betsey Stone

Military barbers strike after bosses raise prices but not pay

Since July 4, workers at four barber-shops at Ft. Lee U.S. Army Garrison and Ft. Pickett Army National Guard Maneuver Training Center in central Virginia have been picketing outside Ft. Lee. The 20 barbers, members of Laborers International Union Local 572, are on strike against Sheffield Barbers, a contractor hired by the Army & Air Force Exchange Service.

“The contractor is not paying us the

posted price. That’s not what our contract intended. That’s not fair. But that’s what we are up against,” Eugene Harris, who has cut hair on the base for eight years, said on a union video about the strike. Harris served in the military for 21 years before becoming a barber, and was deployed to Iraq and Kuwait. Most of the barbers are African American or Korean American. Sheffield has hired replacement workers.

When Sheffield first took over the shops in 2019, the barbers were making 55% of the \$12.15 charged per haircut plus tips. But Sheffield started paying them based on the 2017 haircut price of \$11.25. In the current negotiations, Sheffield offered a 6 cents increase per haircut, even though it has raised the price to \$13.25.

“I don’t like the way they’re treating these guys,” Matt Macklin, retired from the Ft. Lee barbershop after 48 years, said in an article in *Stars and Stripes*, a U.S. military daily. When he heard about the issues, he headed to the picket line. “I said, ‘That’s it, I’m going to be there.’”

Some soldiers on the base and army veterans are honoring the picket line. For more information or to contribute to the strike fund, go to www.liunalocal572.org.

— Arlene Rubinstein

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



October 14, 1996

Workers, farmers, youth, and all defenders of civil liberties need to protest moves by Washington to undermine the democratic rights of opponents of U.S. policy toward Cuba and defend those threatened with fines, imprisonment, or firings for activities protected by the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights.

Class-conscious workers need to understand and explain that working people and others are under no constitutional obligation to voluntarily collaborate with the FBI, Treasury Department, ATF or their finks.

These probes to narrow the space for political action coincide with efforts to try to push through new “anti-terrorist” measures that curtail the democratic rights of all.

These steps are part of the preparation for further assaults on the social wage, working conditions, and livelihood of working people. They are a threat to the entire working-class movement.



October 15, 1971

OCT. 6 — President Nixon today invoked the antilabor Taft-Hartley law to force the striking longshoremen on the West Coast back to work. On Oct. 1, all seaports on the East and West Coasts, and the port of Beaumont, Texas, on the Gulf were closed by dockworkers, whose contract had expired.

In the face of this massive shutdown of a vitally important industry, Nixon appointed a five-member board of inquiry Oct. 4 to recommend when and under what conditions longshoremen should be ordered back to work.

The employers seek to reduce the waterfront work force, subject longshoremen to the uncertainties of irregular ship arrivals, and hire them as part-time workers on an hourly basis. Longshoremen on all coasts have an opportunity at this juncture to establish uniform working conditions and wages with guaranteed annual pay for 2,080 hours.



October 12, 1946

AMSTERDAM, Sept. 27 — Widespread indignation against the Dutch government’s suppression of the Indonesian struggle for independence led to organized protest movements of soldiers culminating in mass demonstrations and a general strike in this city.

During the second week in September, the soldiers at the Harderwijk camp were informed that they were to embark for Indonesia. The soldiers bluntly refused to go.

They formed a committee and issued two leaflets. The first called on the soldiers for action against shipment to Indonesia. The second called on the dock workers and the unions in general to demonstrate their disapproval of the imperialist aims of the government by striking against embarkation orders.

Both leaflets created a tremendous impression. Soldiers and workers responded with a mass sentiment of sympathy.

The murder of Thomas Sankara: a popular revolution overturned

BY PETER THIERJUNG

Blaise Compaore, the iron-fisted ruler of Burkina Faso for almost three decades, will stand trial along with 13 others before a military tribunal Oct. 11 for the 1987 assassination of former President Thomas Sankara.

Sankara was the central leader of the 1983-87 Burkina Faso Revolution. His murder was the beginning of a bloody counterrevolution led by Compaore, a member of the National Council of the Revolution.

In 1983 Sankara led a mass uprising that established a popular and democratic revolutionary government. The 33-year-old leader became president of Upper Volta, the West African country's name under the former French colonial rulers. At his initiative the people adopted a new name, Burkina Faso, which means Land of Upright Men.

With a population that remains among the poorest in the world, Sankara's political course opened the road to economic and social development. He led millions of working people in carrying out deep-going economic and social measures with the backing of the revolutionary government.

These included nationalization of the land to guarantee peasants the fruit of their labors as productive farmers; irrigation projects; and planting 10 million trees to stop the encroachment of the desert.

Steps were taken to combat the centuries-old subjugation of women. Three million children were vaccinated against common diseases. Literacy campaigns were conducted; roads, schools, housing, and a national railroad were built.

International solidarity was extended to those fighting oppression in Africa and worldwide, including standing with Cuba's socialist revolution.

Sankara spoke out on behalf of the oppressed and exploited around the world and stood out among the leaders of struggles for national liberation in Africa after the second imperialist world war because he was a communist.

A bloody counterrevolution

The sheer violence of the counter-revolutionary coup led by Compaore traumatized and politically disoriented a generation of peasants, workers, and young people who looked to Sankara.

Twenty-seven years later, in 2014, Compaore fled the country in face of a popular insurrection against his rule. Demands that the former dictator stand trial for Sankara's murder

were on the lips of millions as they mobilized to oust him. To this day, "Justice for Sankara!" graffiti is seen all around Ouagadougou, the capital city. Compaore now resides comfortably in exile in neighboring Ivory Coast and will be tried in absentia.

Roch Kabore, the current president of Burkina Faso, has resisted demands he ask for Compaore's extradition. Kabore instead recently called for "national reconciliation," and offered to consider Compaore living out his retirement in Burkina Faso. Kabore was formerly prime minister, president of the National Assembly and an adviser to Compaore.

Fidele Toe, who was minister of labor in Sankara's government, said, "We ask that the term 'national reconciliation' not be used to say 'keep quiet,' but, on the contrary, to tell the truth about what happened.

"A country that does not know its past is lying to itself and cannot move forward," he told the media. "It cannot say that it wants to judge the thieves if it has not shed light on its leaders."

Soon after the assassination, Compaore claimed Sankara was accidentally slain in an exchange of gunfire with commandos who supposedly uncovered a plot by Sankara to kill him.

"It was either him or me," Compaore said, trying to make the bloodshed look like personal rivalry.

Alouna Troare was one of six revolutionary leaders who joined Sankara in a meeting on the day of the coup. Years later he described what he witnessed. Gunfire erupted outside Sankara's offices and soldiers demanded participants come out. "Stay! Stay!" Sankara told his comrades, according to Troare. "It's me they want."

Sankara left the room, his hands in the air, and was immediately shot dead, two bullets to the head, and his body sprayed with machine-gun fire. "The attackers had come to kill," Troare said.

Five others in the meeting room were executed. Seven of Sankara's presidential guards were murdered. The bodies of the dead were dumped in shallow graves on the outskirts of Ouagadougou. Troare managed to get away.

A 2015 autopsy of remains believed to be Sankara's revealed a body that had been riddled with bullets. The findings contradicted a military doctor's 1988 death certificate issued to Sankara's widow. It said the revolutionary leader died of "natural causes."

Four of Compaore's personal guards at the time will be prosecuted for murder at the Oct. 11 trial.

The elimination of Sankara was followed by a roundup of hundreds of his supporters to smash popular resistance. These included leaders of the revolution's mass organizations, government officials, students, professors, journalists, soldiers and others. Many were tortured and killed.

Sankara's brother, Pascal, was detained, blindfolded, tied to a tree, beaten until his face was unrecognizable, and subjected to mock executions. Valere Some — a colleague of Sankara in the revolutionary government who tried to organize popular resistance to the coup — was for months beaten, burned, hung from the ceiling, and slashed with



"The democratic and popular revolution needs a convinced people, not a conquered people," says the sign above, quoting revolutionary leader Thomas Sankara under his photo. It's carried in a June 29, 2013, protest against Blaise Compaore, who led the 1987 counterrevolution.

knives. Both survived to tell what happened to them.

In late October 1987, the commander at a military base 50 miles west of Ouagadougou attempted to rally forces against the coup. But commandos led by Compaore's allies surrounded the base, carried out a massacre, and hunted down and executed survivors.

Mariam Sankara, the revolutionary leader's widow, and the Sankara family, along with the family members of others murdered in the coup, have for 34 years waged a campaign to expose the truth. They have persisted despite threats, harassment and fierce opposition. They took their fight to the courts in Burkina Faso, where it was buried, and to the U.N. Human Rights Committee, which ruled in 2006 that the Compaore regime violated their rights.

Rejecting dog-eat-dog values

During the revolution, Sankara spoke openly about the dangers that could derail the revolution and the accomplishments of working people, in face of their class enemies at home, across Africa, and in the imperialist centers.

"Our homeland has become one vast construction site where the criteria of morality, concern for social justice, and respect for everyone's fundamental right to live and to enjoy a better and better existence are not just empty words," Sankara said in a 1987 speech on the fourth anniversary of the revolution. These advances were made possible, he explained, by a people whose political consciousness led them to reject the "dog-eat-dog" values of the "capitalist jungle."

But Sankara warned, "We have come up against opportunism and watched it operate. It works in various ways to get us to desert the revolutionary struggle and abandon an intransigent defense of the people's interests in favor of a frenetic search for selfish personal gain."

"The difficulties of the struggle," Sankara said, "have led some comrades to desert our ranks pure and simple."

The imperialist rulers in Washington and Paris, along with some African capitalist governments, tried in myriad ways to undermine Sankara and overthrow the revolutionary government. They feared the revolution and its example. But where they failed from the outside, Compaore's treachery succeeded from inside to extinguish the beacon Burkina Faso became for Africa and the world, and upended the gains of the revolution.

As the trial unfolds, readers may want to discover for themselves who Thomas

Sankara was and what he stood for. His speeches, the best place to start, will provide insight into the man and leader, and the Burkina Faso Revolution.

Studying Sankara's own words

From Sankara, readers will learn history is not just about the past, but *about what working people do in the present*, based on past lessons, to prepare a future worthy of humanity.

"Sankara believed that a world built on different economic and social foundations can be created not by 'technocrats,' 'financial wizards,' or 'politicians,'" Mary-Alice Waters, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party, wrote in the preface to *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, "but by the masses of workers and peasants whose labor, joined with the riches of nature, is the source of all wealth. By ordinary human beings who transform themselves as they become an active, conscious force, transforming their conditions of life. And the revolutionary government he headed set out along this course."

Thomas Sankara Speaks, the collection of Sankara's speeches published by Pathfinder Press, is available at www.pathfinderpress.com and at the book centers listed on page 8.

Cuban leader speaks to UN

Continued from front page

nies have reaped massive profits.

The way to combat the disease is through vaccination, he noted via video from Cuba, but "hundreds of millions of people in low-income countries are still waiting for their first dose and cannot even venture a guess as to when or if they will ever get it. At the same time, it's beyond belief that global military expenditures were almost \$2 trillion in 2020.

"How many lives would have been saved if those resources had been invested in health or the production and distribution of vaccines?"

The crisis is not new, Diaz-Canel told a U.N. food system summit later in the day. "More than 2.3 billion people, 30% of the world's population, lack access to adequate food, and malnutrition is widespread," he said, noting that Fidel Castro, the central leader of Cuba's socialist revolution, had made the same point at the U.N. 25 years ago, but little has changed.

"The squandering of natural resources and the irrational patterns of capitalist production and consumption must end," the Cuban president told the General Assembly.

Diaz-Canel pointed to the success the Cuban people have had combating the pandemic while standing up to the more than 60-year-long U.S. economic and political war against their revolution. "The U.S. government has not ceased its attack against Cuba for a single minute," he said. That's true whether Democrats or Republicans held office.

The administration of President Joseph Biden has maintained all 243 measures tightening the U.S. embargo added by former President Donald Trump, including placing Cuba on "the spurious and immoral list of countries that allegedly sponsor terrorism."

While governments of the wealthiest capitalist nations refuse to organize production to make sufficient vaccines accessible worldwide, Cuba has developed its own vaccines,

which are proving to be more than 90% effective. By the end of the year nearly 100% of Cuba's population, from 2 years old on up, will be fully vaccinated, Diaz-Canel reported.

The Cuban government has mobilized medical workers and mass organizations across the island to deliver the vaccine, go door to door to discuss how people are doing and to help them if they feel sick, to assure that the vaccination program is successful.

Cuba's selfless solidarity

The Cuban government has also offered its vaccine to other governments or to help them set up their own production. "We carry out selfless solidarity with those who need our support," the Cuban president said.

In his speech at a U.N. conference on the fight against racism, Diaz-Canel noted that "thousands of Cubans supported the movements for national liberation in Africa and against the abusive apartheid regime."

Castro led the Cuban government to immediately respond to a request from the Angolan government for help in defending the country from an invasion by South Africa's white-supremacist regime. Between 1975 and 1991 some 425,000 Cubans volunteered to join that struggle, mostly as combatants, dealing decisive blows to the invading forces defending Angolan independence and helping to bring down apartheid in South Africa.

That internationalism lives on today in Cuba's medical missions around the world. Since the start of the pandemic Cuba has sent nearly 5,000 internationalist medical volunteers to 40 countries and territories to combat COVID-19.

Socialist revolution in the Americas

These achievements are only possible because workers and farmers, led by Castro and the July 26 Movement, overthrew the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in 1959 and established a workers and farmers government. They carried out a deepgoing agrarian reform, which guaranteed land for peasants; nationalized foreign and

Caravans, rallies demand: 'End US embargo of Cuba!'



Caravans and rallies protesting Washington's decadeslong economic war against Cuba were organized Sept. 26 in at least 12 U.S. cities, in Canada, the U.K. and five other countries. From Miami to Minneapolis, Seattle to Mexico City and Buenos Aires, Argentina, participants demanded — End the U.S. government embargo! U.S. out of Guantánamo now! Lift U.S. travel restrictions against Cuba!

Thirty people demonstrated in Tottenham, above, a working-class area in north London Sept. 25, with signs demanding "USA hands off Cuba! End British complicity!" Many passersby took leaflets and expressed their support.

Over 50 people rallied in front of Miami City Hall Sept. 26 and joined caravans through Little Havana and downtown Miami, receiving numerous thumbs-up signs from working people in cars and on the sidewalks, with little hostility.

Some 30 people rallied and marched in south Seattle. Carlos Lazo, a Cuban American school teacher in Seattle who founded Puentes de Amor (Bridges of Love), which initiated the caravans last fall, spoke about the importance of public protests against Washington's bipartisan attacks. "I recently spoke with the Cuban president," Lazo said, "who wanted to make it known that he had high esteem for those working to end the blockade."

— BRIAN WILLIAMS

local companies and placed them under workers control; and became different people in the process. In the course of these struggles they came to recognize the Marxist politics of their leadership and the socialist character of their accomplishments.

Representatives from at least a dozen countries spoke out against the U.S. embargo of Cuba at the U.N. assembly over the last week. This included representatives from Benin, Bolivia, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Lesotho, Mexico, Namibia, South Africa, Suriname, Venezuela and Vietnam.

Two days before Diaz-Canel's presentation, Biden addressed the General

Assembly. He urged governments to "act now to get shots in arms as fast as possible" to combat COVID-19, while offering no course of action that could make that possible.

Biden condemned the governments of Cuba and Venezuela, claiming they "seek to suffocate their people with an iron hand."

In response, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez said the U.S. president claims he is worried about the impact of COVID-19 on everybody, but keeps in place all the measures against Cuba that were imposed by Trump, which make getting medicine and medical equipment even harder.

Worcester nurses: 'We left as one, we go back as one'

BY LAURA ANDERSON AND ABBY TILSNER

WORCESTER, Mass. — Nurses on strike against St. Vincent Hospital here marked a historic 202 days on strike Sept. 25 — the longest nurses strike in Massachusetts history — with an expanded picket line called "Worcester Solidarity Day." Some 200 strikers and supporters joined the protest called by the Massachusetts Nurses Association.

The spirited action included unionists from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Service Employees International Union, Painters union, Carpenters union, roofers, Massachusetts Teachers Association, postal workers, nurses from nearby hospitals, former St. Vincent patients, Socialist Workers Party members, local politicians and others.

Over 700 nurses at St. Vincent walked out March 8 against hospital owner Tenet Healthcare. The central issue is reducing dangerously high nurse-to-patient staffing levels, as well as higher

pay and health insurance improvements. The bosses have hired some 100 strike-breaking nurses, but have had to cut back on patients for lack of staff.

The union thought they had finally reached a settlement that would have improved staffing levels in mid-August, but Tenet turned around and announced they would refuse to allow over 100 of the most experienced nurses to return to their jobs as they intended to keep all the scabs. Instead, they said, they would offer senior nurses who went on strike less desirable positions.

"They took an unprecedented step threatening that our jobs may not be there when we go back," Marlena Pellegriano, co-chair of the Massachusetts Nurses Association negotiating committee with 35 years at St. Vincent, told pickets. "The main fight in the beginning was for patient care, but now they want us to step on our own."

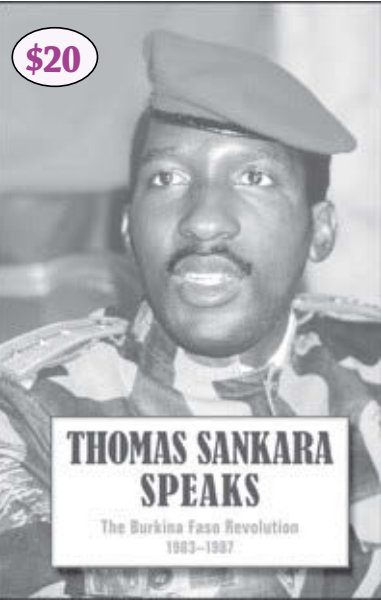
In addition, there are 10 unfair labor practice charges nurses have filed that concern attempts by the company to dis-

rupt the strike and break the union. Tenet demands that these be dropped. There's also a COVID "bonus" that bosses say will only be given to the strikebreakers. This is an insult to the striking nurses that worked through the pandemic.

After hospital bosses asked the Department of Unemployment Assistance to reconsider its decision to grant unemployment to the striking nurses, the state agency cut off the payments Sept. 4. The company now wants the state to force the strikers to repay some of the earlier payments. "This is a union town," Maritza Cruz, co-chair of the Worcester Community Labor Coalition, told pickets. "We support the fight financially and will do whatever is needed to help."

"We are here holding each other up. We want to lead this fight with integrity," Pellegriano said. "We left as one, We go back as one!"

Contributions to the strike can be sent to the MNA Nurses Strike Fund, 340 Turnpike St., Canton, MA 02021.



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Myth of women's inferiority was born with class society

Problems of Women's Liberation by Evelyn Reed is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for October. Reed was a member and leader of the Socialist Workers Party from 1940 until her death in 1979. She wrote and spoke about the economic and social roots of women's oppression from prehistoric society to modern capitalism. She explained why the fight for women's emancipation is an essential part of the working-class struggle for a socialist revolution. The excerpt below is from her 1954 article, "The Myth of Women's Inferiority." Copyright © 1969 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY EVELYN REED

One of the conspicuous features of capitalism, and of class society in general, is the inequality of the sexes. Men are the masters in economic, cultural, political, and intellectual life, while women play a subordinate and even submissive role. Only in recent years have women come out of the kitchens and nurseries to challenge men's monopoly. But the essential inequality still remains.

This inequality of the sexes has marked class society from its very inception several thousand years ago, and has persisted throughout its three



United Mine Workers

Striking Warrior Met miners, families and supporters rally in Brookwood, Alabama, Aug. 4. Women gaining industrial jobs have advanced working class, fight for women's emancipation.

main stages: chattel slavery, feudalism, and capitalism. For this reason class society is aptly characterized as male dominated. This domination has been upheld and perpetuated by the system of private property, the state, the church and the form of family that served men's interests.

On the basis of this historical situation, certain false claims regarding the social superiority of the male sex have been propagated. It is often set forth as an immutable axiom that men are *socially* superior because they are *naturally* superior. Male supremacy, according to this myth, is not a social phenomenon at a particular stage of history, but a natural law. Men, it is claimed, are endowed by nature with superior physical and mental attributes.

An equivalent myth about women has been propagated to support this claim. It is set forth as an equally immutable axiom that women are *socially* inferior because they are *naturally* inferior to men. And what is the proof? They are the mothers! Nature, it is claimed, has condemned the female sex to an inferior status.

This is a falsification of natural and social history. It is not nature but class society which lowered women and elevated men. Men won their social supremacy in struggle against and conquest over the women. But this sexual struggle was part and parcel of a great social struggle — the overturn of primitive society and the institution of class

society. Women's inferiority is the product of a social system which has produced and fostered innumerable other inequalities, inferiorities, discriminations, and degradations. ...

It is not nature but class society which robbed women of their right to participate in the higher functions of society and placed the primary emphasis upon their animal functions of maternity. And this robbery was perpetrated through a twofold myth. On the one side, motherhood is represented as a biological affliction arising out of the maternal organs of women. Alongside this vulgar materialism, motherhood is represented as being something almost mystical. To console women for their status as second-class citizens, mothers are sanctified, endowed with halos and blessed with special "instincts," feelings and knowledge forever beyond the comprehension of men. Sanctity and degradation are simply two sides of the same coin of the social robbery of women under class society.

But class society did not always exist; it is only a few thousand years old. Men were not always the superior sex, for they were not always the industrial, intellectual, and cultural leaders. Quite the contrary. In primitive society, where women were neither sanctified nor degraded, it was the women who were the social and cultural leaders.

Primitive society was organized as a matriarchy which, as indicated by its very name, was a system where women,

not men, were the leaders and organizers. But the distinction between the two social systems goes beyond this reversal of the leadership role of the two sexes. The leadership of women in primitive society was not founded upon the dispossession of the men. On the contrary, primitive society knew no social inequalities, inferiorities, or discriminations of any kind. Primitive society was completely equalitarian. ...

In this early society maternity, far from being an affliction or a badge of inferiority, was regarded as a great natural endowment. Motherhood invested women with power and prestige — and there were very good reasons for this.

Humanity arose out of the animal kingdom. Nature had endowed only one of the sexes — the female sex — with the organs and functions of maternity. This biological endowment provided the natural bridge to humanity. ... It was the female of the species who had the care and responsibility of feeding, tending, and protecting the young.

However, as Marx and Engels have demonstrated, all societies both past and present are founded upon labor. Thus, it was not simply the capacity of women to give birth that played the decisive role, for all female animals also give birth. What was decisive for the human species was the fact that maternity led to labor — and it was in the fusion of maternity and labor that the first human social system was founded.

It was the mothers who first took the road of labor, and by the same token blazed the trail toward humanity. It was the mothers who became the chief producers; the workers and farmers; the leaders in scientific, intellectual and cultural life. And they became all this precisely because they were the mothers, and in the beginning maternity was fused with labor. This fusion still remains in the languages of primitive peoples, where the term for "mother" is identical with "producer-procreatrix."

We do not draw the conclusion from this that women are thereby naturally the superior sex. Each sex arose out of natural evolution, and each played its specific and indispensable role. However, if we use the same yardstick for women of the past as is used for men today — social leadership — then we must say that women were the leaders in society long before men, and for a far longer stretch of time.

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The Militant October 11, 2021

Why you should support the Socialist Workers Party

Below is an updated statement by Joanne Kuniansky, Socialist Workers Party candidate for governor of New Jersey. Her statement is available in English, Spanish, Korean and Gujarati on the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission's website. Patch.com, an online news site, included the statement by Kuniansky in its Sept. 16 article "NJ Governor Candidates: Why You Should Elect Me (In 500 Words)."

Joanne Kuniansky is a union fighter who has worked in oil refineries, railroads, meat packing. She currently is a Walmart deli worker.

The Socialist Workers Party builds solidarity with today's labor battles, from striking Alabama coal miners to Nabisco workers. Workers face defending themselves from bosses demanding we give up hard-won gains. Kuniansky travelled to Alabama to join a miners' support rally and got messages of support and contributions from her co-workers to their strike fund.

Unions, the most important defense organizations of the working class, must take the initiative to lead workers to get vaccinated and get back to work, putting us in the best position to fight bosses' attacks and build solidarity with union struggles, fights against cop brutality.

With millions unemployed and rising inflation, unions need to fight for a federally funded public



Joanne Kuniansky

works program to put millions to work at union-scale wages building hospitals, schools, housing that workers need. Shorten the work-week with no cut in pay to stop layoffs! Cost-of-living clauses in every contract that raise pay and retirement benefits to offset every price rise!

Workers must break from the bosses' Democratic and Republican parties and build a political party of our own, a labor party, based on our unions. The SWP aims to be part of building the leadership we need to unify all those exploited by the capitalist class and replace their rule with a workers and farmers government.

Deaths and financial devastation for thousands of working people in the wake of Hurricane Ida were not caused by "climate change." They are the product of capitalist rule and all the parties that defend it. Workers were swept away in their cars, drowned in basement apartments. Thousands left to fend for themselves, homeless and without power. The deadly lack of preparedness and belated government response turned a "natural" disaster into a social catastrophe.

The government in Cuba organizes workers and farmers to confront these deadly forces of nature with

minimal loss of life. That is only possible because workers and farmers were organized by their communist leadership to make a socialist revolution — to take political power into their own hands and take control of the factories, land and banks from the capitalists, transforming themselves in the process.

My campaign points to the necessity of working people in the U.S. emulating that example and building a party here that can lead millions to make a socialist revolution.

Along that road working people need to fight for the right of women to all family planning services, including safe and secure birth control and abortion, essential for winning women's emancipation. Whether a woman decides to bear a child or not must be a private, personal matter, not the decision of a legislature or court. We must organize and mobilize to win a majority of women and men for this right.

The working class needs our own foreign policy, we share common class interests with working people worldwide. We oppose all Washington's wars and demand an immediate end to its economic and political war on the people of Cuba and the sanctions it inflicts on the peoples of Iran, Venezuela, North Korea, and other countries.

The SWP calls for unconditional recognition of Israel as a refuge for Jews. We urge unions to protest Jew-hatred — a deadly danger to advancing the class interests and solidarity of all workers and toiling farmers.

How unions exploded in 1930s, why we need a movement like that today

Continued from front page

two different parts of the refinery and impose changes making working conditions more dangerous.

Nearly 1,000 members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers union at five Nabisco facilities have just returned to work after making gains in a hard-fought five-week strike. Meatpackers in Quebec, members of the Union of Olymel Workers at Vallee-Jonction, ended their four-month strike Aug. 31 after beating back boss attacks. Unionists at both companies say they go back stronger and more united, ready to fight better to defend themselves on the job.

Workers all across North America point to the concessions squeezed from them in previous contracts to help "save the company," only to find the bosses hungry for even more now. Many workers were told they were "essential" and pressed to work longer hours and faster during the pandemic. Now they find such conditions and worse are the "new normal." Millions have been thrown out of work.

For decades most officials have weakened our unions by acting on the conviction that our interests depend on the bosses making profits and that our defense depends on reliance on the Democratic Party. The result is union membership in industry has declined to just over 6% today, from 35% in the 1960s.

Today's crisis of capitalism pushes the bosses to step up efforts to defend their profits at our expense. In response, workers are looking to find ways to protect ourselves. Gallup polls show support for unions is higher than at any time since 1965. As workers use unions, or see others do so, we see our power to act as a class, and our determination and confidence grows. Any idea that workers have something in common with the bosses is undermined through class-struggle experience.

Powerful example of 1930s struggles

It took an explosion of bloody battles during the Depression of the 1930s for industrial workers to win union recognition and defend themselves. Militant action by hundreds of thousands, including a powerful wave of sit-down strikes 1936-37, organized auto, steel, packinghouses, oil and other basic industries.

Class-struggle militants and communist workers in Minneapolis led tens of thousands of trucking-industry workers in 1934 and after to organize a fighting Teamsters union movement. Their struggles show what workers are capable of when we have the

leadership we deserve.

The general drivers union in Minneapolis united coal and food delivery truck drivers, warehouse workers and over-the-road drivers. In their strikes and organizing drives they reached out and won the backing of the unemployed, farmers, women and owner-operator truck drivers, establishing a strong union and providing leadership to the labor movement across 11 Midwestern states. They organized a union defense guard that defended their picket lines and blocked a fascist recruitment drive backed by the bosses that was aimed at attacking Jews and crushing the rising labor movement.

Teamster leaders acted on the fact that union democracy, discipline and unflinching solidarity with all those exploited and oppressed by capital was the only way to build a fighting union. They fought government frame-ups of union militants and organized labor opposition to the coming imperialist war.

Lessons learned during those struggles and the broadening political horizons of workers involved are described by Farrell Dobbs, a central leader of the union and of the Socialist Workers Party, in his four-volume *Teamster* series. Workers seeking to understand how to organize and harness union power today will find these books invaluable.

The Teamsters fight paved the way for broader battles that led to the rise of the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

A fighting social movement

A series of sit-down strikes begun by workers at General Motors and other auto plants beginning in 1936 spread to every kind of industry, involving high levels of organization, ingenuity and courageous and disciplined defense by the unionists who occupied the bosses' factories. They were backed by family members and other workers who flocked to their side.

Bosses and governments from city halls to the White House responded with cops, injunctions and the National Guard, but determined workers and their allies held their ground and they won. The CIO, formed in 1935, helped advance these struggles.

It organized millions of workers that the old craft-union leaders had viewed as trash, and for the first time attracted into the labor movement large numbers of Black workers. By 1940 there were 200,000 Blacks in CIO unions.

As workers began to sense their class power in struggle against the bosses, many were attracted to

organizing independently of the bosses' political parties. Growing interest in establishing a labor party was frustrated by union officials and the Communist Party, who did everything in their power to prevent workers from breaking with reliance on President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who they touted as a "friend of labor." Motion toward a labor party was derailed by the U.S. rulers' entry into the second imperialist world war.

In the decades since, most union officials increasingly subordinated workers' interests to collaboration with employers, rather than mobilizing the union ranks to rely on ourselves and our allies to fight for what we need. They doubled down on tying our unions to the two parties of the capitalist rulers.

The fact is, social relations under capitalism depend entirely upon the exploitation of workers by the ruling propertied families. Their dog-eat-dog drive for profit, and racist oppression and wars for markets, ensure workers will increasingly look for ways to combine together to defend ourselves.

The worsening impact of the economic, political and moral crisis of capitalism is creating a greater willingness to organize and use unions, to overcome divisions bosses promote to try to stop us from fighting back effectively. More workers are acting together and taking initiatives to build solidarity that is crucial to those walking picket lines.

And they are discussing why we need to break from the bosses' Democratic and Republican parties and build our own political party, a labor party.

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