

‘Militant has news workers need to fight effectively’

BY SETH GALINSKY

Socialist Workers Party members and other readers of the *Militant* newspaper have been getting back to the paper’s hundreds of new subscribers, visiting them on strike picket lines and at their homes, meeting in coffee shops and staying in touch by phone.

We’ve been exchanging views on what’s happening in the labor movement, how to build support for the strikes taking place today, discussing the big political questions working people face and interesting subscribers in working together with us to increase the paper’s reach in the working class, as well as getting and studying books by leaders of the party and other revolutionaries (see book ad specials on page 3).

Not waiting to get back in touch with new subscribers, making sure they are getting their papers in the mail and finding out what they think about what they’re reading will ensure that the international renewal

Continued on page 3

Workers vote to end strike at Kellogg’s, go back stronger

BY DAN FEIN

BATTLE CREEK, Mich. — Some 1,400 cereal workers, members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers union, voted to end their 2 1/2 month strike against Kellogg’s, the union announced Dec. 21. The key issue in the battle was equal pay for equal work and opposition to the bosses’ two-tier pay and benefits system.

Workers had rejected two previous contract offers since the strike began. The walkout included workers in Omaha, Nebraska; Memphis, Tennessee; Lancaster, Pennsylvania, as well as here. They will return to work Dec. 27.

“We have to look out for the new employees coming up,” Tony Lund, a mechanic with 13 years seniority, told this worker-correspondent on the picket line prior to the end of the strike. “The newer employees, the ‘transitional’ workers, get less pay, no pension and less benefits. Our demand is ‘equal pay for equal work.’”

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2021: Strikes, solidarity heat up the class struggle

Workers use their unions to fight boss attacks



Militant/Dan Fein

Nabisco strike support rally in Chicago Sept. 4. Issues raised by strikers, from fighting divisive two-tier wages to need for automatic cost-of-living clauses, are important for all workers.

BY TERRY EVANS

“The concession stand is closed,” United Steelworkers union members told the *Militant* on the picket lines during their three-month strike against Allegheny Technologies Inc. earlier this year, showing their determination to take on the bosses’ unrelenting drive against our unity, wages, working conditions and dignity. This has been reflected in a growing number of industrial strikes marking 2021.

Each one of these battles is fought out over questions of vital importance to millions of workers — divisive two-tier wages, forced overtime, onerous shift schedules, unsafe work-

ing conditions, access to health care and retirement pay, and cost-of-living clauses to combat surging price hikes. Getting out the truth about these struggles and organizing solidarity is crucial in aiding striking workers and in deepening their confidence and fighting capacities.

Workers across the country are watching these struggles, to see if they too can organize and use their unions to fight effectively and win.

“If we don’t stand up, we’re going to get run over,” Karl Brendle, another striking ATI worker in Louisville, Ohio, told the *Militant* in July. “It’s a

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Importance of labor unions shown during deadly Midwest tornadoes



Militant/Jacquie Henderson

2019 strike at GM plant in Bowling Green, Kentucky. Union-organized plant had basement tornado shelter, no lives were lost, unlike at nonunion Amazon warehouse, candle factory.

BY MAGGIE TROWE

Natural disasters under capitalist rule inevitably become a social catastrophe for workers and farmers, as the effects are multiplied by the workings of the dog-eat-dog for-profit system. This exposes the contempt the wealthy rulers have for the safety, life and limb of working people, how workers are left to fend for ourselves.

The horrific Dec. 10 tornado storm

that tore through Kentucky, Arkansas, Illinois, Missouri, Mississippi and Tennessee, shattering homes, factories and other buildings, throwing cars through the air and derailling a train is such an example.

The death toll stands at 92 and rising after more than 40 tornadoes touched down, leaving many communities in rubble. Power hasn’t yet

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US rulers’ drive to isolate Cuba dealt blow by Colombia award

BY RÓGER CALERO

The U.S. rulers’ drive to isolate Cuba was dealt a setback Dec. 8 when the Congress of Colombia gave an award to the Cuban government for facilitating talks that led to a peace agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

Marking the fifth anniversary of those accords, the Congress awarded the Grand Cross with a Gold Plate Order to the Cuban and Norwegian ambassadors for their governments’ support to the negotiations. And the legislators called on President Joseph Biden’s administration to remove Cuba from Washington’s list of State Sponsors of Terrorism.

In May, Biden renewed the Donald Trump administration’s inclusion of Cuba on the list, a move that imposes severe financial and other restrictions. The Biden administration has kept in place over 200 sanctions against Cuba

imposed by the previous administration. These measures intensify hardships facing the people on the island, and deepen Washington’s six-decade-long economic war aimed at crushing the socialist

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Ukraine miners expand protests, demand back pay

Calif. sanitation workers fight over safety, seniority, respect

Los Angeles meeting marks Cuba’s solidarity with Africa

BY LAURA GARZA

LOS ANGELES — “We have medical brigades in more than 10 African countries, just one example of the Cuban Revolution’s solidarity with the peoples of Africa,” Alejandro García, of the Cuban Embassy in Washington, D.C., told a meeting here Dec. 12. “Cuba’s efforts have not only been to help with the independence and sovereignty of Africa, but to help with development.”

The meeting on Cuba’s legacy in Africa, attended by 55 people, was sponsored by the Los Angeles U.S. Hands Off Cuba Committee. Other speakers included Gail Walker, director of Pastors for Peace, and Nana Gyamfi, president of the National Conference of Black Lawyers. Greetings were given from Carlos Lazo of Puentes de Amor.

Mounting pressure against revolutionary Cuba from the Joseph Biden administration was shown when leaders of the African Methodist Episcopal Church where the event was to be held canceled it at the last minute. Organizers were able to secure another venue.

Several speakers and video clips noted the Cuban Revolution’s decisive role in the defeat of repeated military invasions of Angola by the U.S.-backed apartheid regime of South Africa. From 1975 to 1991 more than 375,000 Cuban volunteers fought alongside Angolan soldiers to beat back the invasions. The defeat of the apartheid forces helped lead to the victorious democratic revolution in South Africa led by Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress.

Cuba offers scholarships to African students who come to attend its Latin American School of Medicine,

becoming doctors and nurses.

“Cuba has developed drugs to treat diabetics to prevent amputations,” Jennifer Alvarez, who visited the school outside Havana in 2020, told the meeting. She noted that because of the U.S. embargo of Cuba, these drugs cannot be brought into the U.S.

“Despite some of the toughest months and the decision by the Biden administration to keep in place the sanctions and the additional 243 measures introduced under Trump, the Cuban people, scientists, and the biotechnology industry have created five vaccines against COVID,” García said. “Now we have less than 100 new cases daily, and have had many days recently with zero deaths.”

Scientists protest California ‘anti-racist’ math plan

BY JANET POST

A national “open letter” signed by 1,470 math and science teachers and professors as of Dec. 19 protests the gutting of math education under the guise of fighting racism. The letter states, “We write to express our alarm over recent trends in K-12 mathematics education in the United States,” particularly the new California Mathematics Framework under consideration there. This program offers what it calls a “justice-oriented perspective” for math.

“We all also share the urgent concern that the benefits of a robust mathematical education,” they write, “should be shared more widely between students of all backgrounds, regardless of race, gender, and economic status.”

“While the US K-12 system has



Militant/Laura Garza

Discussion at Los Angeles meeting on Cuba and Africa Dec. 12. “We have medical brigades in more than 10 African countries,” Alejandro García said by video from the Cuban Embassy in Washington, D.C. This shows “the Cuban Revolution’s solidarity with the peoples of Africa.”

much to improve,” the letter states, “the current trends will instead take us further back.” The signatories include Nobel laureates in physics and chemistry, 25 members of the National Academy of Sciences and four winners of the Fields Medal in math.

The 800-page California program is largely based on materials created by think tanks and other groups funded by the liberal Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. One of those groups is TeachingWorks, run by Deborah Lowenberg Ball, a math professor and former dean of the University of Michigan School of Education. Math is a “harbor for whiteness,” she wrote in a recent podcast, “dominated by whiteness and racism.”

At the heart of programs like the one in California, the letter says, is the “aim to reduce achievement gaps by limiting the availability of advanced mathematical courses to middle schoolers and beginning high schoolers.” In other words, if kids are having problems with higher math, eliminate it. That’ll take care of the problem.

“City parents have revolted in several Department of Education schools where administrators discontinued accelerated math options” in New York City, the Dec. 8 *New York Post* reported, including at Lab Middle School for

Collaborative Studies in Manhattan and the Robert Wagner Middle School on the Upper East Side.

In their open letter, the scientists also warn against teaching “trendy but shallow courses over foundational skills,” including prioritizing “data science” over calculus and algebra.

Proposals like this “are merely ‘kicking the can’ to college,” the scientists say, and “may lead to de facto privatization of advanced mathematics K-12 education and disproportionately harm students with fewer resources.”

Programs like the California Mathematics Framework have already had bad results. For seven years the San Francisco Unified School District has experimented with similar “reforms.” The number of minority students reaching Algebra II by the 10th grade declined and there was a 13% overall decline in student enrollment in calculus.

The U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights reported in 2014 that already “a quarter of our public high schools with the highest percentages of black and Latino students do not have any Algebra II courses.”

Due to the upheaval over the newly proposed curriculum, California’s state education board has postponed any decision on the mathematics framework until next May.

THE MILITANT

Sankara set example for workers worldwide

The ‘Militant’ helps publicize the speeches and legacy of Thomas Sankara, communist leader of the 1983-87 Burkina Faso Revolution. He led workers and peasants in carrying out deepgoing economic and social reforms in one of the world’s poorest countries.



Burkina Faso protesters in 2013 with portrait of revolutionary leader Thomas Sankara.

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

‘Militant has news we need’

Continued from front page drive, which officially begins Jan. 1, is off to a good start.

John Hawkins, Leroy Watson and Dan Fein visited the Kellogg’s picket line in Battle Creek, Michigan, Dec. 19. They were greeted by strikers Damiön Kreger, Christopher Hebner and Mike Cramutolo — members of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union Local 3G — who subscribed to the Militant during previous visits bringing solidarity to the strike.

“Where else besides the Militant can you read the information you need to know to fight effectively,” said Kreger, who has 12 years seniority in the plant and subscribed during the first week of the strike in early October. He renewed his subscription on the spot. Four other strikers signed up for a subscription on the picket lines and at the union hall.

Over the Dec. 18 weekend, SWP members and supporters of the Militant in Dallas visited three workers who subscribed to the paper on their doorsteps during the fall subscription, book, and party fund drive.

“When we knocked on Martha Banda’s door, she was in the middle of making tamales,” reports Josefina Otero, “but she told us she really liked the paper and renewed her subscription. She wants us to come back to discuss what she’s been reading.”

Another subscriber, Marrie Martinez, also said she wanted to renew, asking them to come back when she would have the money.

When Otero and Alyson Kennedy stopped back by later in the week, Martinez told them, “I like the articles

on the strikes,” but she expressed reservations about the Militant and Socialist Workers Party’s support for a woman’s right to choose abortion.

“Most working people want to have children, but often feel they face insurmountable obstacles,” Kennedy said. “Many working people can’t afford to raise a family today with the cost of rents and food going up and low wages.”

Fights for wages, conditions

The Socialist Workers Party points to the need for workers and our unions to continue fighting for higher wages and better working conditions; for government-funded public works programs to provide jobs while building what workers need — affordable, comfortable housing, child care centers and other infrastructure; and family planning service centers offering help with children; safe, effective contraception, and access to abortion for those who need one.

Arianna Ortiz, who helps Martinez with house cleaning and taking care of her husband, who has had a number of strokes, joined the discussion. She said that when the schools were closed because of COVID, “I had to quit my job as an after-school project worker, because I had no one to care for my two boys. My rent went up \$65 a month. It goes up every year.”

Martinez said that she wants to read the Militant article on “A Working-Class Course Is Needed to Support Our Families, Women’s Rights” from the Dec. 27 issue when it comes out in Spanish (it’s in this issue) and to continue the discussion.

In New York City, supporters of the paper have been getting back in touch



Militant/Alyson Kennedy
SWP member Josefina Otero, left, talks to Marrie Martinez and Arianna Ortiz at Martinez’s house in Dallas Dec. 3. Martinez renewed, saying she likes the Militant’s strike coverage.

with new subscribers every week. A striker at United Metro Energy renewed when Sara Lobman went by the Teamsters Local 553 picket line to show support for their fight.

Fight the scourge of Jew-hatred

This worker-correspondent and Willie Cotton took the paper and books out to Brooklyn to knock on doors and talk to subscribers and win new readers. The first person who answered was a young ultra-Orthodox Jewish Talmud student. He told us his cousin would be interested and called him to come down to meet us. We had a lengthy discussion on everything from women’s rights, abortion, fighting against the scourge of Jew-hatred, the Cuban Revolution and capitalism vs. socialism.

Among the books we showed them was the Jewish Question: A Marx-

ist Interpretation by Abram Leon, a young Belgian revolutionary who was killed in the Nazi gas chambers at Auschwitz in October 1944. The book describes the social roots of Jew-hatred and explains why there is no solution for it under capitalism. We also highly recommended the introduction by SWP leader Dave Prince.

“Will the introduction give me a good idea of what your party is all about?” the cousin asked. When we assured him it would, he bought the book with a subscription to the Militant.

“And he kicked in a extra few bucks,” Cotton said.

Want to help introduce friends, co-workers, neighbors and relatives to the Militant and the Socialist Workers Party? Great! See page 8 to contact the party branch nearest you, or contact the Militant at themilitant@mac.com.

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Cincinnati	10
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Lincoln	3
Los Angeles	17
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Minneapolis	12
N. New Jersey	16
New York	25
Oakland	18
Philadelphia	10
Pittsburgh	12
Seattle	13
Washington, D.C.	11
Total U.S.	220
Prisoners	10
UNITED KINGDOM	
London	10
Manchester	8
Total U.K.	18
Canada	30
New Zealand	5
Australia	10
Total	293
Int’l Goal	300

Protests condemn BBC reporting on anti-Jewish attack

BY TONY HUNT

LONDON — Angered by the BBC’s biased reporting minimizing an antisemitic assault two weeks earlier, 250 people gathered in front of the company’s central London offices Dec. 13, chanting, “BBC News: Tell the truth!” and “BBC News: Stop blaming Jews!”

On Nov. 29, a group of young Jews from the U.K. and Israel were touring London in an open-top bus to celebrate Hanukkah. Organizer Rabbi Shneur Glitsenstein, from the Chabad Israeli Centre, told The Times that on Oxford Street some got off and began dancing. Moments later three “men began playing Arabic music from their phones and dancing next to us. They quickly became aggressive ... yelling ‘Free Palestine!’ ... Our group returned to the bus to avoid an inevitable confrontation.” Glitsenstein says the men then threw objects at the bus.

A video circulated online shows three men giving what appear to be Nazi salutes, spitting, using their shoes to bang on the bus and making offensive gestures as the bus tries to move off in traffic.

In its reporting, the BBC referred to the antisemitic threats as “alleged” and then claimed “anti-Muslim” slurs could be heard from Jews on the bus. No other media made this claim. The BBC also said, “It’s not clear what role [the alleged slurs] may have had in the incident,” implying Jewish teenagers were responsible for provoking the

antisemitic attacks.

On Dec. 3, the BBC amended its coverage saying there was only a single “anti-Muslim slur.” The Jewish Chronicle reports there is no clear

audible evidence of any such remarks.

Gideon Falter, chief executive officer of the Campaign Against Antisemitism, and Fiyaz Mughal, of Muslims Against Antisemitism, addressed the rally.

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Celebrate 63rd anniversary of the revolution in Cuba

Below are excerpts from a speech given by Fidel Castro in Havana, Jan. 1, 1979, celebrating the 20th anniversary of the defeat of the U.S.-backed Fulgencio Batista dictatorship and the opening of the first socialist revolution in the Americas. Castro describes the momentous events that placed power in the hands of the workers and farmers. Today, on its 63rd anniversary, Cuba's revolution stands as an example for working people everywhere to emulate. The entire talk appears in Education for Socialists: Selected Speeches of Fidel Castro. Copyright ©1979 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

Perhaps not even we ourselves were fully aware of how great a step January 1, 1959, was to be in the history of our homeland and of the Americas — that January 1 that was also a tremendous event in the development of the world revolutionary movement.

Forty years and two months after the glorious October Revolution [in Russia], the first socialist revolution in the western hemisphere began. Four and a half centuries after the discovery of America, a society that was the fruit of that conquest; of the extermination of the aboriginal population; and of colonization, slavery, capitalism, neocolonialism and imperialism was to know its first truly deep and irreversible change. This change took place at the very doors of the most powerful imperialist country in the world. ...

Cuba was, without a doubt, after Puerto Rico, the nation most tied to U.S. domination in the Americas. The large landowners and bourgeoisie, trusting to the power of the empire and to the well-armed and well-trained repressive forces, never thought seriously about the possibility of a socialist revolution in our homeland. ...

The people needed leaders. The leaders were among the people. The people always produced its leaders in every stage of our revolutionary struggles. Leaders do not shape peoples; it is the peoples that shape their leaders.

None of the men who later were to lead the victorious ranks of the Rebel Army on January 1, 1959, had gone to a military academy or had ever been lionized by the press. And, with but few exceptions, none of the ones who later were to figure in the Political Bureau and the Central Committee of the Party or in the leadership of the Government were known then.

The bourgeois press, the bourgeois parties and imperialism had hammered out other names, other figures, other leaders. Today, millions of our young people and children have never even heard of them, and many of our adults have forgotten them.

But we had to fight. I repeat that there is no revolution without a struggle. No

social changes are possible without the tenacious, consistent struggle of the peoples and their revolutionary vanguard. Marxism-Leninism gives us theory; the struggle gives us victory. ...

In Cuba, it may be categorically stated that revolutionary power was won exclusively by our people. At that stage we couldn't receive any kind of foreign aid, and the arms with which we fought were supplied exclusively to the Batista army, from which we took them in one battle after another.

It is impossible to forget the days that led up to January 1, 1959. Hard fighting was going on all over the country. While the underground fighters in the cities risked their lives, defying death with incomparable courage up to the very last, the Rebel Army, with 3,000 veterans ... fought tirelessly and inflicted one defeat after another on an adversary whose total forces ran to 80,000 men. Alongside the revolutionary army marched all the people.

That was an unforgettable, history-making day that we are celebrating today, one on which our workers unanimously went over the heads of their official "leaders" and carried out the Rebel Army's instructions to take a decisive part in the battle, throwing



AP/Harold Valentine

Fidel Castro addresses crowd in Havana in January 1959, after triumph over U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship. "Before January, a vanguard was the main protagonist in events" in Cuba, Castro said 20 years later, but "since that January, the main protagonist has been the people."

themselves into the general strike that paralyzed the country completely, helped to destroy imperialism's coup maneuver and facilitated controlling and disarming the rest of the enemy units in less than 72 hours. All the people took part in the final battle — a beautiful and exemplary revolutionary event that changed forever the history of our homeland. ...

Up until January 1, imperialism was our indirect adversary; our direct adversary was Batista. After January, imperialism was our adversary directly. Be-

fore January, we fought to become the masters of our destiny; after January, we fought to defend this right and to carry out the socialist revolution.

Before January, we waged a patriotic battle; after January, our battle was also internationalist. (Applause)

Before January, we were part of a national revolution; since that January, we have been part of the world revolution. (Applause) Before January, a vanguard was the main protagonist in events; since that January, the main protagonist has been the people. (Applause)

US drive to isolate Cuba dealt blow by Colombia award

Continued from front page revolution made by Cuba's workers and farmers.

"It's a disgrace what was done to Cuba by including it in the list of terrorist organizations," Sergio Jaramillo said Dec. 6. Jaramillo was the main representative of the former government of President Juan Manuel Santos during the negotiations with the FARC. "This is something we have to fix because Colombia is in debt to Cuba."

Since 1998, the Cuban government has taken initiatives to end the armed conflict and has hosted negotiations on the island. The Colombian government established formal talks with the National Liberation Army (ELN) in 2017, with the support of the Cuban and Norwegian governments.

In January 2019 the current government of Iván Duque ended talks with the ELN after a car bombing in Bogotá left 22 police cadets dead. It demanded the guerrilla army cease kidnappings and release all hostages. Duque, who succeeded Santos, also demanded the Cuban government extradite the ELN commanders who traveled to the island for the negotiations, something both Havana and Oslo say is a violation of the protocol agreed upon by both parties to facilitate the talks.

The Trump and Biden administrations have used Duque's slanderous accusations against the Cuban government to justify keeping Cuba on the U.S. rulers' terrorist list. But the real record of the leadership forged by Fidel Castro during the revolutionary war to overturn the Fulgencio Batista dictatorship gives the lie to this claim.

Cuba never mistreated prisoners

Fidel Castro and the leadership of the Cuban Revolution vigorously opposed the use of terrorist methods, like kidnapping of civilians, assassination of politicians, and mistreatment of enemy soldiers.

The methods used by the FARC were the opposite of those followed by the movement that led working people to take power in Cuba and make a socialist revolution. Such methods would have made it impossible to deepen the organization and mobilization of workers and farmers.

"My opposition to holding prisoners of war, to applying policies that humiliate them or subject them to extremely harsh jungle conditions, is well known," Castro wrote in his book *La Paz en Colombia* (Peace in Colombia) published in 2008, and available in Spanish in PDF format. The conduct of Cuba's rev-

olutionary leaders reflected their moral stature and deep confidence in the capacities of workers and farmers as the makers of revolutionary change.

Over decades of armed conflict the Colombian government asked Havana to mediate in peace talks and hostage situations. One of those times was in 1983, when ELN combatants kidnapped the brother of then Colombian President Belisario Betancourt. Castro condemned the kidnapping and his intervention led to the hostage's release.

"In our view, this action against a close relative of yours is not ethical, neither political or just under no circumstances," wrote the Cuban leader in a letter sent to the Colombian president, published in *La Paz en Colombia*. "To hurt him politically or to take his life, would represent a crime that should never be committed by those who really act in the name of revolutionary ideas."

The initiative to grant the Order to Cuba and Norway came from senators of the Comunes party, formed by the FARC after its military demobilization.

"Together with Cuba, we have had the privilege and great responsibility of being the guarantors of the peace process in Colombia and we deeply value it," said John Petter Opdahl, Norway's ambassador at the ceremony presenting the awards.

— New York —

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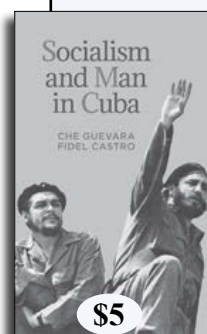
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Socialism and Man in Cuba

by Che Guevara and Fidel Castro

Guevara explains why the revolutionary transformation of social relations necessarily involves the transformation of the working people organizing and leading that process.



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—ON THE PICKET LINE—

Ukraine miners expand protests, demand back pay

Miners at a number of state-owned Ukrainian mines brought their protests over wage arrears to the streets of Kyiv, the capital, Dec. 16. The action was followed by underground sit-ins and aboveground protests at the Myrnodar mine in Donetsk and the Pervomaisk and Novodruzheska mines in Luhansk. These were preceded by a Dec. 7 sit-in at the Chervonogradskaya mine in Lviv.

The government's response to earlier arrears actions was to pay miners \$12.4 million, far below the \$89 million owed that dated back to July. And the state budget included no funds for health and safety measures, Mykhailo Volynets, chairman of the Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine, told the Dec. 16 protesters.

"There is a shortage of portable self-contained rescue devices," he said, "as well as a shortage of rechargeable lamps." He pointed out that the injury rate in Ukrainian coal mines increased by 22.8% over last year, including eight miners killed.

"If paid on time, my family would not be poor," a miner from Chervonograd at the Kyiv protest said. He was holding a banner that read "Our children also want to eat." He explained he is consistently paid in installments that amount to only 6% to 20% of his wage. "Because of this you often have nothing to buy with. You have to take loans, and then you don't know how to repay them."

Volynets was joined by Andriy Zymyn, chairman of the Trade Union of Coal Workers of Ukraine, the country's other major miners' unions. He addressed the rally in front of parliament.

Volynets is a member of parliament and had initiated a special session of the budget committee that same day to fight for miners' families to get paid before Christmas.

Instead, he reported, the committee ruled the issue had to be heard in a full session of parliament, pushing back any possible payment until no earlier than Jan. 22.

Greeting the news with shouts of

"Shame!" the miners continue the fight. Some miners say they will start a hunger strike if back wages aren't paid.

— Vivian Sahner

Student workers strike for first contract at Columbia University

NEW YORK — Some 3,000 graduate and undergraduate student workers at Columbia University, members of United Auto Workers Local 2110, have been on strike here since Nov. 3, fighting for their first contract.

The workers won a ruling from the National Labor Relations Board in 2016 that students, who work as teaching and research assistants, are employees with the right to unionize. Their demands are for a contract that includes higher wages, improved health care, better protection against discrimination and harassment, and that undergraduate workers be recognized as members of the union.

"The university is in New York, so we have to be able to live here," striker Victoria Greene told the *Militant* on the picket line Dec. 17. "Many of us don't have any other income or resources. And we make less than the annual living wage in the city." The Ivy League university's endowment is \$14.35 billion.

"Last spring we were on strike but were asked to take down the picket lines for three weeks to allow 'mediation,'" Bonnie Siegler, a graduate research assistant, said. "But the contract that came out of those negotiations didn't meet any of our demands. We organized to vote it down. That negotiating committee resigned and we elected a new one, including some people who had been part of the fight for the no vote."

Daniel Driscoll, Columbia University's human resources vice president, sent letters to the strikers threatening that if they did not return to work by Dec. 10, they would be replaced for the spring semester.

In response, the union organized expanded picketing Dec. 8 at entrances to the main campuses, urging professors and students not to go to class. They were joined by faculty, students and workers from New York Univer-



Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine

Miners protest in Kyiv, Ukraine, Dec. 16, after not receiving millions in back pay or funding for health and safety measures. Signs read "Our families" and "our children also want to eat."

sity, Fordham University and the City University of New York, as well as by striking Teamsters at United Metro Energy and other unionists.

Workers are getting strike benefits from the union and also have a hardship fund to help with emergency expenses. To contribute, go to <https://opencollective.com/student-workers-of-columbia>.

— Sara Lobman

Calif. sanitation workers fight over safety, seniority, respect

LOS ANGELES — More than 250 Republic Services sanitation workers in the San Diego area, members of Teamsters Local 542, went on strike Dec. 18. "Safety issue here is a big concern. We're driving trucks that shouldn't be on the street," Manny Puma, a driver for Republic in Chula Vista and the local's shop steward, told CBS News 8.

Their job is to pick up the trash, strikers told the reporters, but say they're being treated like trash.

"We're picking up residential — 1,300 to 1,400 homes a day. No matter what the weather condition is, we're out there servicing our customers," Puma said. "Sometimes we're hampered by machines that aren't safe. Trucks that are leaking oil."

Republic Services is the second-

largest waste collection company in the country, operating in 41 states with some 30,000 workers. The Teamsters union is negotiating over similar issues with workers in Orange County, Los Angeles, and New Orleans.

Some 400 sanitation workers in Huntington Beach and Anaheim in Orange County, members of Teamsters Local 396, went on strike Dec. 9 over too much overtime, company harassment, violations of seniority and disrespect from the bosses.

"You may be the senior driver on a route and they move you around for no reason," front loader driver Enrique Rodriguez Jr., told the *Militant*. "Then you're on a route you're not familiar with and they expect you to finish on time."

One worker who got sick with COVID took it home and a family member died. "The company told him he'd used up all his sick time and didn't have any more and had to come back to work," fleet mechanic and union committee member Ron Velasquez said. The company doesn't provide any paid bereavement time. The morale on the picket line was really high, he added.

The strike ended Dec. 16 after workers voted up a new company offer. Valasquez said they won a new bidding process that gives workers the chance to take or pass up on jobs based on seniority, and some transfer drivers hired through a subcontractor will become company employees. They won a \$6 raise over the six-year contract with \$2.23 in the first year, and prevented the bosses from adding any more tiers to the pay scale.

"We felt our strike did make changes," he said. "We needed to do something bold, we stuck together to make a statement and show we are the ones that make the wheels turn. They know if we have other issues in the future we have that solidarity."

— Bill Arth and Laura Garza

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



January 6, 1997

For an entire month, daily protests against the Stalinist regime of Slobodan Milosevic have filled the streets of Yugoslavia. The number of demonstrators in the capital of Serbia has hovered around 100,000. On December 16 up to 250,000 people took to the streets.

The working class in Yugoslavia had been facing deteriorating conditions of life and work for nearly two decades leading up to the 1990s. This was rooted in the Stalinist bureaucratic and anti-working-class methods of the petty-bourgeois layer that controlled state power.

The attack on the Yugoslav working class took a qualitative turn for the worse when the competing regimes in the different republics — primarily in Serbia and Croatia — launched their war in 1991. Their goal was to maintain or improve the parasitic and privileged way of life of the castes they represent.



January 14, 1972

The massive five-day U.S. bombing of North Vietnam underlined what many have been reluctant to believe: President Nixon is continuing to seek a military victory in Southeast Asia. The real meaning of "Vietnamization" is defeat of the Vietnamese revolution and stabilization of a proimperialist regime in Saigon.

U.S. Air Force and Navy jet bombers flew about 1,000 attack sorties against targets described as "fuel and supply depots, anti-aircraft gun, missile and radar sites, and MIG fighter airfields."

Devastating setbacks to the imperialist forces in Cambodia and Laos were clearly a major factor in Nixon's decision to step up the bombing of North Vietnam.

The antiwar movement must respond with vigorous protests, mobilizing as many antiwar forces as possible. Already there have been immediate actions protesting the bombing raids.



January 4, 1947

American labor is hardening its front in struggle for new wage increases to keep up with rising living costs. Capitalist spokesmen advance the long-ago exploded argument that wage rises will lead to price rises, although wage rises actually only cut into profits. Flying in the face of facts, they try to make out that business cannot "afford" higher wages.

The unions have not yet advanced the powerful slogan which the General Motors workers found so effective last year: "Open the books!" If the unions are permitted to dig into company records they can establish irrefutably whether or not Big Business is lying when it talks about inadequate profits and inability to pay.

The giant interlocking monopolies do not dare to open their books to inspection. The exposure of their superprofits would wreck their propaganda beyond all repair!

Read about the battles that forged the US labor movement



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Working-class fight for women’s emancipation, support for families

BY SETH GALINSKY
NEW YORK — Paul Mailhot, a member of the Socialist Workers Party National Committee, spoke here Dec. 11 on the fight for women’s emancipation and the class-struggle road for workers to fight for political power — in the wake of a U.S. Supreme Court hearing on challenges to the 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling.

The 1973 Supreme Court decision, which decriminalized abortion, created a “right to privacy” for a woman and her doctor to carry out an abortion up to the point of “fetal viability,” roughly 24 weeks.

“It was more a medical procedures’ guide than codification of a broad working-class consensus in favor of women’s rights won through debate, discussion and action,” Mailhot said. “In fact, Roe v. Wade has been a blow to the fight for women’s rights and for the working class.”

Support for women to be able to get an abortion was growing in 1973, “but millions still had to be convinced why this right was integral to the broad range of rights women were fighting for,” Mailhot said.

Middle-class women’s groups reduced this broader fight into an abortion issue, unconnected to the broader questions of women’s emancipation and family formation. This allowed support for the right to choose to be portrayed as ignoring respect for human life.

Opponents of women’s rights took advantage of the flawed Roe v. Wade decision to make the fight against abortion the spearhead of their attack. “Since 1973 they have gotten some 1,300 laws passed in states across the country, put-

ting obstacles in the way of women having control of their own bodies,” Mailhot said. Today there are no facilities in nearly 90% of U.S. counties where women can get an abortion.

Working-class starting point

“The framework for the debate working people need about women’s emancipation can’t start from abortion or the Roe v. Wade decision,” Mailhot said. “It starts with combating all the obstacles under capitalism to family formation in the working class and worse-off layers of the middle class. And with the second-class status of women and the way it underpins capitalist rule.”

The comments of several judges during the Dec. 1 hearings shows a Supreme Court majority is considering overturning Roe v. Wade, if not now, then down the line, Mailhot said.

But that won’t close off the needed discussion over how women’s rights are a key part of the broader fight of the working class against the attacks of the capitalist rulers and their government. This includes the need to advance all aspects of family planning, fighting for health care, society’s responsibility for contraception and child care, and more.

Debate over adoption

One aspect of this is the place of adoption. Judge Amy Coney Barrett noted that since Roe v. Wade adoption and “safe haven laws” make it easier for women to give up unwanted children without fear of being prosecuted. Why not talk about adoption as an alternative? she raised.

“Questions like the one asked by Barrett about adoption can’t be



Militant/Kevin Dwire
Picket in St. Paul Park, Minnesota, Jan. 30, 2021, supporting Teamster unionists locked out by Marathon Petroleum. Women are increasingly in front lines together with men in labor battles, showing struggle for women’s emancipation advances fighting power of working class.

sloughed off as irrelevant — or even worse — ‘Catholic-minded.’” Mailhot said. They must be taken up from the standpoint of the working class.

“Among working people, adoption is a normal way of dealing with a societal need — couples who can’t have kids and giving a home to kids who don’t have one,” Mailhot said. Relatives and friends often take in children of people they are close to.

For most working-class families adoption is an exercise in class solidarity — a rejection of the ‘me and mine’ attitudes hammered into us by the capitalist class.”

“Two of the five children adopted by my sister and her husband were foster kids, who were never formally adopted but were taken in as part of their family,” he recalled. Mailhot described how a neighbor complained to his parents, “your daughter’s family looks like the League of Nations.”

“Along with fulfilling a need, I always thought my sister’s family helped break down prejudices in the small town where they lived and in my own family,” he said.

Mailhot pointed to a Dec. 2 article by *Wall Street Journal* columnist Peggy Noonan, who said that the Roe v. Wade ruling has generated such sharp debate because “Roe involved death.”

“But it is the capitalist system that is about death,” Mailhot said. “From the rulers’ wars, to the maiming and deaths of workers on the job, to the treatment of the elderly, to the thousands of women who lost their lives in botched abortions before the procedure was decriminalized.”

The fight for working people to decide how best to form a family, including for women to be able to choose to have an abortion, is about life, in the face of the pressures of the dog-eat-dog capitalist system.

The values the capitalist class puts on human life, he said, is reflected in the fact that “they hold the first year of college — and especially the first year of grad school — in higher regard than the first year of starting a family.”

Advancing human diversity

Mailhot urged forum participants to study the course charted by the communist leaders of the Bolshevik and Cuban revolutions.

He quoted the Soviet government’s 1920 “Decree on the Protection of Women’s Health.” It says, “By working for socialism, and by introducing the protection of maternity and infan-

cy on an extensive scale,” it will be possible to achieve the gradual disappearance of abortion. (See article on facing page.)

At the same time, the decree codified the fact that “the Soviet government that came out of the Bolshevik-led Russian Revolution was the first government that ensured women had the right to a safe, legal abortion,” Mailhot said.

He pointed to an article in the Cuban daily *Granma* titled, “Cuba Has Broken the Barrier of Silence that the US Reinforces Against Its Deaf Community.” It reports extraordinary steps the Cuban government takes to get around the U.S. rulers’ embargo to provide hearing aids to those who need them and sustain its sign language interpretation service — a hallmark of its deep respect for human diversity.

“The working-class morality that provides the foundation for the Cuban government’s policies is also why it doesn’t encourage using abortion as a form of contraception, while ensuring it is free and accessible. In the face of the punishing U.S. economic war against Cuba, the government there is fighting to make birth control easily accessible and to improve the economic conditions for family foundation.”

Addressing the broader questions facing working people is key to advancing the fight for women’s emancipation, Mailhot said.

“In 2008 Hillary Clinton stated that abortion should be ‘safe, legal and rare,’ he said. “How do you make it rare when having a baby and raising a family remains a challenging decision for mil-

Continued on page 9

Bolshevik Revolution advanced the fight for women’s equality

One of the central tasks taken on by the Soviet Union after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia was to organize determined steps toward women’s equality and ability to participate fully in society as part of advancing the revolution.

Below is a decree issued in 1920 by the Soviet government that made Russia the first country in Europe to decriminalize abortion, as part of advancing the protection of the family and the health of women. Its goal was to organize government services and aid that would make many abortions unnecessary while also assuring no woman could face victimization for having the procedure.

This was part of a broader campaign to involve workers and farmers in advancing women’s full legal equality with men. Laws on women’s rights codified in 1921 guaranteed women the right to divorce, reserved solely for men under the czarist regime. Sex discrimination in employment was outlawed and the eight-hour day enforced. State-run nurseries were provided free of charge as more women entered the industrial workforce. Public health services were made freely available with special attention to women and children, especially for pregnant mothers and those breast feeding.

“The oppressed position of women,” Leon Trotsky, one of the central leaders of the revolution, explained in 1923, “cannot be disposed of merely by declarations, however sincere they may be and even if they are given legislative character. It is necessary that a woman should feel, in ordinary life, in everyday experience, that there are no external restrictions and constraints upon her and no contemptuous or condescending attitude is being taking toward her.

“On the contrary, she must feel that she not only has her ‘rights’ but is being given fraternal collaboration directed toward helping her rise to a higher level.”



1920 Soviet decree on women’s health

In past decades, the number of women resorting to artificial termination of pregnancy has grown both in the West and here in this country. The legisla-

tion of all countries combats this evil by punishing the woman who chooses to have an abortion and the doctor who makes it. Without leading to favorable results, this method of combating abortions has driven the operation under-



Literacy class for women factory workers in Moscow. After Russian Revolution in 1917, Soviet government led by V.I. Lenin aided women in making giant steps forward. This included 1919 literacy drive, fight for equal rights, state guarantee of child care, decriminalized abortion.

ground and made the woman a victim of mercenary and ignorant quacks who make a profession of these secret operations. As a result, up to 50% of such women are infected in the course of operation, and up to 4% of them die.

The Workers’ and Peasants’ Gov-

ernment is conscious of this serious evil to the community. It combats this evil by propaganda against abortions among working women. By working for socialism, and by introducing the protection of maternity and infancy on an extensive scale, it feels assured

2021: Strikes, solidarity heat up the class struggle

Continued from front page

good time to get moving now. Bring everyone up with us.”

The number of union battles first began to rise in 2018 with a series of teachers strikes that started in West Virginia. It paused during the imposition of government pandemic lockdowns in 2020 before rising again this year.

The bosses are driven by deepening competition at home and abroad to take steps to defend their markets and profits, and they aim to take it out on our class. But they increasingly find that their “last, best, final offer” is not always “final.” After 2,900 United Auto Workers union members at Volvo Truck in Dublin, Virginia, went on strike in April, they twice voted down proposed contracts before getting one more to their liking in June.

Threats to throw strikers out of their jobs and hire permanent replacement workers did not stop 1,400 workers at Kellogg’s, members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers union, from overwhelmingly voting down a contract Dec. 5. Then they voted up an improved version Dec. 18-20.

Locked-out steelworkers at Marathon’s St. Paul Park refinery in Minnesota; strikers at John Deere’s plant in Davenport, Iowa; at Kellogg’s plant in Omaha, Nebraska; and coal miners at Warrior Met in Alabama have all faced court injunctions aimed at restricting their picketing, making it harder for workers to shut down production to force concessions from the bosses.

Bosses at ExxonMobil in Beaumont, Texas, are trying to break the United Steelworkers union. At stake are boss demands for job cuts that would endanger the safety of workers and people living in the area. After locking out workers May 1, they are pushing for a government-run union decertification election.

Two-tier contracts are a central issue in many of today’s strikes. Over de-

cedes bosses forced through contracts that impose worse wages, conditions and benefits on new hires, seeking to boost profits while dividing workers doing the same job. Workers counter with demands for “equal pay for equal work.” This was a key issue in the recent strike by the bakery workers at Kellogg’s cereal plants.

Another important issue is the impact of inflation on workers and their families. Real wages, which have declined for decades, are taking a big hit as prices rise at the fastest rate in 40 years, especially on essentials like food, gas and housing. Striking UAW members at John Deere fought successfully to retain cost-of-living protection.

Reversing the decadeslong decline in the number of workers who have contracts with COLA is a key question. And we have to arm ourselves to be able to explain that the bosses’ claim that wage increases cause higher prices is a lie. Rising prices are a way the bosses try to boost their profits at the expense of working people, regardless of what happens to our wages. Explaining this clearly is key to derail their attempts to turn fellow workers against striking unionists.

Workers who don’t yet have a union are also taking action. Last month a well-publicized hunger strike was organized by New York yellow cab drivers to win some relief from the crushing debt the city government has forced on them.

A class-struggle road forward

“At first I didn’t know what it would be like to be on strike. Now I’ve learned about solidarity,” Gerald Lawrence told the *Militant* on the picket line at Kellogg’s in Memphis, Tennessee, last month. More workers are gaining class-struggle experience and are strengthening bonds with fellow workers as they reach out and win support.

“I’ve learned about our rich history here,” Lawrence added, “going back to the 1968 sanitation workers

of achieving the gradual disappearance of this evil.

But as the moral survivals of the past and the difficult economic conditions of the present still compel many women to resort to this operation, the People’s Commissariats of Health and of Justice, anxious to protect the health of the women and considering that the method of repressions in this field fails entirely to achieve this aim, have decided:

1. To permit such operations to be made freely and without any charge in Soviet hospitals, where conditions are assured of minimizing the harm of the operation.

2. It is absolutely forbidden for anyone but a doctor to carry out this operation.

3. Any nurse or midwife found guilty of making such an operation will be deprived of the right to practice, and tried by a People’s Court.

4. A doctor carrying out an abortion in his private practice for the purposes of profit will be called to account by a People’s Court.

N. Semashko, People’s Commissar of Health.

Kurskii, People’s Commissar of Justice.

strike,” part of the Black-led working-class movement that overthrew Jim Crow segregation.

Vital lessons from other working-class struggles can be found in Farrell Dobbs’ four-volume *Teamster* books. Dobbs was a central leader of the strikes and organizing drives that made Minneapolis a union town and that brought a quarter million over-the-road truckers into the union across the Midwest in the 1930s. He describes how workers with a revolutionary-minded leadership organized to fight, win allies among farmers and others oppressed by capital, and make gains.

He also describes how the powerful rising labor movement was crippled by the class-collaborationist outlook of union officials, who tied the unions to getting out the vote for the Democrats, one of the bosses’ two main political parties.

As working-class struggles grow, “trade union action alone,” Dobbs explains, “will prove less and less capable of resolving the workers’ problems.”

Workers need to organize ourselves independently from the bosses’ parties, their government, cops and courts. We need to build a party of our own, a labor party, based on our unions. As our battles against the bosses get more combative and generalized, we’ll need such a party — and a hardened revolutionary leadership — to take political power and form a workers and farmers government.

Important contract battles lie ahead in 2022, when some 185 major union contracts, covering more than 1.3 million workers, will expire. This includes over 22,000 West Coast dockworkers; 30,000 oil and petrochemical workers across the country; 5,700 members of Steelworkers union members at Goodyear Tire in Virginia; 4,000 Teamster car haulers; BCTGM-organized Frito-Lay workers in Topeka, Kansas, and Vancouver, Washington; and many more.

‘Workers in the US must go into politics on their own account’

Notebook of an Agitator: From the Wobblies to the Fight against the Korean War and McCarthyism by *James P. Cannon* is one of *Pathfinder's Books of the Month* for January. Cannon was a founding leader of the communist movement in the U.S. and of the Socialist Workers Party. Below is an excerpt from his talk at the SWP's 13th national convention, July 1, 1948. It was broadcast live nationwide by the American Broadcasting System. Workers engaged in rising union battles today will value Cannon's description of the diametrically opposed class interests of "the two Americas." Copyright © 1993 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY JAMES P. CANNON

American capitalism — the last solvent stronghold of an outlived and doomed world system — is trying to prop up the hated regimes of capitalists and kings and landlords by economic pressure and military force.

These are the two main elements of the present world crisis.

The Wall Street money-sharks, and the brass hats of Prussian mentality, are riding high in Washington these days. The masters of America, drunk with power, are threatening and terrifying the people of the world — seek-



July 12, 1948, *Militant* covers SWP convention, including James P. Cannon's speech on "the two Americas," the imperialist exploiters vs. workers and farmers, broadcast live to millions.

ing to dominate and enslave them — striving to transform the other countries of the world into colonies of the American empire.

Their program is a program of madness, and it is doomed to failure. The great majority of the peoples of the world do not want to be slaves of America. That is to their credit and we applaud them for it. The attempt to enslave them would be profitable only for the small group of monopolists — and the military caste, who dreams of careers as colonial administrators of conquered peoples.

But the criminal adventure would encounter such ferocious resistance that the American people at home would have to pay an enormous cost in living standards ruined by inflation, in the stamping out of democracy by military rule. And America's young sons would have to pay in misery, blood and death. The American people would be among the first victims of the insane campaign of American imperialism to conquer and enslave the world.

To avoid this calamity it is necessary now to show the people of the world the other America. For there are two Americas — and millions of the people already distinguish between them.

One is the America of the imperialists — of the little clique of capitalists, landlords, and militarists who are threatening and terrifying the world. This is the America the people of the world hate and fear.

There is the other America — the

America of the workers and farmers and the "little people." They constitute the great majority of the people. They do the work of the country. They revere its old democratic traditions — its old record of friendship for the people of other lands, in their struggles against Kings and Despots — its generous asylum once freely granted to the oppressed.

This is the America which must and will solve the world crisis — by taking power out of the hands of the little clique of exploiters and parasites, and establishing a government of workers and farmers. The Workers' and Farmers' Government will immediately proceed to change things *fundamentally* —

Throw out the profit and rent hogs, and increase the living standards of the people who do the useful work.

Assure freedom and democratic rights to all, not forgetting those who are denied any semblance of them now.

Call back the truculent admirals from the seven seas — and ground the airplanes with their dangling bombs.

Hold out the hand of friendship and comradely help to the oppressed and hungry people in the world.

These people don't want to fight anybody. They only want to live. There are two billion people in the world — and more than half of them don't get enough to eat. These people should be helped — not threatened, not driven back into slavery, under the social system that has kept half of them hungry all their lives.

It is well to recall now that America was born of revolution in 1776, and

secured its unity as a nation through another revolution — the Civil War — which smashed the abomination of chattel slavery in the process. Our great, rich, wonderful country was once the light and the hope of the world. But our America has fallen into the hands of a small, selfish group, who are trying to dominate the world — and to set up a police state at home.

These Wall Street money-sharks are just as foreign to the real America as were the despots who ruled the land before the revolution of 1776. They are just as foreign as were the traffickers in human flesh and blood — the slave owners — whose power was broken by the Civil War — the blessed second American Revolution. These imperialist rulers of America are the worst enemies of the American people.

American democracy, under their rule, is slipping away. The fear that oppressed Mark Twain, the fear that America would lose its democracy, is steadily becoming a reality. The Taft-Hartley Law is but the most recent instance of this ominous trend. The divine right of kings has reappeared in America — disguised as the divine right of judges to issue injunctions and levy fines against labor organizations.

Only three years have passed since the imperialists finished the last slaughter. And now they are drafting the youth for another. Militarism is becoming entrenched in America. Militarism — so long synonymous with goose-stepping Prussianism — is now to be made synonymous with Americanism, if Big Business has its way. A large section of the sturdy immigrants who helped to build this country came here to escape militarism. Now their grandsons face the same brutal regimentation here.

All this is part and parcel of the development of capitalism — the system which puts profits above all other considerations. The capitalist system has long outlived its usefulness. Capitalism offers no future to the people but depressions, imperialist wars, fascism, universal violence and a final plunge into barbarism.

To avoid such a fate, the workers of the United States must go into politics on their own account, independent of all capitalist politics. They must take power, establish a Workers' and Farmers' Government, and reorganize the economy of the country on a socialist basis.

January

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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8 The Militant January 3, 2022

Solidarity crucial to outcome of labor fights

Workers are showing growing confidence today in using our unions to fight against the attacks of the bosses and their government. This is an advance for all working people, including workers yet to be organized, farmers and all those oppressed and exploited by the capitalist rulers. More workers are walking picket lines, battling bosses’ moves to impose two-tier contracts that widen divisions in the plant, wages that fall farther and farther behind rising prices, cuts in health care and retirement pay, and grueling schedules that wreak mayhem with family life.

United Mine Workers of America members at Warrior Met Coal in Brookwood, Alabama, have been on strike since April to win back what the bosses wrested from them in previous steep wage and benefit cuts. To help them persevere in their long battle, the Allegheny/Fayette Central Labor Council sent dozens of Christmas toys and bikes for the children of the UMW members. The union lists every one of the contributors on their national website.

Working-class solidarity is a formidable weapon against bosses who think they’re all powerful. More is needed. Expanding support for labor struggles can affect their outcome. Workers see they are part of a national — and a worldwide — common class struggle. Strike victories boost the confidence of all working people. They provide a powerful example of what courageous and united action by working people can accomplish to millions who face the crushing effects of the capitalist social and economic crisis. They help us rebuild and grow the labor movement.

Hundreds of sanitation workers in Southern California went on strike Dec. 18. Some 650 locked-out oil refinery workers in Beaumont, Texas, continue to fight the bosses’ drive to decertify and break their union. Defending safety on the job and the surrounding com-

munity is a key part of both these struggles.

On strike for nearly 10 months, nurses at St. Vincent Hospital in Worcester, Massachusetts, have been fighting for more hiring to assure better conditions and care. They will vote on a tentative agreement Jan. 3.

Each of these battles is in the interests of all working people. Visit their picket lines and win contributions to their union strike funds. Join labor support rallies. UMW officials have announced a rally for striking miners called by the Alabama AFL-CIO on Jan. 12.

Union solidarity isn’t limited to picket lines. Film crew workers in New York, members of Teamsters Local 817, raised funds to fill a truck with vital supplies and drove it to Kentucky to aid workers there left to fend for themselves by the bosses and their government after recent deadly tornadoes.

Through using our unions and building solidarity workers discover the immense power our class can wield.

Karl Marx, the founder of the communist movement, explained in 1866 that unions need to act as “organizing centers of the working class in the broad interests of its *complete emancipation*.”

“They must convince the world at large that their efforts, far from being narrow and selfish, aim at the emancipation of the downtrodden millions.”

In struggle and building solidarity, workers deepen their consciousness that our class interests are irreconcilable with those of the bosses. And also with their political parties, the Democrats and Republicans, and the entire system of exploitation and oppression the rulers defend. This is the road to prepare for the bigger battles the crisis of capitalism will produce in the years ahead.

Importance of unions shown during tornadoes

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been fully restored.

Eight workers were killed when the Mayfield Consumer Products candle factory in Mayfield, Kentucky, was leveled by the storm. The plant, with a majority Latino workforce, has been running round-the-clock to meet holiday demands. When tornado sirens began to sound and weather bureau warnings to take shelter were being mass-texted to the population, the candle plant bosses, instead of calling off the shift, were determined to keep the factory running rather than lose production. They then had workers “shelter” in a hallway. There was no underground tornado shelter in the plant.

“It should have been shut down,” Chelsea Logue, 22, a worker there, told the *Louisville Courier-Journal*. Logue was buried alive in the rubble until she and co-workers clawed their way out.

“When we went around and started asking if we could go home, one of the HR (human resources) ladies told us that if we went home, we were going to be terminated because it was considered abandonment of our job,” said candle factory worker Sarah Atkins.

“They knew it was heading toward us,” plant worker Jennifer Sanchez-Flores, 23, said. “By the time they told us to go back to work, they should have said, ‘Hey, this might be coming straight toward us. Go home.’ They should have sent us home.”

In Edwardsville, Illinois, the storm ripped huge chunks of the steel roof off and collapsed the walls of one of the Amazon warehouses in town, leaving dozens of workers trapped, buried in debris, and with cars tossed on top of them. Amazon bosses, like the candle factory bosses, unwilling to sacrifice holiday profits, had kept workers on the job. Six died. The company’s profits jumped 84% last year during the pandemic.

The bosses at Amazon are fiercely anti-union. There was no union at Mayfield Consumer Products, where the starting wage is \$8 an hour.

The conditions there — especially the bosses’ refusal to shut down and the lack of a proper tornado underground shelter — are in sharp contrast to the situation at a unionized Kentucky General Motors Corvette factory that was also hit by a tornado with

150 mph winds. This underlines how much workers need labor unions.

What a difference a union makes

There were 20 to 30 members of United Auto Workers Local 2164 still working after the second shift ended at the Corvette plant in Bowling Green. But, because of the union, these workers were able to take cover in a designated basement tornado shelter.

“Thankfully all the systems in the plant worked,” Jason Watson, shop chairman for Local 2164, told the *Detroit Free Press*. “The take-shelter alerts that are broadcast ... people took cover and once the all-clear sounded they were permitted to go home. None of them said they were scared, because they couldn’t tell what was going on. When you’re in the basement, a bomb could go off and you wouldn’t hear it.”

The plant suffered serious damage, with the roof and an employees entrance on fire. “There’s all kinds of visible damage throughout the building and structural things,” Watson said. At least 122 Corvettes already built there were destroyed.

Many workers’ homes were damaged by the storm as well. “Our union hall has spearheaded all of those efforts to determine who may need help or what kind of help may be needed,” Watson said.

After extensive repair work — including the labor of 90 skilled trades Local 2164 members — the plant began to reopen Dec. 20. The union received a slew of donated gift cards to help local members with repairs at home and to get by on layoff while repairs were being made. The number of cards was so generous, Watson said, the union is sharing them with others in the community who suffered tornado destruction.

The 1,200 UAW workers in Bowling Green were part of the GM-wide auto strike in the fall of 2019, where one of the big issues was fighting against the bosses’ push for a divisive two-tier wage setup.

“We’re not doing this for us, we’re doing it for everyone in the country,” striker Dennis Wyatt, a 35-year pipefitter, told the *Militant* on the picket line at that time. “If we can get a little something, then maybe other workers will say, ‘Hey, maybe we need a union.’”

Kellogg’s strike ends

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“The company wants to keep us divided,” said Trevor Bidelman, BCTGM Local 3G’s president. “We are looking out for what strengthens the unity and solidarity of the workers. The labor movement needs a moral compass.

“Only one member crossed the line here,” he added.

“Eliminating the two-tier setup isn’t our only issue. Forced overtime is another,” said Don Rothwell, who works in the power house at the plant. “I worked seven months straight without a day off. Only when my brother-in-law died did they give me one day off.

“Around 200 people attended a strike solidarity rally here Dec. 17,” he said. “The UAW and other unions joined us there.” Democratic Party Sen. Bernie Sanders spoke at the event, which was held outside corporate headquarters.

Prior to the vote, the company said their latest offer included “no new concessions, or takeaways” from the union. But that wasn’t the opinion of Battle Creek plant manager Gregory Jackson in a Dec. 17 email leaked to striking workers. Jackson wrote the new offer contained “no gain overall for them, with 3 more weeks on strike and no income.”

His comments are “appalling. But don’t surprise me at all,” Donivan Williams, a member of the BCTGM Local 3G executive board, told the *Michigan Advance*. The strike was called “because of the way that people have been treated.”

Fellow cereal workers from the Post Consumer Brands plant located just down the street have joined the picket lines, striker Damion Kreger said. He told this worker-correspondent that a union-organized Christmas party was held for the strikers’ children Dec. 11 where presents were distributed.

“Staying out this long was a huge step. We inspired many people,” Bidelman told the *Huffington Post* after the vote was announced. The tally has not been disclosed, but Bidelman thought the vote was close.

Under the new contract, “unfortunately, I think some people will get stuck in transitional [jobs]” he said. “At our local we were a little disappointed. That being said, we’ve got to take some time and reflection.”

“I’m glad that we’re returning to work,” Scott Evans, a striker at the Memphis plant told the *Militant* by phone Dec. 21. “I hope our fight was enough to make life better for the newer and future workers.”

Support for families

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lions of women and men today?” Capitalism in crisis is less and less able to provide conditions for workers to be able to form families, ensuring the choices women face about whether to give birth are harder and harder.

“The fight for jobs, protection from rising costs of living, universal health care, child care, decent affordable housing; access to family planning, including contraception and hospital-provided abortion; opposition to bureaucratic obstacles to working class families adopting children,” Mailhot said. “These are all part of the fight we need to wage in which women’s private right to choose to have an abortion fits.”

More men and women are standing together on picket lines to resist boss attacks around the country today, he pointed out. These battles include fights against cuts to real wages, forced overtime, life-draining schedules and other obstacles to family life. “That’s an encouraging sign for the future of the fight for women’s emancipation, which takes place around a broader range of issues today. And for organizing a working-class movement capable of taking power out of the hands of the capitalist class, the greatest enemy of the rights of women.”

‘Militant’ holiday schedule

The ‘Militant’ will be taking a break Dec. 24 - Jan 1. The following issue will be mailed out Jan. 6.