

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Democrats' fear of 2022 election, 'deplorables,' drives assault on rights
— PAGE 6

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 86/NO. 25 JULY 11, 2022

Moscow's troops out now! Defend Ukrainian sovereignty!

BY ROY LANDERSEN

In one of his most brazen acts of murder of innocent civilians in his invasion of Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin sent cruise missiles that hit a busy shopping mall June 27 in Kremenchuk, far from the front lines of combat in Donbas, killing 20 and injuring dozens more. These attacks on civilian urban areas, from Kyiv to Kharkiv to Odesa,

Solidarity with workers in Ukraine, Russia! End US sanctions on Russia!

are a growing part of Moscow's war to destroy Ukraine as a country and reimpose its domination.

Moscow claimed that the target had been a military installation and the mall was abandoned. Or, they said, the attack was carried out by Ukraine authorities to make Putin look bad.

Russia's deputy United Nations
Continued on page 8

Rail workers resist gov't, boss attacks on safety, pay



Falls County Sheriffs Office
Freight train derails June 23 in Texas. Four days later Amtrak train hit truck, derailed in Missouri, killing four, injuring 150. Bosses' profit drive endangers workers, nearby communities.

US rail workers fight for right to strike, new contract

BY CANDACE WAGNER

After working for nearly three years under an expired contract on the nation's Class 1 freight rail lines, 23,000 engineers received strike ballots from their union, the Brotherhood

Continued on page 9

40,000 rail workers in UK strike against wage freeze

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

LONDON — In the first national strike here by an industrial union in decades, 40,000 rail workers stopped work for three days last week. Striking members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union included station, signal, maintenance and track workers, and train crews. Halting work every other day, their action disrupted the rail network for a week. More strikes are planned.

The workers are fighting 13 rail operating companies, which have imposed a pay freeze on workers over the last two years, and Network Rail, the state-run company responsible for rail infrastructure, which refused any

Continued on page 9

'Workers need our own party, a labor party, to take political power'



Militant/Beverly Bernardo

Chris Hoepfner, SWP candidate for U.S. Congress from Philadelphia, discusses party's program, activities with Ammie Moralez during block party in his neighborhood June 26.

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

"I was born in 1995," Luke Winnicki told Chris Hoepfner, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress, June 26 in south Philadelphia. "My first memory was Sept. 11, 2001, then there was the 2008 financial crash. My family survived but a lot of people didn't and since 2016 it's been one thing after another. That's

why people are looking for solutions."

"The crisis of capitalism is accelerating," Hoepfner replied, pointing to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. "The stakes for working people are very high. We need to form a labor party independent of the Democrats and Republicans to organize to take political power into our own hands."

Continued on page 2

US rulers jack up interest rates, deepen crisis for workers, farmers

BY TERRY EVANS

Facing a spreading economic crisis and soaring inflation, especially in things workers need, the U.S. rulers have launched steps that will fuel a deeper downturn in production and jobs. In a model of understatement, Federal Reserve Chair Jay Powell told Congress June 22 that the central bank's interest rate hikes meant a recession was "certainly a possibility."

Former Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers was more explicit than Powell. "We need five years of unemployment above 5% to contain inflation," he said June 20. The "we" both Summers and Powell speak for

Continued on page 7

SWP statement:

Defend the working class, our families, women's rights

This statement by Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for governor of Texas and the party's 2020 presidential candidate, was released June 25.

The Socialist Workers Party plans to redouble our efforts — our election campaigns, expanding the reach of the *Militant* and the work of party members in the unions — in defending the working class and our families amid today's capitalist crisis and by fighting for women's emancipation as an essential part of that struggle.

Workers and farmers face an onslaught by the bosses and their government, who are determined to try to solve their crisis — a combination of soaring prices and a downturn in production, trade and jobs — on our backs. All this is exacerbated by the effects of Moscow's attempt to crush

Continued on page 3

UN commission: End US colonial rule in Puerto Rico

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

UNITED NATIONS — "U.S. laws dealing with Puerto Rico have one purpose — to perpetuate the colony," said Richard López, speaking for the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party. He was one of two dozen pro-independence petitioners at the annual hearing of the U.N. decolonization committee.

Calling for support to the fight for independence from U.S. rule, López added, "We know it's not by begging the masters in Washington that we'll achieve equality and justice."

Continued on page 11

Inside

Quebec gov't language law is blow to working people 4

Expand use of nuclear power for world energy needs 6

Ecuador protests demand lower prices, halt foreclosures 7

—On the picket line, p. 5—

Calif. nurses fight against inadequate supplies, staffing

Assa Abloy workers strike for pay rise in New Zealand

Workers need a labor party!

Continued from front page

"I agree we need a workers party," Winnicki said. "I'm never going to vote for the Democrats again."

Winnicki teaches 7th grade social studies and is a member of the American Federation of Teachers. He described how classrooms where he taught were contaminated by asbestos. "That is a good example of why the

SWP program demands workers control of production," Hoepfner said, to enforce safety on the job.

Winnicki signed the petition to put Hoepfner on the ballot, bought a *Militant* subscription and a copy of the book *Labor, Nature, and the Evolution of Humanity*. "This addresses some of the questions we're discussing in my classes," Winnicki said.

SWP members and supporters are campaigning for the party's ticket in Pennsylvania — Candace Wagner for governor, Osborne Hart for U.S. Senate and Hoepfner.

A three-week target effort is set for July 9-31 to collect 2,000 signatures, twice as many as required, to put Hoepfner on the ballot, the first time in decades that the SWP will have gotten ballot status for federal office in Pennsylvania. Heading into this effort 332 signatures have been collected. As of June 28, campaigners in Philadelphia also sold 15 subscriptions and 11 books.

Party members and supporters across the country began a four-week drive June 25 to win 20% of those who subscribed to the *Militant* this spring to become long-term readers of the paper. The drive also includes selling a similar number of books by SWP and other revolutionary leaders to subscribers.

"I like the *Militant's* weekly coverage opposing Putin's war in Ukraine," Sharon Burnett, a retired cook and member of the Service Employees International Union, told SWP members Leroy Watson and Dan Fein when they visited her home in Englewood, on Chicago's South Side June 27. Burnett has been reading the paper for nearly a year.

"U.S. sanctions against Russia are



Katy LeRougetel, right, Communist League candidate in Quebec provincial election, speaks with Kiève Parisée June 21 in rural Princeville, Quebec. Parisée and her husband were laid off two days earlier.

a hindrance to building solidarity between workers in Ukraine and Russia. That's crucial to pushing back Putin's attacks," Fein said. Burnett renewed her subscription and picked up two books, *Are They Rich Because They're Smart? Class, Privilege, and Learning Under Capitalism*, and *In Defense of the US Working Class*.

Challenges raising a family

In a campaign trip to Princeville, a rural region two hours east of Montreal, Katy LeRougetel, Communist League candidate in the Quebec provincial election in Montreal's Anjou-Louis-Riel riding, and CL member Annette Kouri visited Kiève Parisée, 21, and her family June 21.

Parisée said she and her husband both lost their jobs two days earlier. They had worked for the Pair program that telephones the elderly living alone once a day to make sure they're OK and gets them medical care if needed.

"I took the job because I could

work from home and still care for the baby," she said, pointing to the lack of child care during the pandemic. "I used up my unemployment insurance, so I had nothing when my daughter was born recently."

"It takes a lot to raise a family," replied LeRougetel. The CL urges unions to lead a fight for a shorter workweek with no cut in pay to spread the available work around. "We're for a program of job creation, together with child care, affordable housing and family planning services, including access to abortion for those who choose it."

Parisée took a copy of the Communist League program and an article from the *Militant* translated into French.

For more information or to join the *Militant* renewal campaign and the effort to get the SWP on the ballot in Pennsylvania, contact the nearest campaign office listed on page 10.

Beverly Bernardo contributed to this article.

'Militant' Renewal Drive June 25-July 26				
Country	Sub quota	Subs sold	Book quota	Books sold
UNITED STATES				
Atlanta	18	3	18	0
Chicago	25	1	25	2
Cincinnati	18	1	18	2
Dallas-Ft. Worth	16	4	20	3
Lincoln	5	1	5	1
Los Angeles	25	5	25	7
Miami	7	0	7	2
Minneapolis	16	0	16	0
N. New Jersey	16	2	16	4
New York	25	4	25	0
Oakland	20	7	20	5
Philadelphia	8	0	8	0
Pittsburgh	12	1	12	0
Seattle	16	0	15	5
Washington	13	1	13	9
Total U.S.	240	30	243	40
Prisoners		9		
UNITED KINGDOM				
London	12	4	15	6
Manchester	10	1	10	5
Total U.K.	22	5	25	11
CANADA	25	5	25	6
NEW ZEALAND	5	2	5	0
AUSTRALIA	7	1	7	0
Total	299	52	305	57

THE MILITANT

Capitalists seek profits from drug use epidemic

The use of drugs — illegal or not — is a threat to the workers' movement, and an obstacle to struggles being fought by working people. The capitalists encourage and enable drug use as their profits soar. The 'Militant' tells the truth about the impact of this deadly scourge.

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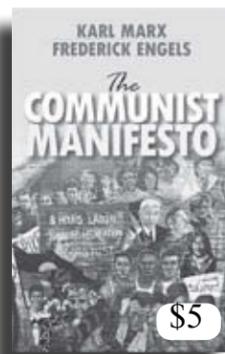
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"Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever expanding union of the workers."

—Karl Marx and Frederick Engels

Written in 1848, the Communist Manifesto explains why communism is the line of march of the working class toward power, "springing from an existing class struggle, a historical movement going on under our very eyes."

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

Defend families, women's rights

Continued from front page
the independence of the Ukrainian people.

Millions are out of work as bosses impose longer and longer workdays and weeks, low wages and unsafe working conditions for those who have a job. Capitalism's economic crisis bears down especially hard on the family, with unaffordable housing, high child care costs and rising pressure to care for the sick and elderly. Many young workers find it increasingly difficult to start a family and birthrates are going down.

SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STATEMENT

Women face harder and harder decisions about when and whether to bear a child and how many to have.

In 1973 the *Militant* hailed as a victory the Roe v. Wade decision. But over the years it became clear the court ruling set back the fight for women's rights and the fight to repeal all laws criminalizing or restricting abortion. Today there are no facilities to get an abortion in some 89% of U.S. counties.

The U.S. Supreme Court decided Roe v. Wade on a political, not constitutional basis. Its decision shut off a growing discussion and debate to win a majority of the working class to recognize that a woman's right to decide to carry a pregnancy to term is one precondition for women's equality.

Fight for women's emancipation

The starting point for the SWP is there can be no road to women's emancipation without dealing with the broader social crisis bearing down on the working-class family and addressing the challenges and responsibilities that fall on women as the bearers of new life.

The recent Supreme Court decision overturning Roe v. Wade reopens a much-needed debate. Today popular opinion on the right to choose abortion is more class-divided and polarized than ever. The challenge is to take on this debate as part of defending working people and our families in the face of the growing capitalist crisis.

The recent decision did not make abortion illegal, but instead turned it over to the states and the people. "The permissibility of abortion, and the limitations upon it, are to be resolved like most important questions in our democracy: by citizens trying to per-

suade one another and then voting," said the majority opinion written by Justice Samuel Alito.

Democrats, the middle-class left and the liberal press claim the ruling will lead to the end of same-sex marriage, legal contraception and other rights. But the decision says, "To ensure our decision is not misunderstood or mischaracterized, we emphasize that ... nothing in this opinion should be understood to cast doubt on precedents that do not concern abortion." In a concurring opinion, Justice Brett Kavanaugh states that the court's Roe decision does not mean "overruling," nor does it "threaten or cast doubt" on same-sex marriage.

The "cancel culture" left has made it clear they intend to target Supreme Court justices and others they disagree with for retaliation and shut down any discussion. Since the May 2 leak of Alito's draft ruling, there have been some 24 violent assaults against pregnancy centers. Claiming responsibility for one of these attacks, a group called Jane's Revenge says, "If abortion isn't safe, you aren't either." Their threats echo the deadly assaults carried out in previous years by rightist groups on doctors and clinics.

A gunman was arrested outside Kavanaugh's house in June and told police he planned to kill the judge.

A working-class course

Shutting down debate is the opposite of what working people need. We need to discuss and debate how we can join together and protect our families, and why our unions should lead the fight for jobs, better working conditions, access to adoption, affordable child care and family planning, including contraception as well as safe and secure abortion.

Essential to advancing such a fight is answering claims of those driving to restrict access to abortion that they are "pro-life." That banner belongs to the party that advances a course toward workers power, the only road to begin ending women's oppression and to protect all human life.

The National Organization for Women in New York responded to the Supreme Court ruling by stepping up its drive to win votes for Democrats. Under successive Democratic and Republican administrations assaults on workers, farmers and women's rights have accelerated.

The SWP candidates in the 2022 elections point to the need for workers to join together and organize inde-



Sara Lobman, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate from New York, discusses with Bram Lefevete at New York action May 14 after draft Roe v. Wade decision was "leaked" to the press.

pendently of the bosses and their parties. We need to build solidarity with each union fight and build a labor party that advances a course of uncompromising struggle for what our class needs. The stakes are enormous. Working people must see the necessity of taking political power into our own hands.

That is both necessary and possible, as working people in Cuba have demonstrated. Led by Fidel Castro and the July 26 Movement, they overturned capitalist rule and took power. Their revolutionary government fought to remove obstacles to women's involvement in all social and political activ-

ity. It has combated prejudices against women that have existed for millennia and led in founding a women's organization, the Federation of Cuban Women, to advance that struggle.

The center of the struggle for women's emancipation today is defending the working-class family. In fact this fight is the road to decriminalize abortion, leaving this decision to women. It's part of a course to advance the working-class fight for state power to create a society that uses the wealth that we create to meet the needs of the majority, not only to emancipate the working class but also to end women's oppression.

Russian Revolution fought for women's equality, access to work, culture, rights

The following is an excerpt from *The Revolution Betrayed* by Leon Trotsky. It describes how the Russian Revolution set out to create conditions to advance the fight for the emancipation of women and how this course was set back by imperialist-fueled civil war and overthrown by Stalinist counterrevolution.

BY LEON TROTSKY

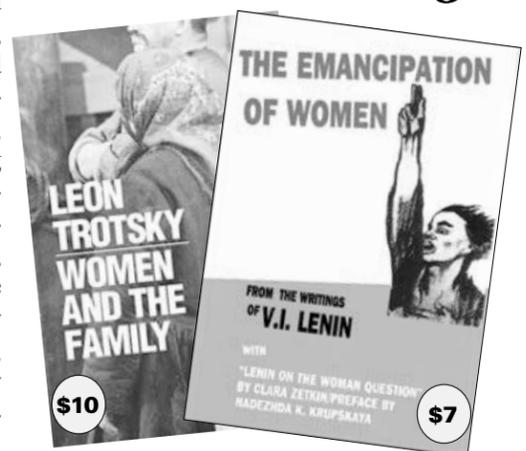
The October revolution honestly fulfilled its obligations in relation to woman. The young government not only gave her all political and legal rights in equality with man, but, what is more important, did all that it could, and in any case incomparably more than any other government ever did, actually to secure her access to all forms of economic and cultural work. ...

The place of the family as a shut-in petty enterprise was to be occupied, according to the plans, by a finished system of social care and accommodation: maternity houses, crèches, kindergartens, schools, social dining rooms, social laundries, first-aid stations, hospital, sanatoria, athletic organizations, moving-picture theaters, etc. The complete absorption of the housekeeping functions of the family by institutions of the socialist society, uniting all generations in solidarity and mutual aid, was to bring to woman, and thereby to the loving couple, a real liberation from the thousand-year-old fetters. ...

It proved impossible to take the old family by storm — not because the will was lacking. ... Society proved too poor and little cultured. ... You cannot "abolish" the family; you have to replace it. The actual liberation of women is unrealizable on a basis of "generalized want."

[After the Stalinist reaction overthrew Lenin's revolutionary Bolshevik program and policies, the new bureaucratic rulers moved to outlaw abortion.] These gentlemen have, it seems, completely forgotten that socialism was to remove the cause which impels woman to abortion, and not force her into the "joys of motherhood" with the help of a foul police interference in what is to every woman the most intimate sphere of life.

Further reading



See distributors on page 10 or visit pathfinderpress.com

SWP joins in discussion on women's emancipation at Roe v. Wade actions

SWP members in Atlanta met graduate student Wyatt Madden at a June 26 protest against the Supreme Court decision overturning Roe v. Wade.

He told party member Susan LaMont he was concerned with the direction of U.S. politics after the ruling. LaMont said she didn't think the ruling would lead to the outlawing of birth control and other rights won in hard-fought struggles, and it should call forth a broader working-class fight to defend our families and women's rights. She said the SWP was for working people organizing independently of the bosses' two parties and building our own party. Madden said he liked "the idea of a labor party." But until one is formed, "isn't it better to have a candidate who's even a bit better?"

The lesser-evil politics of the Democrats and Republicans is a trap, LaMont said. A labor party is needed "to lead working people to make a socialist revolution that can rid the world of capitalism." Madden wasn't convinced, but said, "I want to try this paper to learn more about what you're saying," and got a subscription.

UMWA rallies build solidarity for 15-month strike in Alabama

BY SETH GALINSKY

“This is an opportunity to send another message to Warrior Met,” United Mine Workers of America President Cecil Roberts said in a video posted for union members, urging workers to come to the weekly strike support meeting at the union hall in Brookwood, Alabama, June 29. Some 1,100 coal miners have been on strike against the company for over 15 months.

Roberts noted that union members voted down the company’s contract offer by a margin of 95% when they went on strike April 1, 2021. Miners rejected the contract because the mine owners refused to honor their promise to restore steep concessions in wages, benefits and work conditions that the union agreed to in 2016 when Warrior Met Coal took over operations from Jim Walter Resources, which had declared bankruptcy the year before.

“The rallies are so important to show solidarity and support for the strike and what we’re fighting for,” said Charles Foster, a young miner who had been working at the company’s No. 4 mine for two years when the strike started. “We need to keep showing the company that we’re not going to roll over for them.”

The company’s mines are known for being prone to high levels of methane gas. In 2001, 13 miners were killed in two gas explosions at the Jim Walter No. 5 mine in Brookwood.

In its May quarterly report, Warrior Met boasts that “the hard work we undertook over the past few years is paying off, as we continued our strong upward trajectory to deliver our third straight quarter of strong profitability.” Company directors have handed out stock dividends worth more than \$28 million so far this year to shareholders.

The company’s increased profits come from the rise in the price of metallurgical coal — used in steel production — due to supply chain backlogs and, in part, to the war in Ukraine and U.S. sanctions on Russia. Despite hiring scabs and using mine bosses to keep digging coal in the Brookwood mines, production is just two-thirds of what it was before the start of the strike, the company admits.

Warrior Met continues to look for strikebreakers in an attempt to ramp up production, and as part of its plan to open a new mine along the Blue Creek coal seam. On June 24 UMWA miners picketed outside a Warrior Met job fair in Pennington Gap, Virginia.

Meanwhile, the company continues to violence-bait the union. A court injunction that for several months prohibited all picketing within 300 yards of mine entrances has been lifted. But in violation of the miners’ constitutional rights, the court has limited the union to a maximum of eight pickets per mine entrance. The judge said “we can’t patrol except in the designated locations,” UMWA Communications

Director Erin Bates told the *Militant*. “We can’t walk across the roads leading to and from the mine sites.”

The strikers have won considerable solidarity from the labor movement and other workers, Roberts said. More is needed!

Join the mineworkers’ weekly strike support rallies in Brookwood. Send checks made out to UMWA 2021 Strike Fund to UMWA Strike Fund, P.O. Box 513, Dumfries, VA 22026. Send messages of support to District 20, 21922 Hwy. 216, McCalla, AL 35111. Email umwadistrict20@bellsouth.net.

Susan LaMont in Atlanta contributed to this article.



United Mine Workers of America
Alabama miners picket Warrior Met job fair to hire scabs in Pennington Gap, Virginia, June 24. Bosses refuse to honor promise to restore wages, benefits, conditions lost by UMWA members.

Quebec gov’t language law is blow to working people

BY MICHEL PRAIRIE

MONTREAL — The National Assembly of Quebec adopted Law 96 on May 24, declaring French the province’s official common language and enforcing its use. Under the pretext of combating the “declining use of French,” the bill restricts the use of English and any other language apart from French. The questions posed here are critical for building the revolutionary workers movement in Quebec.

“Law 96 aims to divide workers. Our unions should fight it,” Katy LeRougetel, Communist League candidate for Montreal’s Anjou-Louis-Riel riding in the upcoming elections to the National Assembly. She was speaking at a Militant Labor Forum here June 4. “This is crucial for the unity of the working class at a time when attacks by bosses are sharpening under the impact of the growing crisis of their system.”

Under the law, as of June 1 the Quebec government will make public services to the population in French only, with the partial exception for the long-established English-speaking community. English is the first language of close to 15% of the population and the second language of many immigrants who don’t speak French.

After six months, newly arrived immigrants will receive social services only in French.

Medical staff will not be able to communicate with patients or with each other in any language other than French, a step denounced by many doctors and nurses as well as immigrant groups because it undermines access to health care.

Government inspectors are now authorized to conduct warrantless searches of workplaces and seize records and computers to enforce the law.

It limits access to those public pre-university colleges (called CEGEPs) where the instruction is in English. In Quebec, only children whose parents or siblings had attended English-language schools in Canada are permitted to go to English-speaking schools. Many French-speaking youth have until now enrolled in English-speaking CEGEPs in order to improve their English. This right will now be restricted.

In addition, Law 96 adds three classes in French for students to graduate at English-language CEGEPs, on top of the two they already have to complete. This new requirement was denounced among others by the Assembly of First

Nations of Quebec-Labrador and several other Aboriginal organizations.

Many Aboriginal communities speak English and not French as a second language. Learning a third language in a CEGEP will add further barriers to the education of Aboriginal youth, who already face a high dropout rate in schools.

Pushed through by the governing Coalition for the Future of Quebec, Law 96 follows the passage of Law 21 in 2019. In the name of “secularism,” that law prohibited many government employees from wearing religious symbols at work, especially targeting Muslim women, and Jews and Sikhs who wear the veil, skullcap or turban.

An increase in bilingualism

Inhabitants of Quebec who are native French-speakers make up some 80% of the population of the province. Historically, they were oppressed and discriminated against by the Canadian rulers. This setup provided bosses with a weapon to foster divisions based on language, allowing them to lower wages and conditions for a section of the working class, weaken struggles by workers to defend our common interests, and undermine the labor movement as a whole.

But these inequalities and divisions were largely overcome through four decades of massive struggles, including hard-fought strike battles in the 1970s that won the support of work-

ers and unions across Canada.

“Contrary to what the government claims, French is not declining in Quebec,” LeRougetel said. “In 2016 more than 94% of the population could converse in French. It is the language most often used at work.”

What is increasing, she explained, is French-English bilingualism. From 1961 to 2016, the percentage of people who were bilingual in Quebec almost doubled, rising from 26% to 45%.

“It is this growing unity of the working class that Law 96 seeks to reverse,” said LeRougetel. “It’s a threat to the bosses and their governments as they try to resolve the deepening capitalist crisis on our backs.”

She said debating this broadly in our unions and the working class is crucial, pointing out that most trade union officials support Law 96, which undercuts the unity workers need.

On all political questions, she said, unions need to act independently of the bosses’ parties and their governments and start from workers’ common interests. That requires building our own party, based on the unions, to lead the fight to take political power out of the hands of the capitalist rulers and establish a workers and farmers government.

The forum launched LeRougetel’s campaign for elections that take place Oct. 3. The Communist League will also run Félix Vincent Ardea in the Marquette riding, in the west of Montreal.

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—ON THE PICKET LINE—

Calif. nurses fight against inadequate supplies, staffing

DALY CITY, Calif. — Nurses and other workers at the Seton Medical Center here led a successful fight two years ago to keep the hospital from closing, something that would have created a health care desert in this mostly working-class city south of San Francisco.

Now the nurses are fighting against unacceptable conditions at the hospital. “Most of all we need adequate supplies and more staffing,” intensive-care nurse Emely Collado told this *Militant* worker-correspondent June 23 as she picketed during a two-day strike called by the California Nurses Association.

Necessities like oxygen, surgery supplies, towels and even bedsheets have been lacking. Given these conditions, Collado said, there has been a big turnover of nurses. Many of the hospital patients are on Medi-Cal and Medicare.

The nurses are protesting the bosses’ decision to close a skilled nursing facility for elderly patients who need ongoing treatment and a geriatric psychiatric unit that has been closed for seismic repairs.

The nurses have been in contract negotiations since December 2021. According to union spokesperson Julie Tran, hospital management has consistently missed scheduled negotiations. A large “Wanted” sign was posted at the picket line with a photo of hospital manager Sarkis Vartanian, asking anyone who knows his whereabouts to contact the union bargaining team.

Collado and other nurses on the line told the *Militant* they had been active in the earlier fight to keep the hospital open. Because of those protests, money was “found” to remain open, with the proviso that the hospital become profitable in the future. Now Vartanian claims the nurses’ contract demands are “unrealistic” and that the hospital cannot afford more staff or a wage increase.

Joel Britton, Socialist Workers Party candidate for governor of California, joined the picket line June 23. “These nurses need support. Seton Medical Center is a case study in how the medical care for profit system is stacked against working people,” he said. “Our

unions need to get the word out and win solidarity, and to fight for universal, government-guaranteed health care for all.”

— *Betsy Stone*

Nurses picket across Minnesota fighting for more staff, pay

HASTINGS, Minn. — Dozens of nurses and their supporters gathered outside the Allina Regina Hospital here June 21 in an informational picket. The central issue is management hiring more nurses to allow for better care and an end to schedules and forced overtime that make conditions dangerous for staff and patients. Pickets were also held at St. Luke’s and Essentia hospitals in Duluth.

“It’s all solidarity,” nurse Gina Jacobson told this *Militant* worker-correspondent. “We need to retain more nurses so we can serve the community.” Picketing nurses chanted, “Patients before profits.”

Over 15,000 nurses across Minnesota are in negotiations. Thousands picketed throughout Twin Cities June 1. Though they face different contracts, demands are similar — hire more staff and improve wages and benefits. The conditions nurses face have been made worse by the effects of the COVID pandemic.

“When you’re working and past your eight hours or 12 hours, you’re not at your peak,” nurse Angie Nolle told CBS-3 in Duluth, “and it’s your third double that week. Do you think you’re going to be giving the best patient care that you can?”

“The profit-first policies of hospital CEOs have created a staffing and retention crisis,” Mary C. Turner, Minnesota Nurses Association president and a registered nurse at North Memorial Hospital, told the press, “pushing nurses away from the bedside and putting the bottom line ahead of patient care.”

David Rosenfeld, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress, spoke with nurse Mary McAlpin about how hospital managements are taking humanity out of health care. “Telehealth shouldn’t be developed into routine care,” McAlpin said. “There’s too many negatives.”

“That’s an example of how every ‘innovation’ gets warped into another



Militant/Betsy Stone

“We need adequate supplies and more staffing,” said nurse Emely Collado at Seton Medical Center in Daly City, California, during two-day strike called by California Nurses Association.

way to make profits while undermining quality health care,” Rosenfeld said. “As long as health care is seen as a business first and foremost, short-term profits will be the only thing that matters to the owners. Only the working class has an interest in organizing society on the basis of human solidarity.”

— *Gabrielle Prosser*

Assa Abloy workers strike for pay rise in New Zealand

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — Thirty workers, members of the E tu union, picketed the Assa Abloy lock manufacturing plant here June 23, part of a 24-hour strike demanding a pay increase.

The plant employs some 80 permanent and 50 temporary workers on 10-hour shifts, four days a week. But union shop steward Ralph Greig, who works nights, said most of his shift put in 10 hours overtime a week to try to keep up with the rising cost of living. “The general perception is that once you work 40 hours, you should be able to sustain yourself and lead a good life,” he told the press.

Assa Abloy bosses have offered a wage raise just above the official government inflation rate, currently at 6.9%.

Workers say this isn’t enough. “We have workers here doing two jobs to earn a living, and quality family time is being compromised,” union orga-

nizer Eugene Setu told the *Militant*. “This is a big international company that’s making millions.”

Based in Sweden, Assa Abloy is one of the biggest “access essentials” manufacturers worldwide, with operations in over 70 countries and 51,000 employees. They make mechanical and digital locks, including the Yale brand, cylinders, keys, tags, security doors, automated entrances, and are expanding into biometric technology. Their net income for the year ending March 2022 was \$1.23 billion, a 23.4% increase over the year before.

The majority of workers earn less than 24 New Zealand dollars an hour (\$15), and some have been working here for 20 to 30 years, Setu said.

— *Felicity Coggan*

Bakery workers locked out in Quebec fight for wage raise

BOUCHERVILLE, Quebec — Nearly two months after being locked out in response to a walkout, over 300 Quebec Bridor bakery workers continue their fight for wage raises to cover the cost of living as prices soar, and for safer work conditions. Boucherville is across the St. Lawrence River from Montreal.

Bridor is a major industrial bakery chain with plants here, in Montreal, and in New Jersey. Louis Le Duff, the France-based owner, had an estimated fortune of \$2.1 billion in 2020.

The workers are members of the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN). Their last contract expired Dec. 31, 2020. At a June 9 union meeting, they unanimously voted down a company offer that included wage increases of only 2.5% a year. Inflation in Canada is running at close to 7%.

On May 18 and 26 the union mobilized from two union meetings to strengthen the picket lines. Also participating were striking workers from Rolls-Royce, where workers repair jet engines, and from Novago, a hardware store.

“We want better working conditions and wages that cover the cost of living,” striker Odette Murekatete told this *Militant* worker-correspondent. Pickets described how the bosses demand they keep production up with half of the normal workforce. According to Karine Morisseau, a union business agent, there should be 400 workers on the job, but the bosses are running the plant with 300.

Samuel Morin, who was recently hired as an electrical mechanic, said, “We are fighting for the other workers who have 20 years seniority but who are still not even getting \$20 an hour.”

— *Joe Young*

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



July 14, 1997

STOCKHOLM — The June European Union summit highlighted the competing interests and divisions among the imperialist governments in Europe. The heads of state gathered failed to reach an agreement on voting procedures that was supposed to pave the way for the enlargement of the EU into Eastern and Central Europe.

At least ten governments have applied for membership, ranging from Estonia in the north to Cyprus in the south. For London, Stockholm, Helsinki and Washington, this enlargement is a high-priority question that intersects with the expansion of NATO.

The governments of Sweden and Finland advocate having the European Union guarantee the military defense of Baltic states that are members of the EU if threatened by Moscow. This course has been backed by Washington and by British Prime Minister Anthony Blair.



July 14, 1972

“Most Americans thought it horrifying when Gen. Curtis LeMay spoke in 1965 of bombing the North Vietnamese ‘back into the Stone Age,’” Anthony Lewis wrote in the *New York Times* July 3. “But something very like that is happening right now.”

U.S. bombs are pouring on the cities, villages and towns of North Vietnam, industrial centers, and even the vital dikes of the Red River delta. Meanwhile it has been revealed that the Pentagon has been consistently using an undisclosed chemical to produce acidic rain to destroy mechanical equipment.

A Senate subcommittee estimates that the total of refugees since 1965 approaches nearly 8 million men, women and children, nearly one-half of South Vietnam’s population. “Our estimates put the number of civilian casualties during April and May at nearly 80,000 — including as many as 25,000 deaths.”



July 14, 1947

As greedy landlords across the U.S. pressed their organized drive to intimidate tenants into signing “voluntary” leases for 15% rent boosts, mass resistance of tenants, largely spontaneous, began to erect a road block in the path of the rent gougers.

In most areas, tenant groups and labor organizations are demanding state and local laws to protect tenants. These include rent-freeze laws without loopholes, moratoriums on evictions and heavy penalties on landlords who try to coerce tenants into paying higher rents in violation of existing laws.

The chief problem facing tenants is to turn their mainly spontaneous and disorganized resistance into organized form. Neighborhood groups must be welded into community-wide bodies and these tenant leagues must join with the unions, Negro and veterans groups to carry out a mass action program.

Democrats' fear of losing 2022 elections, 'deplorables,' drives attack on political rights

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

Democrats' probe into the Jan. 6 incursion into the Capitol building a year and a half ago continues to broaden, while they desperately seek something to run on in 2022 as President Joseph Biden's poll numbers fall. In the process they threaten political rights working people have fought for long and hard, and we have an important stake in safeguarding.

Lurid, but uncorroborated, hearsay testimony was given to a hastily convened meeting June 28 of the House select committee probing the incursion. Cassidy Hutchinson, a former White House aide, alleged Donald Trump wanted to join the Jan. 6 march on the Capitol, which he didn't do. The committee didn't call a single eyewitness to any of these events to testify.

Officials from the U.S. Secret Service have announced that Tony Ornato and Bobby Engel, the two agents named by Hutchinson, are willing to testify before the panel and dispute her story, CNN reported June 29.

Despite weeks of testimony, the committee has yet to come up with any real evidence of a crime carried out by Trump that the Justice Department could charge him with. That hasn't stopped Democrats from expanding the hearings, nor the liberal press running banner headlines on them. Nor has it prevented the Justice Department directing the FBI to ever-more raids on homes of ex-Trump officials.

Agents seized the phone of John Eastman, a conservative lawyer who helped in Trump's efforts to have the result of the 2020 election decertified, based on the former president's unsubstantiated claims the election was stolen from him. The search warrant used to seize the phone on June 27 "is overbroad and provides no probable cause link to any suspected criminal activity," Eastman said.

FBI snoops also seized all electronic devices at the home of Jeffrey Clark, a former Justice Department official, who had promoted Trump's claims of widespread election fraud.

Former FBI bosses James Comey and Robert Mueller had led the drive against Trump for the Democrats, including "investigations" that ended in failed impeachment charges.

Acting as Washington's political police, the FBI has been used for decades to spy on militant workers, the Socialist Workers Party, Black rights fighters and opponents of the U.S. rulers' wars. The extent of their assaults was exposed during the SWP's successful political campaign and 1973 lawsuit against the gov-

ernment. At the trial the FBI admitted to breaking into SWP offices more than 200 times, as well as using wire taps and hundreds of informers to spy on party members and their families.

The House select committee considers unimportant the rights that have been upended by their subpoenas and hearings. The August trial of five members of the Proud Boys for their "role" in Jan. 6 has been pushed back to December on the grounds that the House hearings may include information that would affect their cases.

Right to a speedy trial

The House panel refuses to release about 1,000 transcripts of interviews with the Proud Boys before September, leaving the five locked in jail. Attorneys for one of the defendants, Ethan Nordean, told the *Washington Post* that the panel was forcing Nordean to choose between a fair trial or the speedy one the Constitution entitles him to. He's been in jail since April 2021.

Enrique Tarrío, the group's former head, who wasn't in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 6 but was charged and jailed anyway, says he doesn't expect a fair trial in August or December.

The committee hired James Goldston, the former president of ABC News, to produce the hearings as if they were a must-watch docudrama. With seven Democrats and two Republicans on the panel all handpicked by Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi based on their record of despising Trump, there's not much they will debate.

"He would go down in the history books as having been impeached twice," the *Washington Post* crowed June 17, "and accused of a crime or

crimes by Congress."

But there's a world of difference between being accused and being convicted beyond a reasonable doubt. The hearings are an affront to anyone interested in defending the presumption of innocence, something working people have fought to win over centuries.

During the 18 months Democrats have controlled the White House and both chambers of Congress, the crisis facing working people has steadily grown worse with no end in sight as skyrocketing costs for food, housing and gas push families to the brink and conditions on the job become increasingly dire.

Recent polls show that six out of 10 Americans disapprove of President Joseph Biden. "I don't know how much worse it can get," Milan Ramsey told *The Associated Press*. A high school counselor and a Democrat in Santa Monica, California, said she and her husband moved into her parents' house with their infant son to make ends meet.

The party, deeply divided, is pinning its hopes for the 2022 mid-term elections and the 2024 presidential vote on the House committee hearings vilifying Trump after allegations he led a "coup." Their evidence? "Trump Sought to Join Jan. 6 Mob, Enraged He Lunged for Limo Wheel to Go to Capitol," screamed a headline across all four columns of the online front page of the June 28 *New York Times*, after former White House



Militant/Glen Campbell

Picket in Cleveland, 1976, by supporters of 1973 SWP lawsuit against government use of FBI informers, spying, break-ins.

aide Hutchinson testified.

Democrats tried to impeach Trump in 2021. That failed — just as their first attempt to impeach him in 2019 did. Now they've cooked up this panel hoping they can initiate legal proceedings that will end with the former president barred from running again for office.

Television viewership of the House committee hearings dropped sharply after the first day. A poll cited by CNN found that few have changed their minds during the hearings, with 46% of adults saying Trump committed a crime and 47% saying he did not.

No matter what your view, trial-by-TV-show is a blow to political rights. Today the working class, more than ever, has a stake in defending constitutional rights, protections and the political space we need as we organize and fight. It's only by acting together with fellow workers that we will be able to defend ourselves from the sharpening attacks by the bosses and their government.

Expand use of nuclear power for world energy needs

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

For all their pious talk about the climate crisis and the need to end the use of fossil fuels, most capitalist rulers worldwide, as well as middle-class environmental groups, oppose much-needed steps to expand the use of nuclear power. This is the one source of energy available today that can provide clean energy safely and help advance electrification across the globe. The Socialist Workers Party and its candidates fight for its development, under workers control.

Electrification is an essential precondition for modern industry and for the development of culture and political life among toilers in the semicolonial world and worldwide. It's crucial for workers and our unions to fight for this course on a world scale, the road to narrow the gap between workers and farmers in the U.S. and EU and those in so-called developing countries — many of whose economies are distorted by exploitation and oppression from the imperialist powers — as well as between working people in urban and rural areas here at home.

Across the world, 940 million people have no access to electricity, most in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. There are also 3 billion with no access to clean fuels for cooking, resulting in millions of premature deaths each year from indoor smoke and other air pollutants.

But the world "energy crisis," exac-

erbated but not caused by Moscow's assault on Ukraine's independence, has pushed the U.S. capitalist ruling families, EU governments and other ruling classes to ramp up production or import of coal, oil and other pollutants. While much of the climate hysteria is overblown, working people need to fight for a road forward.

Given the realities today, wind and solar power generation are not a viable alternative to fossil fuels. The only means of safely generating the quantity of electricity needed is nuclear power. There are safety issues posed by nuclear energy and the disposal of radioactive waste, but compared to the current energy and social crisis workers face, they are manageable.

What is needed is a labor movement that fights for workers control of all aspects of production, backed by the power to shut it down if it poses a risk. It's the capitalist bosses and their governments and their dog-eat-dog drive to maximize profits at all cost that toss aside workers' safety in every aspect of production.

In Germany the government shut down three of its six nuclear plants at the beginning of this year and plans to shutter the rest by its end. These plants have provided electricity to millions of people for almost four decades.

The rulers in Berlin are now responding to Moscow's aggression by reversing their overwhelming reliance

on Russian pipelines for fuel. Are they switching course by restarting their nuclear power plants? No, they're ramping up coal production! And they're discussing natural gas rationing, which will hit working people hardest, in Europe's largest economy.

In the U.S. there are 93 operating commercial nuclear reactors at 55 nuclear power plants across 28 states. The average age of these facilities is about 40 years old. Only one new nuclear reactor has been commissioned in the last 26 years. As of November 2021, 23 are in various stages of being decommissioned. There is no serious alternative to nuclear power for the production of electricity sorely needed today.

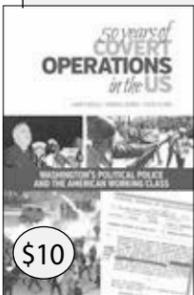
The Socialist Workers Party says, "Our politics start with the world." The interests of workers and farmers in the U.S. are intimately tied to those of toilers worldwide. This includes fighting for nuclear power to generate electricity.

In the course of building the kind of working-class movement that can win this battle, we will also create the weapon needed to defend ourselves against the profit drive of the capitalist rulers that makes *all* industry and power generation dangerous to humanity. This requires building a movement of millions of workers and farmers, independent from the capitalist rulers and their parties, that can fight to take political power into our own hands.

That's why the SWP exists.

50 Years of Covert Operations in the US

Washington's Political Police and the American Working Class



The 15-year political campaign of the Socialist Workers Party to expose decades of spying and disruption by the FBI and other opponents of government policies.

pathfinderpress.com

Crisis facing workers, farmers

Continued from front page
is the relative handful of ruling capitalist families who own the plants, mines and mills, not working people.

Workers need to fight against any rise in unemployment. It would intensify competition for jobs, which the bosses will use to accelerate their assaults on wages and conditions.

Summers isn't too optimistic about the future of capitalism either. At best, he says, it's a return to what he calls "secular stagnation." That doesn't bode well for working people.

The coming slump comes on top of a 40-year-high inflation rate. Capitalist economists blame workers fighting for better wages for causing inflation. The *Wall Street Journal's* James Mackintosh bemoans the number of strikes today and the potential for workers' "empowerment." "Stronger unions make for a more inflationary environment," he claimed June 27.

Whenever workers and farmers face bouts of ruinous price rises, bosses blame those who are striking to defend their living standards. It's not our wage demands, but the way the profit system works that leads to inflation.

The long-term decline in profit rates, which began in the 1970s, spurs bosses to cut investment on capacity-expanding production and equipment. Instead, they turn to speculation in search of profits. As competition for markets inevitably sharpens, capitalist producers press their governments to print more money, hoping to get a boost over their rivals.

When this happens, demand outstrips the production of goods and prices start to soar, devastating workers' living standards, crippling younger workers' ability to start and maintain a family, slashing the value of retirees' savings and forcing more farmers off the land.

Under these conditions, workers are driven to fight for higher wages. "Uniting and winning higher wages only means a greater share of the wealth our labor produces goes to us, not into the pockets of bosses," Joanne Kuniansky, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Congress from New Jersey, told the *Militant*. "It doesn't force prices up, or push greater hardship onto the backs of other workers."

SWP candidates around the country urge our unions to lead a fight for escalator clauses in every contract — and in all government programs like Social Security and SNAP food

stamps — so that when prices rise, our wages and benefits go up automatically to match.

"To prevent the working class from getting torn apart by the coming capitalist downturn it is crucial that we fight for a shorter working week with no cut in take home pay, alongside an end to life-crushing overtime, and what many workers call 'suicide' or 'divorce' shift schedules that rip families apart," Kuniansky said.

"Fighting for these measures can win workers some protection and strengthen our unions for bigger battles to come, as opposed to looking to capitalist politicians and government central bankers to tinker with interest rates."

Workers face broad social crisis

The squeeze on working people is tightening on many fronts. New York City authorities imposed the sharpest rent rise in nearly a decade on over 2 million tenants who live in "rent-stabilized" apartments. Moving across the Hudson River provides no respite. Landlords in New Jersey have filed 40,600 eviction notices in the first half of this year.

Disastrous consequences of the capitalist crisis are being felt by working people worldwide. In the U.K. working people were hit with a 54% increase in household energy bills in April. Rail workers there are striking to defend living standards, and other unions are holding strike ballots.

For workers and farmers in the semi-colonial world, the crisis is devastating. From Peru to Sri Lanka, Ecuador to Zimbabwe, toilers are protesting, demanding higher wages and action by governments to cut soaring prices.

In Harare, Zimbabwe, hundreds of nurses marched demanding higher wages at Parerenyatwa Hospital June 21. They rejected a government offer of a 100% raise, saying it didn't come close to the inflation rate of 130%.

Protests took place in Burkina Faso, where in some provinces the price of corn and millet has risen by 122%. "As far as this cost of living that keeps increasing is concerned, we realized that the authorities have betrayed the people," said Issaka Porgo, president of the coalition organizing the actions against the ruling military junta.

"Working people confront an international crisis," Kuniansky said, "and we share interests in common with fellow working people worldwide. We need to organize together against the bosses and governments."



AP/Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi

Protests have erupted worldwide fighting soaring inflation. Above, hospital nurses and medical workers protest in Harare, Zimbabwe, June 21. They rejected government pay offer of 100%, saying it didn't come close to inflation rate of 130% as food costs, fuel prices are exploding.

Ecuador protests demand lower prices, halt foreclosures



Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon (Confeniae)

After two weeks of sizable daily protests by Indigenous groups, the government of Ecuador has given in to some of their demands and is negotiating with them on others. The protests by thousands of workers and peasants provoked by the impact of skyrocketing prices began June 13, initiated by the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (Conaie).

Above is a June 28 march in Quito, the capital, where thousands of Indigenous protesters have camped out. Sign says, "Cut fuel prices."

At the top of the groups' list is the demand to roll back the price of fuel. Diesel has nearly doubled in the last two years. On June 27 Ecuador President Guillermo Lasso cut fuel prices by 10 cents a gallon and lifted the state of emergency he had declared in six provinces. The moves "are not enough," but are a sign that the movement is making gains, Conaie and other Indigenous groups said in a statement.

Crude oil accounts for nearly half of Ecuador's export earnings. While profits go up for the oil companies, higher prices of everything from fuel to fertilizer and cooking oil are battering working people. Nearly one-third of the population lives on less than \$3 a day.

The protesters demand debt relief for working farmers, including a cut in interest rates and a moratorium on home, farm and vehicle foreclosures; "fair prices" for farm products; government jobs programs; and a moratorium on new oil drilling and mining.

Protest roadblocks on major highways have virtually paralyzed Quito. Violent clashes with riot police and soldiers, including near the National Assembly, have left five protesters dead and hundreds injured.

"Look around you. You will see some who are whiter, some who are blacker," Conaie leader Leonidas Iza Salazar said at a mass meeting June 27, answering the government attempts at dividing Indigenous communities in the countryside from working people in the cities. "Our struggle is multicolored, it's intercultural."

— SETH GALINSKY

Bakery workers at Form-A-Feed in Wisconsin strike for pay raise

BY EDWIN FRUIT

NEW RICHMOND, Wis. — Nine members of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Local 22, went on strike at Form-A-Feed here June 13. They are the only union members among the over 200 workers at the company's two mills, here and in Stewart, Minnesota.

The company makes food for cattle and pigs as well as forage for other farm animals.

This *Militant* worker-correspondent met Local 22 President Walter Borgan on the picket line. Their contract expired May 1 and the workers are fighting for higher wages and benefits. The bosses offered profit sharing to the nine workers if they decertified the union. They refused.

Workers want an 8% raise and a one-year contract, Borgan said, and a \$2,500 ratification bonus. The last company offer was for a \$500 bonus and a 6% wage increase.

Signs on the picket line included, "Fighting for more \$ — Stop the Greed" and "Retirement for 200+, not just the 9 of us."

Jim Hanson, with 41 years at the mill, said the strikers have been getting community support on the picket line, including food donations. He said that Boilermakers unionists have refused to cross the picket line and that the company had to bring in nonunion people from Minneapolis, some 50 miles away, to maintain the boilers.

Borgan said that if they are successful, they will go to the Minnesota plant and introduce the union to workers there.

One of the workers on the picket line told us his family farms some 500 acres. He said that they can't afford to buy feed from Form-A-Feed because it's too expensive. Things are tough for family farmers today, he said, pointing to skyrocketing prices of the cost of fuel and other necessities to run a farm.

The workers' spirits are high and they're resolved to stay out as long as it takes. Borgan said that workers had watched the BCTGM strikes over the past year at Frito-Lay, Nabisco, Kellogg's and the Jon Donaire bakery, all of which show you have to fight to get what you deserve.

Defend Ukrainian sovereignty!

Continued from front page

ambassador claimed the Kremenchuk attack was “a new Bucha-style Ukrainian provocation.” There was a brutal occupation of the Bucha suburb of Kyiv in March by Russian forces before they were driven out. The Kremlin tried a similar cover-up there after the exposure of killings and abuse of residents perpetrated by Moscow’s military command.

In response, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky called on the United Nations to organize an international visit to the mall, saying it would see that “this is a calculated Russian strike, exactly at this shopping mall.”

Since the determined Ukrainian defense thwarted Moscow’s initial invasion thrust against Kyiv, and then Kharkiv, Russian military efforts have focused in the country’s east, where they have shorter, more direct supply lines. Russian forces there are carrying out a murderous assault by artillery, leveling whole cities and villages, then occupying what’s left. They have inched ahead in the Donbas region, but with heavy losses.

After a massive artillery and aircraft bombardment turned much of the city to rubble, Russian forces finally captured Severodonetsk June 24 when Kyiv withdrew its remaining troops. Moscow is now showering a withering artillery barrage against Lysychansk, on higher ground across the river and the last major city in Luhansk yet to be occupied by Russian forces.

These battles are taking a heavy toll on both armies. Moscow keeps shifting commanding officers in frustration over the slow pace of advances and continuing demoralization among Russian troops. Gen. Alexander Dvornikov — who reportedly took command of Moscow’s invasion with the shift to focusing on Donbas — hasn’t been seen publicly for weeks. Col.-Gen. Genady Zhidko appears to now be on the hot seat, the Moscow Times reported June 29.

Fissures in imperialist ‘world order’

The war — the largest on European soil since the Second World War — has heightened shifts and fissures in the imperialist “world order” that

emerged from that war, with Washington as top dog.

As recent battles raged, imperialist leaders held G-7 and NATO summits in Europe.

Leaders of the Group of Seven wealthy capitalist countries — Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the U.K. and the U.S. — met in Bavaria, Germany, June 26-28, followed by a larger NATO gathering in Madrid.

The pretense of unity among these alliances, all heavily dependent on Washington, is increasingly strained as the war drags on. The rulers face their own crises and divisions at home, and are seeking the best path to defend their own imperialist interests, markets and profits. All are embarked on expanding their military capability.

Russian President Vladimir Putin is relying on these frictions and on “war fatigue” among the major capitalist powers to weaken their moves to stand by Ukraine.

The June 28-30 NATO summit for the first time included Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea. This reflected that while making a show of wide support to Kyiv, all these capitalist governments are increasingly focused on the rising challenges posed by Beijing.

President Joseph Biden announced a new escalation of the U.S. “force posture” in Europe to bolster its place as the key European power. This includes a permanent U.S. army headquarters in Poland, a “rotational brigade” in Romania of 5,000 troops and “more defense and other capabilities” in Germany, Italy and the Balkans.

Like its European imperialist rivals, Washington’s goal is to be in a position to force a deal to its advantage onto the Ukrainian government when the time is right.

Openings for fraternization

The Kremlin is scrambling to recruit men to fight in Ukraine after heavy losses in the first months of the invasion. The Putin regime hasn’t been able to impose a general draft because it would have to admit that this is a protracted war that it isn’t winning, not the “special military operation” painted in state media.

Ukrainian resistance continues in occupied Kherson



Kherson, a Ukrainian port on the Black Sea, was the first major city to fall to Russian forces when they invaded Ukraine Feb. 24. It lies near the Crimean Peninsula, which was seized by Moscow in 2014.

“In the first days of the occupation in March, Russian troops faced fierce resistance in Kherson,” Kyiv reporter Olena Mukhina, wrote in Euromaidan Press. But Moscow’s forces dispersed protesters with rubber bullets and stun grenades. Some 250 civilian leaders were “disappeared” and 70 have since been released, often after being tortured.

Half the population left Kherson in the first three months of the war. Eventually public protests, like that above, dwindled, said Mukhina, “but the resistance didn’t vanish — it went underground.”

Russian flags continue to be replaced by Ukrainian flags in the night. Leaflets saying “Kherson, 10 km to freedom” appeared, warning Russian soldiers that the counteroffensive by Ukrainian forces keeps getting closer to the city.

The occupying forces have shut down Ukrainian TV and radio, imposed Russian banking and closed Ukrainian phone services. Despite this “Russification,” Moscow’s puppet administration faces serious difficulties. It announced June 7 it would hold a referendum on whether the city should join the Russian Federation, but has never set a date.

When Ihor Kolykhaev, the mayor, refused to cooperate with the occupiers, he was replaced by an official loyal to Moscow. But Kolykhaev set up shop in a public building and has continued running city services.

— R. L.

Recruitment offices across Russia are popping up to lure reservists and others into contracts with pay offers and bonuses, up to six times the median Russian salary of \$600 a month.

One Russian worker, Vadim Shatrov, who signed up, wrote in his online diary that he enlisted both for financial reasons and because of his patriotic views. Within two days, he was assigned to the 138th motorized rifle brigade in the Belgorod region on a three-month contract.

“The way I see it,” he wrote, “I’m not going to fight against ordinary Ukrainians; I’m going to fight with NATO, Nazis and terrorists!”

But as he got closer to the Ukrainian border, he grew

more disenchanted. Fellow volunteers returning from “behind the ribbon,” slang for being in Ukraine, told him horrifying war stories. He said, “Out of the four people from Yaroslavl, only one guy came back. He said his commanders abandoned them there.”

“We’ve had several hundred requests from people who wanted to sever their contract prematurely,” said Sergei Krivenko, director of the human rights group Citizen. Army. Law. “They say the war is brutal, and it’s not clear to them what they are doing there and who they are fighting against.”

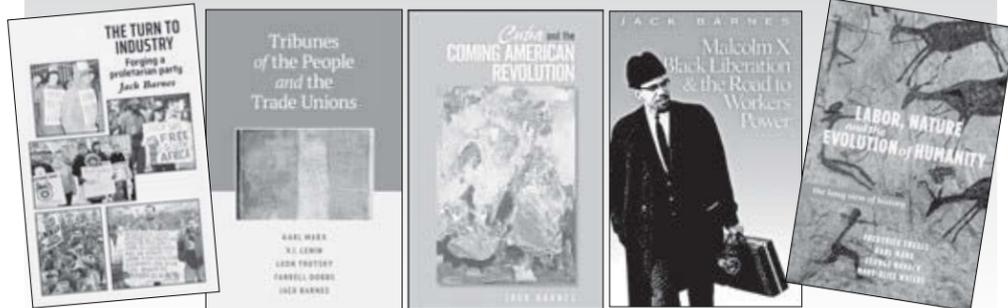
Examples like this show the potential for fraternization between Ukrainian and Russian workers, including those in uniform.



State Emergency Service of Ukraine
Volunteers, emergency workers search for survivors amid wreckage in shopping mall in Kremenchuk, central Ukraine, after June 27 Russian missile strike. Scores were killed or injured in attack. Kremlin claims Kyiv bombed itself to smear Russia.

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US rail workers resist attacks

Continued from front page

of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen. But this doesn't mean a strike is near. All rail workers are tied up with legal restrictions and miles of red tape that make calling a strike a challenge.

The BLET is part of United Rail Unions, the 11 main rail unions that are bargaining together, representing 140,000 members.

They face a coalition of rail bosses who are offering only small wage raises, while demanding workers pay higher costs for medical coverage. The profit-driven bosses' key demand is to eliminate the conductor position on the trains, leaving the engineer alone in the locomotive running trains up to three miles long for up to 12-hour shifts.

Some 30% of the total workforce on these rail lines has been eliminated in less than a decade. The Class 1 railroads have driven their profits up to over 50%, and are determined to make more.

Over several decades of attacks, the bosses have cut rail operating crews from five to two. Now they want to run trains with just one worker. The job gets more and more dangerous, both for workers and for those who live near the tracks.

New attack on workers

This comes on top of draconian work rule and attendance changes put in place by Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway bosses earlier this year that wreak havoc with workers' lives and families.

Pushed by their members, the BLET and conductors union SMART-TD prepared for a strike against this policy. But the company convinced a U.S. District Court judge that federal law bars a strike because the attendance policy was a "minor issue." Not minor for the workers, of course.

Since then, some 700 conductors and engineers have quit their jobs at BNSF, leaving the bosses short handed and lengthening already strung-out delivery times. Container loads are laying in West Coast port waters and big rail yards in Chicago.

New hires are being put to work with only 10 to 12 weeks of training. Often workers only get 10 hours off before being called back to work. To miss a call threatens your job.

This author was on duty a total of 17 hours in one shift last week because the company didn't want to pay for a cab to our destination to rest, in addition to 15 hours four days earlier for the same reason.

Rail jobs used to be considered good jobs, and ran in families. But that's changed. "You give up so much when you work for the railroad, but it impacts your family even more," 30-year-old Brady Wassam, who left his job as a BNSF engineer, told the *Montana*

Free Press. For years he never knew if he'd be home for holidays and other special events.

"The only thing faster than a speeding bullet is how fast rail workers are quitting because of the unsafe working conditions and rail bosses' daily harassment," Lance Anton, a railroad conductor for BNSF in Lincoln, Nebraska, told the *Militant* by phone June 20. "From my experience, most of the rail union members I talk to want to fight for better work conditions. We're told we're essential to move the freight, then we should have the right to work safely without being pushed to work faster.

"Rail workers have become second to the huge profits being paid out to stockholders," he said. "We need to organize, mobilize all rail workers into one big industrial union to fight for workers control over road and yard service."

Under these conditions, the danger of deadly derailments grows. One freight train derailed June 23 in Marlin, Texas.

Then, four days later, an Amtrak passenger train running from Los Angeles to Chicago hit a dump truck at an unmarked crossing and derailed outside Mendon, Missouri, killing four and injuring at least 150 more.

Area farmers had been complaining for years about the crossing and neither the railroad nor area authorities have done anything. "We have to cross this with farm equipment to get to several of our fields," Mike Spencer told the *Kansas City Star*. "We have been on the railroad for several years about fixing the approach by building the road up, putting in signals, signal lights or just cutting the brush back."

"They knew it was unsafe," he



Militant/Joe Swanson

Over 40 rail worker unionists picketed annual meeting of Berkshire Hathaway, owner of BNSF, in Omaha, Nebraska, April 30. "Rail workers are quitting over unsafe working conditions and rail bosses' daily harassment," Lance Anton, BNSF conductor, told the *Militant* June 20.

added. "That was pretty much a no-brainer." He said some 85 trains run through every day.

The 1926 Railway Labor Act — passed with bipartisan support after 400,000 rail workers went on strike four years earlier — was designed to aid the rail bosses and make strikes as difficult as possible.

'We need the right to strike'

"The law is designed to tie us in knots and keep us from using the only power we have, the power to collectively withhold our labor," Seattle conductor and SMART-TD member Henry Dennison told the *Militant* June 25. Dennison is also the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate from Washington state.

"We need to fight to be able to bring our strength in numbers and labor solidarity to bear. These anti-labor laws need to be swept aside," Dennison said.

"This is the biggest obstacle we face — we as workers don't have political power. We need to build our own party, a labor party, based on fighting unions."

"We should fight for a maximum of 50-car trains and four-person crews — an engineer and a conductor up front and two conductors in the back," says Dennison. "We need this for safety, to lessen the burden of the work and make it possible to seriously train new workers."

"Ultimately," Dennison explains, "the future of humanity depends on the working class developing a respected leadership and leading our allies to take power to build a workers and farmers government, based on the needs of all those oppressed and exploited by capitalism."

Candace Wagner is a freight rail conductor and member of the BLET union. She is the Socialist Workers Party candidate for governor of Pennsylvania.

40,000 UK rail workers strike against wage freeze

Continued from front page

pay increase last year.

With U.K. retail price inflation running at over 11%, the rail bosses' pay offer amounts to another wage cut. Network Rail has offered 3% if the union agrees to "efficiency savings," such as treating Sundays as a normal working day.

Most rail workers already face shift schedules that are dangerous and disrupt family life. Rail bosses also plan to throw 2,500 workers out of their jobs.

Workers, unions support strike

"Our pickets have been well supported," Clayton Clive, secretary of Manchester South RMT branch, told the *Militant*, "with up to 100 rail workers at the three picket locations around Manchester Piccadilly station at any one time — a real spread of all workers."

The strikers' fight is winning solidarity. A steady stream of passersby at the busy St. Pancras station in London expressed support, bringing water and snacks to strikers.

"I work in a nonunion workplace but I support the rail workers and any workers fighting to protect their living standards," retail worker Jonathan Murdoch Scott said after delivering sweets to the strikers. "It's not just about pay," added Sami Scott, who works as a learning mentor in primary education. "They're facing job cuts and worsened conditions too."

Strikers picketing Piccadilly sta-

tion have received solidarity delegations from postal workers, members of the Communication Workers Union, who are balloting for strike action to win higher wages; members of Unite, including bus workers who won an 11-week strike for better pay last year; meat workers with their union representative from the Pilgrim pork factory, members of the Community union; teachers and health workers, who are also set to ballot for strike action; and many others.

Pickets in Manchester carried a sign showing support for members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers who are on strike at Canadian National. The RMT branch secretary has sent the Canadian rail workers a solidarity message.

The *Financial Times* reported a poll showing a majority of people consider the RMT's strike justified.

Solidarity rallies have been held in London, Manchester, Bristol and elsewhere. The London rally was joined by two dozen hospital cleaners, members of the GMB union, on strike against contract company Mitie. "We face very similar attacks on wages and conditions," striker Milliecent Ford told the *Militant*.

Government figures reveal the vast majority of workers are getting wage raises below inflation, on average about 4%. Seven hundred British Airways workers at Heathrow airport are facing a similar cut to real wages and have also voted to go on strike.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Transport Secretary Grant Shapps and other ministers appear daily on TV, blaming striking workers for inflation by claiming higher wages will lead to an uncontrollable "wage/price spiral." In addition, ministers say public sector workers will also be offered raises below the inflation rate.

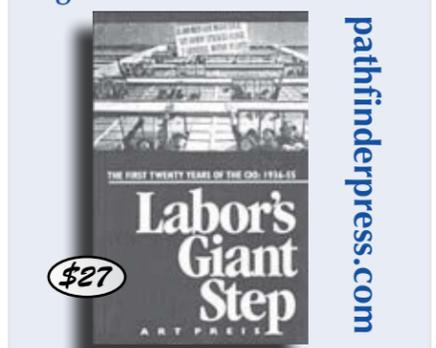
Labour Party leader Keir Starmer opposes the rail strikes and said he would back below inflation rises for nurses, teachers and others.

The government announced May 26 one-off payments of up to 650 pounds (\$798) to millions of workers hardest hit by the current crisis. It hopes this will prevent further union action.

"Workers don't want Chancellor Rishi Sunak's one-off bribes but wages that protect against inflation," said Pete Clifford, a Manchester rail worker, union activist and leader of the Communist League. Clifford just won his job back after a union-led fight against his sacking by bosses at Carlisle Support Services.

"Every union-negotiated pay deal should include automatic cost-of-living rises," Clifford said. "The government's talk of a wage/price spiral is a cover for what the bosses really don't like — wage rises that eat into their profits. Rising inflation is not caused by workers' wage demands, but by the bosses' profit system. What scares the rulers is that a victory for the RMT would inspire other workers."

Read about the battles that forged the US labor movement



Cuba's women made 'a revolution within the revolution'

Women and the Cuban Revolution, which includes speeches and documents by Fidel Castro, Vilma Espín and others, is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for July. The excerpt below is from "The Revolution Within the Revolution," a December 1966 speech by Castro given to the Fifth National Plenary of the Federation of Cuban Women. The book explains women's changing role in Cuba as workers and farmers took power in 1959. Fidel discusses the gains made in fighting against women's oppression in Cuba and how "discrimination with respect to race and sex can only be wiped out through a socialist revolution." Copyright © 1981 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Left, Granma; right, Bohemia/Gilberto Ante

Cuban women were transformed, and strengthened Cuban Revolution, as they took on challenges in every field. Left, women militia members mobilized during 1962 missile crisis. Right, women took on more and more responsibility, including jobs traditionally reserved for men.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY FIDEL CASTRO

This phenomenon of women's participation in the revolution was a revolution within a revolution. [Applause] And if we were asked what the most revolutionary thing is that the revolution is doing, we would answer that it is precisely this — the revolution that is occurring among the women of our country! [Applause]

If we were asked what things in the revolution have been most instructive for us, we would answer that one of the most interesting lessons for revolutionaries is that being offered by our women. [Applause] ...

We are finding that, in reality, this potential force is superior to anything that the most optimistic of us ever dreamed of. We say that perhaps at heart, unconsciously, something of a bias or underestimation existed.

For events are demonstrating, even now, the possibilities of women and the role that women can play in a revolutionary process in which society is liberating itself, above all, from exploitation, and from prejudices and a whole series of circumstances in which women were doubly exploited, doubly humiliated. ...

What have we found? What is being found everywhere in this revolutionary program, as far as the Cuban women are concerned? Well, we are finding a whole series of things such as those I mentioned before: a great sense of responsibility, great seriousness, great discipline and enthusiasm. ...

[This is] perhaps one of the greatest victories over prejudices that have existed, not for decades or centuries but for thousands of years. We refer to the belief that all a woman could do was wash dishes, wash and iron clothes, cook, keep house, and bear children — [Applause and exclamations] age-old prejudices that placed women in an inferior position in society. In effect, she did not have a productive place in society. Such prejudices are thousands of

years old and have survived through various social systems. If we consider capitalism, women — that is, lower-class women — were doubly exploited or doubly humiliated. A poor woman, part of the working class or of a working-class family, was exploited simply because she was poor, because she was a member of the working class.

But in addition, although she was a woman of the working class, even her own class looked down on and underrated her. Not only was she underestimated, exploited, and looked down upon by the exploiting classes, but even within her own class she was the object of numerous prejudices.

So all these events have been a great lesson to all of us, to every revolutionary. Naturally, a considerable amount of prejudice still persists. If women were to believe that they have totally fulfilled their role as revolutionaries in society, they would be making a mistake. It seems to us that women must still fight and exert great efforts to attain the place that they should really hold in society.

If women in our country were doubly exploited, doubly humiliated in the past, then this simply means that women in a social revolution should be doubly revolutionary. [Applause]

And perhaps this is the explanation, or at least the social basis, for the resolute, enthusiastic, firm, and loyal support given

by Cuban women to this revolution.

This revolution has really been two revolutions for women; it has meant a double liberation: as part of the exploited sector of the country, and second, as women, who were discriminated against not only as workers but also as women, in that society of exploitation.

The attitude of Cuban women toward the revolution corresponds to this reality; it corresponds to what the revolution has meant to them.

And the support of the popular masses for the revolution is directly proportional to what the revolution has meant to them in terms of their liberation.

There are two sectors in this country, two sectors of society which, aside from economic reasons, have had other motives for sympathizing and feeling enthusiasm for the revolution. These two sectors are the Black population of Cuba and the female population.

I suppose you recall that in Cuba's old bourgeois constitution, there was an article which declared illegal any discrimination for reasons of race or sex. The constitution declared such discrimination illegal. But a constitution in a capitalist society, or such an article in a capitalist society, solves nothing, because discrimination for reasons of race and for reasons of sex existed in practice. And the basis for all of this was the existence of a class society which practiced exploitation.

In a class society, which is to say, a society of exploiters and exploited, there was no way of eliminating discrimination for reasons of race or sex. Now the problem of such discrimination has disappeared from our country, because the basis for these two types of discrimination which is, quite simply the exploitation of man by man, has disappeared. [Applause]

Much news reaches us from the United States, for example, about the civil rights struggle of Blacks. Nevertheless, racial discrimination in the United States will not disappear until capitalist society has disappeared.

That is, discrimination will never be wiped out within the framework of capitalist society. Discrimination with respect to race and sex can only be wiped out through a socialist revolution, which eradicates the exploitation of man by man. [Applause]

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— SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STATEMENT —

Back fight for Puerto Rico independence!

Statement by Sara Lobman for the Socialist Workers Party to the hearing of the U.N. Special Committee on Decolonization of Puerto Rico, June 20, 2022.

Distinguished chairperson and committee members:

My name is Sara Lobman. I am the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate here in New York. My party adds its voice in support of the fight for Puerto Rico's independence from U.S. colonial rule.

The U.S. rulers have used their colonial domination to plunder Puerto Rico's wealth for more than a century. From the pharmaceutical plants to the food-processing industry, it is workers who produce that wealth, and U.S. and other capitalists who rake superprofits from their labor.

They further squeeze working people with cuts in wages, pensions and living standards enforced by the U.S.-imposed fiscal control board to pay wealthy U.S. bondholders on a \$72 billion debt. We demand Washington cancel that debt. It is not the workers' debt, it's the bondholders' debt!

My brothers and sisters here have highlighted some of these brutal assaults, which are magnified by colonial rule. Here in the U.S., workers and farmers are ravaged by the same capitalist disaster, by the same bosses and their government. Inflation, now at a 40-year high, is devastating our livelihoods. Deaths from drug overdoses are soaring. Millions remain jobless or unable to work enough hours to support their families. Others face forced overtime that leaves no time for family life, while speedup threatens life and limb. Nearly one-third of young adults live with their parents, mostly because they cannot afford their own home.

These sharpening class conflicts in Puerto Rico and the U.S. are part of a growing world capitalist crisis. Today, the largest land war in Europe in 75

years threatens the independence and sovereignty of Ukraine and promises more wars to come, opening a new stage in the crisis of the world imperialist order.

But working people — in both Puerto Rico and the U.S. — are not helpless victims. Workers and their unions have waged island-wide protests against blackouts, utility rate hikes, and attacks on the jobs of electrical workers since the colonial government handed over management of the state-owned electrical system to Luma Energy.

Thousands of teachers and firefighters have marched for better wages and against pension cuts. Truckers waged a two-day work stoppage last summer, winning a substantial pay increase.

Here in the U.S., bakery workers, coal miners, oil workers and others have waged important strikes for sustainable hours, better pay and basic dignity.

Working people in the U.S. have a vital stake in championing the fight for Puerto Rico's independence. A successful struggle to free Puerto Rico from U.S. colonial rule will also strengthen the hand of workers here in the fight against our common exploiters.

Is this possible? Yes. Cuba's socialist revolution points a road forward. In 1959, millions there overthrew a U.S.-backed dictatorship, took power out of the hands of the U.S. and Cuban ruling classes, and established a workers and farmers government. They began to uproot all forms of exploitation and oppression, and have extended solidarity to others around the world fighting imperialist domination.

For more than 60 years Cuba's working people have successfully defended their revolution, an example for workers and farmers both in Puerto Rico and the U.S.

I thank the committee for the opportunity to speak here today. The Socialist Workers Party urges you to continue to condemn U.S. colonial rule of Puerto Rico.

Manchester rail workers win unionist's job back

BY ÓLÖF ANDRA PROPPÉ

MANCHESTER, England — “We’re learning we can use union power,” Rail, Maritime and Transport Union activist Pete Clifford told a rally in solidarity with striking rail workers here June 25.

Clifford had returned to work June 14 after a union campaign reversed his removal four weeks earlier from his job as a train dispatcher for TransPennine Express at Manchester Piccadilly station here. He is employed by contractor Carlisle Support Services.

He told the rally that along with 13 fellow Carlisle-employed dispatchers and his RMT union branch he fought the sacking. Unionists distributed leaflets throughout the station explaining Clifford was fired for his union activity. They collected 858 signatures on an online petition from workers at the station and around the country demanding his reinstatement.

On June 8 the RMT union's National Executive Committee announced a strike ballot of dispatchers at the station in support of Clifford. By June 10 Clifford was told he could return to work.

In addition to his union activity, Clifford is known as a distributor of the *Militant* and member of the Communist League. Bosses' efforts to fire him were part of an anti-union offensive in the lead-up to national walkouts by rail workers.

The fight to reinstate Clifford “shows exactly what trades unionism and standing together is all about,” said Clayton Clive, secretary of Manchester South RMT branch.

“The law may be on the bosses' side, but we can still win,” Kevin Olome, a station worker at Manchester Piccadilly, told the *Militant*.

UN commission calls for end to US colonial rule in Puerto Rico

Continued from front page

As in previous years, the U.N. committee adopted a resolution, introduced by Cuba's revolutionary government and co-sponsored by six other governments, ratifying “the inalienable right of the people of Puerto Rico to self-determination and independence.”

Speakers described the economic and social disaster facing working people on the island, made worse by measures taken by the colonial government and enforced by a U.S.-imposed “financial oversight” board to make workers and farmers shoulder the burden for payments to wealthy bondholders on a \$74 billion public debt.

The root of the problem, said Juan Dalmau of the Puerto Rican Independence Party, is that “to this day, 124 years after making us a possession through military conquest, the U.S. government insists on maintaining Puerto Rico, a Latin American and Caribbean nation, subordinate to its rule. All fundamental decisions on our collective lives are made unilaterally” by Washington.

Since 1952 the U.S. government has tried to disguise its colonial rule by declaring Puerto Rico a “Commonwealth,” Ariel Hernández of the Sovereign Union Movement (MUS) said. But over the years, “this so-called showcase of democracy in the Caribbean has shattered,” leading to decades of economic crisis.

“Puerto Rico is a classic colony,” said Christina Mojica of Boricuas Unidos en la Diáspora.

As a colony, its people have been hit with an ongoing series of attacks by their overlords in Washington. Normahiram Pérez of Call to Action on Puerto Rico noted that the fiscal control board, set up by the Obama administration in 2016, has overseen the closure of hundreds of public schools, cuts in public employees' pension funds, and other attacks on jobs and living standards of working people.

Protests demand ‘Luma out!’

Vanessa Ramos, president of the American Association of Jurists, pointed to moves to privatize Puerto Rico's state-owned electrical company. The island's government turned the utility's power transmission and distribution network over to Luma Energy, a U.S.-

Canadian company. Six years after Hurricane Maria devastated the island, blackouts and rate hikes continue, she said. “Tired of false promises, the people of Puerto Rico have forcefully made their response heard with demonstrations demanding ‘Luma get out!’”

One example of what colonial rule means, Lía Fiol-Matta of LatinoJustice PRLDEF said, was the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in April upholding a federal law denying Supplemental Security Income benefits to Puerto Rico's residents.

Sara Lobman, speaking for the Socialist Workers Party, stated, “From the pharmaceutical plants to the food-processing industry, it is workers who produce [Puerto Rico's] wealth, and U.S. and other capitalists who rake superprofits from their labor.” She demanded Washington cancel the island's debt.

Working people in Puerto Rico and the U.S., Lobman said, have common interests, and workers here “have a vital stake in championing the fight for Puerto Rico's independence.”

“Cuba's socialist revolution points a road forward,” she said. It shows how workers and farmers can lead a successful fight to take political power and win genuine independence and freedom.

Several petitioners described the migration of hundreds of thousands to the U.S. over the past decade under the blows of the capitalist economic crisis. They condemned Act 60, a law giving big tax breaks to foreign business owners who establish residence in Puerto Rico, and said this has led to wealthy U.S. investors buying up properties on the island, driving up real estate prices and rents. In March, dozens of residents of Puerta de Tierra, a working-class neighborhood in San Juan, marched to protest moves to displace them.

Some speakers argued that this “gentrification” was a deliberate effort to depopulate Puerto Rico. In fact, working people around the world face housing crises, driven by the normal workings of capitalism, under which land and housing are commodities bought and sold for profit.

This year, former colonial Gov. Ricardo Rosselló headed a delegation of a dozen individuals to speak at the decolonization hearing in favor of Puerto Rico becoming a U.S. state. They hailed a draft U.S. con-

gressional bill backed both by pro-statehood forces and Democrats, including Reps. Nydia Velázquez and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

If adopted, the measure would lead to a referendum allowing Puerto Ricans the choice of voting for statehood, independence, or a status described as “sovereignty in free association with the U.S.”

This proposal is part of efforts by Democrats to promote statehood for both Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico, seeking to shift the composition of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate in their party's favor.

At the U.N. hearing, pro-statehood speakers agreed Puerto Rico is a U.S. colony, but argued the only way to end second-class status is for it to become the 51st state. They bragged about a 2020 nonbinding plebiscite where 53% voted for statehood.

Pro-independence speakers answered these claims, explaining that Puerto Rico has had six previous status plebiscites that changed nothing, including the 2020 referendum, where the low turnout meant the pro-statehood vote represented barely a quarter of adult residents.

Moreover, said Eduardo Villanueva of the Puerto Rico Bar Association, any plebiscite organized by the U.S. government would have no legitimacy. “Decolonization will be decided by the colonized, not the colonizer,” Vanessa Ramos added.

Ben Ramos of ProLibertad pointed out that Rosselló himself was forced to resign as governor in 2019 amid massive demonstrations.

Before and after the U.N. event, pro-independence groups held several actions in New York, including a panel discussion featuring several of the petitioners and a rally outside the U.N. of over 100 after the hearing.

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