

US rail workers discuss fight over crew size, safety, deadly schedules

BY NAOMI CRAINE

CHICAGO — Even though the country's 115,000 rail workers have been saddled with a government-imposed contract that unions representing a majority of the workers had voted down, they continue to seek to use their unions to fight for livable schedules, safer working conditions and against boss demands for even more job cuts. The workers' efforts are in the interests of all working people.

Running ever-longer trains with smaller train crews and fewer maintenance workers has yielded massive profits for the owners of the seven major North American railroads. But it's increasingly dangerous for both rail workers and those who live near the tracks.

A recent investigative series in the *Kansas City Star* puts a spotlight on the effects of the rail bosses' profit drive, especially in small towns and rural areas. About half of the 130,000 railroad crossings in the U.S. are un-

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Iran protests: 'Stop all the executions! Free prisoners!'

Actions feed divisions among capitalist rulers



Hengaw Organization for Human Rights

Hundreds gather in Sanandaj, in Kurdish region of Iran, to mark life of Aram Habibi Dec. 26, 40 days after he was killed by regime's thugs. Mourners chanted, "Down with the dictatorship."

BY SETH GALINSKY

In the face of more than 100 days of protests across the country by working people and youth, the capitalist government of Iran is suffering from deepening factional divisions over

how best to proceed. The outpouring of opposition to the government's trampling on rights was sparked by the death of Mahsa — Gina in the Kurdish language — Amini.

The young Kurdish woman died Sept. 16, three days after she collapsed following her arrest by the hated "morality" police in Tehran.

Even as the bourgeois clerical regime continues to send thugs to attack protests; arrests demonstrators, union

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Defend Ukraine independence! Demand Moscow troops out now!

BY ROY LANDERSEN

Working people in Ukraine continue to lead the defense of their homeland from deadly bombardment and war moves carried out by the forces of Russian President Vladimir Putin's regime. They've pushed Moscow's invaders back from over half the territory Russian forces occupied early in the war. Undeterred by these losses, Moscow continues its drive to seize Ukraine and subjugate its people.

A monthslong Russian barrage has destroyed power, heat and water services as the winter freeze deepens. Nearly 9 million are without electricity. Far from breaking the Ukrainian people's resolve, this is deepening their determination to resist.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky flew to the U.S. and addressed a joint session of Congress Dec. 21 in an effort to shore up arms supplies from Washington, which is Kyiv's largest source of weapons. At the same time, President Joseph Biden's administration has urged Zelensky to talk to Moscow and to be ready to cede territory to the invading forces in order to bring an end to the war.

The U.S. rulers aren't concerned about Ukrainian independence but

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Over half of new US budget goes to the military to defend imperialist interests



U.S. Navy

USS Abraham Lincoln leads fleet in Pacific July 28. Over half of \$1.66 trillion allocations in spending bill go to U.S. rulers' military. U.S. is world's last, declining global imperialist power.

BY TERRY EVANS

Touted by Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer as good for "parents, veterans, nurses, workers" and for "vital services," a sweeping \$1.66 trillion "omnibus" spending package passed the Senate with bipartisan support Dec. 22 and the House the next day. Under cover of posturing about supporting Ukraine, the heart of the bill is military spending to strengthen the U.S. rulers' readiness to defend its position as top imperialist power.

Over half the money is allocated to Washington's war machine, up 10% from last year. It includes building three destroyers and nine other warships; \$139.7 billion for high-tech weapons, such as hypersonic missiles; an emergency waiver so the Pentagon can replenish its arsenal to replace weaponry sent to Ukraine as fast as possible; and cash to buy 61 F-35 fighter jets.

New contracts were set immediately, starting with \$1 billion to Lockheed

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SWP: Workers need our own party, a labor party based on our unions

Statement by Ilona Gersh, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Chicago, Dec. 28.

Recent experiences of millions of working people have driven home the fact that the key division in U.S. politics is *not* the conflicts between Democrats and Republicans, or liberals and conservatives. It's the irreconcilable class vs. class interests that divide workers from the ruling capitalists and their upper-middle-class hangers-on whose relentless assaults on our unions, jobs, wages and working conditions mark capitalism's social and moral crisis today.

With bipartisan support, President Joseph Biden led Congress to bar rail workers from striking against dangerous working conditions, unlivable work schedules and for better pay and paid sick leave. Bipartisan backing also ensured passage of the \$1.66 trillion spending bill in Congress. It beefs up the U.S. rulers' war machine that stands behind their class interests in conflicts with Moscow, Beijing and

other rivals. It's working people who will be the cannon fodder in the wars they're preparing.

More cash is provided in the bill for the FBI and government prosecutors for frame-ups, part of their assault on constitutional freedoms being led by the White House. Such attacks are key to the rulers' drive to hold work-

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HarperCollins strikers fight for higher wages, union rights

Nurses strike Sutter Health hospitals over wages, staffing

Fort Worth cop convicted for killing of Atatiana Jefferson

BY GEORGE CHALMERS

FORT WORTH, Texas — Three years after he shot and killed Atatiana Jefferson in her own home, police officer Aaron Dean was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to 11 years, 10 months and 12 days in prison. He will have to serve at least half of the sentence before becoming eligible for parole.

The trial was delayed several times, but the persistence of her family and support from the community were finally able to win this conviction. The jury took about 13 hours to reach the verdict.

On Oct. 12, 2019, Dean and another officer responded after a neighbor noticed Jefferson's doors were open and called police around 2:55 a.m. Jefferson was with Zion Carr, her 8-year-old nephew, playing video games. Carr testified that he and his aunt had opened the doors to let smoke out after burning some hamburgers. When she heard a noise in the backyard, Jefferson grabbed her handgun from her purse.

Prosecutors explained Jefferson had the right to self-defense. They said Dean never identified himself as a police officer and never said he saw Jefferson had a gun until he found it after he shot her.

The defense lawyer argued that Dean thought a burglary might be in process and claimed he saw Jefferson point a gun at him through her bedroom window.

Angered at her killing, hundreds joined a vigil in front of the house the next day, and hundreds more turned out for a Fort Worth City Council meeting to demand something be done. The following day Dean resigned from the police force and was charged with murder.

Several dozen members of the community, along with this reporter, gathered outside the courtroom to wait for the jury to render a verdict and set the sentence. "Black people are not safe in Fort Worth," said Patrice Jones, a founder of the Southside Community Garden who organized the painting of a mural to honor Jefferson. "The police target Black people in 55% of their shootings but we are 18% of the population."

Tamara Neal, an activist with the Texas Organizing Project, said, "We have never seen a white officer go to jail for killing a Black woman. We have turned a corner if we put pressure to get the job done."



Hundreds have protested cop killing of Atatiana Jefferson three years ago, finally winning conviction of Aaron Dean for manslaughter. Parade in her honor in Fort Worth, Oct. 9, 2021.

African Studies conference discusses road forward

BY RICHARD HAZBOUN
AND MIKE FITZSIMMONS

PHILADELPHIA — Some 1,400 people, mostly from universities in the United States, Canada and some African countries, attended the African Studies Association conference here Nov. 17-19. They discussed the social and political crises produced by imperialist exploitation of the continent's resources and people. This is exacerbated by the recent droughts in East Africa, floods and Islamist insurgents in West Africa. This was the first face-to-face ASA conference since the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020.

Another common theme of the conference workshops was the combined foreign debt of African countries, which reaches into hundreds of billions of dollars; intensified pressure for repayment

from the International Monetary Fund; rising inflation; and the weakening of these countries' currencies against the U.S. dollar. Also discussed was the impact of Chinese investment in Africa. Many workshops were on the fight for women's equality, including access to abortion. The war in Ukraine was addressed at a plenary session, with four panelists opposing Moscow's invasion.

An attractive Pathfinder Press booth, staffed by volunteers from several cities in North America, attracted dozens of attendees. Over 160 books were sold.

The booth featured books on Africa, Cuba's socialist revolution, and works of revolutionary working-class fighters, from Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky to Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Thomas Sankara and leaders of the Socialist Workers Party. The broad list of titles sold showed wide interest in global economic and social crises, attacks on constitutional rights in the U.S., Moscow's war in Ukraine, the roots of women's oppression, increasing labor resistance and more.

Fifty-one books by Thomas Sankara were sold, including: *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, *Women's Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle* and *We Are Heirs of the World's Revolutions*. More than 30 years since his assassination and the overthrow of the Burkina Faso Revolution, Sankara is central to debate on

the way forward for toilers in Africa and worldwide. Thirty-six books on the fight for women's emancipation were sold.

"One of the main reasons I attend the ASA conferences is to buy books and place them in the college library's reserve section," professor Godriver Odhiambo, from Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York, said. "I value Pathfinder books as primary sources which give the truth the West has buried."

There were many conference participants familiar with Cuba's role in helping Angola defeat South Africa's invasion in the 1970s and '80s, as well as the role of Cuban medical volunteers around the world. Sales of titles on the Cuban Revolution included *Cuba and Angola: The War for Freedom*; *Red Zone: Cuba and the Battle Against Ebola in West Africa*; and *Cuba and Angola: Fighting for Africa's Freedom and Our Own*.

A bestseller was Pathfinder's newest book, *Labor, Nature, and the Evolution of Humanity*. "Without knowing how our labor transforms nature, how it's the motor force along humanity's ongoing road, we can't see beyond the class exploitation that warps every aspect of our social relations, ideas, and values," the book explains. The title sold out.

Thirty-three participants signed up for more information. Some asked for visits by Pathfinder volunteers to discuss class adoptions and library acquisitions.

THE MILITANT

Abolish Canada's anti-working-class Emergencies Act

The 'Militant' reported on efforts of the Communist League in Canada to expose, abolish the rulers' Emergency Act, which was used to attack the truckers' protest in Ottawa in February. This draconian law is aimed at the whole working class, our unions and others.

CBC/Evan Mitsui
Canadian rulers used heavily armed police to attack truckers' protest in Ottawa Feb. 19.

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Defend Ukraine independence!

Continued from front page

about advancing their own imperialist interests. Putin's war — the first full-scale conflict between two state powers on European soil since World War II — has caused capitalist rulers worldwide to reassess their position and alliances, and is fueling a new arms race.

Putin cynically uses this to repeat his false claims that the invasion was necessary “to protect our citizens,” because Washington and its allies are “pulling apart Russia, historical Russia.” In fact he aims to conquer Ukraine and regenerate the Russian Empire of the czars with himself at its head.

Putin's call-up stirs opposition

Moscow's September call-up of 300,000 conscripts has stirred deeper opposition to the war at home, especially among the wives and mothers of conscripts, and among soldiers who are speaking out.

“No one cared, the commanders weren't giving any orders at all, plenty of them were drinking,” captured Russian soldier Yevgeny Chavelyuk told the press. He had received no training apart from firing a few target shots before his unit was deployed, without being told, into Ukraine. He was interviewed in a prisoner-of-war camp.

In response to declining support for Putin's war, the Russian president Dec. 19 ordered the Federal Security Services, heirs of the KGB, to step up repression against “traitors, spies and saboteurs.”

Hundreds of Russian soldiers have joined Ukrainian forces to resist the invasion. Using the pseudonym “Caesar,” one ex-Russian soldier is helping defend the burnt ruins of Bakhmut in the eastern Donbas against a monthslong Russian onslaught. He told CNN, “When Ukraine is free, I will carry my sword to Russia to free it from tyranny.”

Hotline for Russian troops to give up

Thousands of others have called a Ukrainian hotline to find out how to surrender and defect.

This program instructs soldiers on how to follow small Ukrainian drones guiding them through the battlefield to Kyiv's forces. Ukrainian artillery units also fire dummy shells — each containing 1,500 leaflets on how to surrender — that burst over Russian positions.

In neighboring Belarus, President Alexander Lukashenko has come under increasing pressure from Putin to do more to back Moscow's invasion. Two years ago, working people joined mass protests against Lukashenko's theft of presidential elections. He rode out the revolt only with Putin's support. Despite his regime's repression, he knows that popular opposition will erupt anew if Belarusian forces are committed to the war.

Lukashenko let Moscow use Belarus to transport troops and material to attack Kyiv. But working people took steps to impede the Russian troops and supplies, aiding Ukrainian efforts to repulse the invading columns. Now a court in Minsk, the capital of Belarus, is hearing cases against those involved in the actions.

In a closed-door hearing Dec. 22, Vitaliy Melnik, a member of an underground group known as the “rail partisans,” was sentenced to 16 years in jail on charges of “terrorism” and “insulting” Lukashenko. When arrested in April he was shot in both knees by Belarusian police. In the past few months, rail worker Sergei Konovalov was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment and Sergei Glebko to 11 years on similar charges.

Fellow partisans Dzmitry Ravich, Dzyanis Dikun and Aleh Malchanau, who could have faced the death penalty on charges of “state treason,” were given sentences of from 21 to 23 years Dec. 28. The three had also been shot and injured during their arrest.

Mariupol siege survivor refutes Putin

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov repeated one of Moscow's lies used to justify the war Dec. 26, claiming it's needed for the “demilitarization and denazification” of Ukraine. As evidence for these slanders, the Kremlin often alleges the Ukrainian Azov brigade is a rightist outfit.

Illia Samoilenko, an Azov Regiment officer, refuted these claims during a mid-December speaking tour in Israel. Samoilenko survived the three-month siege of the Azovstal steelworks in Mariupol and then four months in solitary confinement in Moscow, before he was released in a POW swap.

Samoilenko told the *Times of Israel* that he joined the Azov Regiment in 2016, two years after its founding as a volunteer force to fight Moscow-led militias that had seized control of parts



In mid-November, women protested outside offices of Russian military from St. Petersburg, above, to Ulyanovsk, over the treatment of conscripted relatives. Placard demands investigation of deaths and injuries of those sent to Ukraine front lines from the Belgorod region.

of the Donbas region of Ukraine.

Samoilenko acknowledged that some antisemitic rightists were initially part of the Maidan popular uprising that overturned the pro-Moscow regime of Viktor Yanukovich in 2014, as well as being members of the Azov group. Many quit the regiment a year later.

“The rest of the right-wing radicals,” Vyacheslav Lykhachov, a Russian-born Israeli researcher, told the *Times*, “were deliberately cleaned out by the

new commandant of the regiment in 2017.” Jewish Ukrainians were always brigade members, Samoilenko said, “but not in great numbers because a lot of people were frightened by the Russian propaganda.”

On his return from captivity in Russia, Samoilenko said he had been struck by Ukraine's transformation into “a different country where we understood our potential, how strong we are when we're united.”

US bosses, gov't have disdain for lives, health of older workers

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

COVID-19 cases are on the rise in the U.S. and worldwide. Close to 3,000 people died across the country in the third week of December, nearly 90% of them over 65 years old. Hospitalizations have increased 30% over the last two weeks.

It's a far different picture than the one President Joseph Biden painted on a Sunday “60 Minutes” broadcast in September, when he said COVID was still around, but the pandemic was “over.” “No one is wearing masks. Everybody seems to be in pretty good shape,” he said.

The problem, White House COVID response coordinator Ashish Jha told reporters in December, is that “there are still too many older Americans who have not gotten their immunity updated, who have not gotten themselves protected.”

Like in earlier rounds of the pandem-

ic, the lives of older workers, who can no longer produce profits for the bosses, get scant attention. So-called stage of life — a euphemism for age — was used to decide who got a bed or ventilator, and hundreds of thousands died locked down in nursing homes without being able to visit with family.

Fewer than 50% of nursing home residents have received the latest vaccine booster, yet in October the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the agency that regulates nursing homes, relaxed penalties for failing to meet vaccine mandates.

Cissy Sanders of Austin, Texas, told the press she met multiple obstacles trying to get a booster for her 73-year-old mother, who is in a nursing home. After the facility told her they couldn't find a vaccinator, she made plans to take her mom to Walgreens. “I'm concerned

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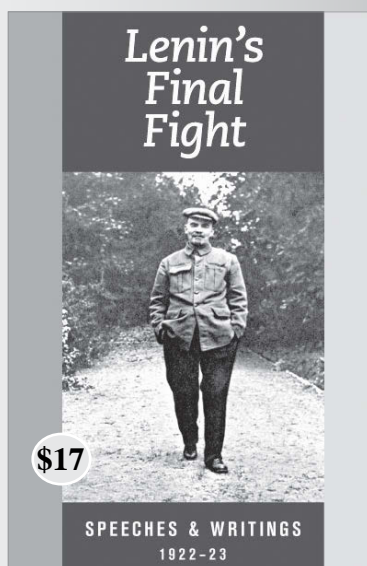
“I declare war to the death on Great Russian chauvinism.”

“A distinction must be made between the nationalism of an oppressor nation and the nationalism of an oppressed nation, the nationalism of a big nation and that of a small nation.”

— V.I. Lenin, 1922

In 1922 and 1923 Lenin waged his last political battle. At stake was whether the revolution would remain on the proletarian course that had brought workers and peasants to power.

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California 'tax rebate' donations to 'Militant' hit \$6,424

“We thought we might not be getting the California Gas Tax Rebate, but after all this time it finally showed up in our mailbox. So, it gives us great pleasure to contribute the \$700 we received to the *Militant*,” wrote Patti Iiyama and Jerry Freiworth from the Oakland area. “The paper is, of course, completely indispensable to workers and farmers in struggle today, and will become even more so in the giant class battles to come.”

This boosts to \$6,424 the total that *Militant* readers in California have sent in to the paper from what state officials dubbed a California Gas Tax Rebate.

A big thanks to all those who have contributed to the fund that goes to help the *Militant* offset inflation-driven increases in printing and shipping costs. With this note, we are concluding coverage in the paper of this fund. However, as the note from Patti and Jerry indicates, the state has slowly dribbled out these payments and it is possible that a few more readers will receive checks from the state. If so, you are encouraged to send them along.

— NORTON SANDLER

New ‘Till’ film misses real story of fight to overturn Jim Crow

“Till,” 2022, a film directed by Chinonye Chukwu, written by Michael Reilly, Keith Beauchamp, and Chinonye Chukwu, starring Danielle Deadwyler.

BY ILONA GERSH

If you want to learn about the powerful movement that ended the brutal Jim Crow system of segregation in the South, this movie misses the mark. It focuses on Mamie Till, whose 14-year-old son Emmett was cold bloodedly lynched while visiting relatives in Mississippi in 1955. But it shows very little of how Mamie Till decided to step up and lead years of protests against the acquittal of the two racists who lynched her son, and how it helped build the civil rights movement.

IN REVIEW

If you want to learn more about this, check out the articles written at the time in the *Militant*. Go to www.themilitant.com beginning in August 1955 and you can follow the wave of protest meetings organized by Mamie Till, the NAACP and the trade union movement for the next two years.



AP Photo/Hattiesburg American, Barry Beard
Mamie Till-Mobley speaks about the lynching of her son, Emmett, at rally in Kokomo, Mississippi, July 8, 2000.

And there is a good film on this important piece of history, the 2003 PBS documentary, “The Murder of Emmett Till,” directed by Stanley Nelson. The world changed because of the mighty struggle that tore down Jim Crow in the South and spread to the North. But “Till” ends by implying that nothing has changed. The fact is these proletarian-led struggles transformed the thinking of working people forever. And the fight around Emmett Till’s murder played an important part. If you want to join in this debate, then you should see this movie.

The fight to overturn Jim Crow

Jim Crow was set up in the South after the bloody defeat of the Radical Reconstruction governments that came out of the Second American Revolution — the Civil War that overturned slavery. That was the biggest setback for the U.S. working class in our entire history. The rural poor and working class were forcibly divided along color lines by Klan violence. Class solidarity was crippled and racist oppression enshrined. It was enforced by state power, in the southern states and in Washington, D.C., by both Democrats and Republicans. From 1880 to 1960, thousands of Black men and women were lynched,

tortured and mutilated, including sharecroppers, farmers, store owners, miners, railroaders and other toilers. There is no way to know the exact number. People would just disappear. The lynch mobs were still active in the 1950s, but now protests answered the lynchings. And the civil rights mobilizations grew, spreading to every city and town. Jim Crow’s days were numbered. The response to the killing of Emmett Till, the 1955-56 Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1960 Woolworth lunch counter sit-ins, 1961 Freedom Rides, 1963 Battle of Birmingham, 1965 Selma-to-Montgomery march, the organization of self-defense efforts in Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina and more, became overwhelming.

These battles won support and awakened struggles for equal rights across the country. African Americans who led these struggles saw them as a part of the fight for national liberation sweeping Africa, Asia and elsewhere. In the words of Malcolm X, millions were awakening to their self-worth.

The lynching of Emmett Till

On Aug. 24, 1955, after working in the fields, Emmett and some other youth went to a store for snacks in the small rural town of Money, Mississippi. He bought some candy from Carolyn Bryant, who owned the store along with her husband Roy Bryant. The story that was spread was that Till cat-whistled at her inside the store. In the Jim Crow South that was unacceptable. Three days later, Emmett Till was kidnapped from his uncle’s house. Two racists pistol-whipped him, shot him in the head, tied a 75-pound fan around his neck with barbed wire, and threw his body into the Tallahatchie River.

The lynching of Emmett Till was part of a wave of racist terror that swept the South in response to the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision by the U.S. Supreme Court that outlawed public school segregation. The jury took just an hour to acquit Roy Bryant and his brother-in-law, J.W. Milam. Mamie Till led opponents of Jim Crow who had come down to witness the trial away from the courthouse *before the jury came back*, knowing there would be a victory rally for the killers. “It was like the Fourth of July,” she said. The coffin containing Emmett Till’s body came to Chicago nailed shut, his mother was instructed not to open it. She told the funeral home that if they didn’t open it, she would get a hammer and do it herself. “Let the people see what I’ve seen,” she said.

The funeral of Emmett Till had a big impact on me, even though I was only 6 at the time. I grew up on the South Side of Chicago, about a mile from where Emmett Till lived with his mother. The funeral was in my neighborhood. Those were turbulent times. I remember desegregation battles that took place over housing in Chicago. More than once, my friends and I were chased off Lake Michigan beaches by white gangs of youth who wanted to keep them “for whites only.” Emmett Till’s funeral was a turning



Some 250,000 filed by Emmett Till’s 1955 Chicago funeral, helping fuel fight against Jim Crow nationwide. Till’s mother, Mamie, spent years protesting acquittal of two racists who killed him.

point for the civil rights movement there. According to the *Chicago Defender*, 250,000 people filed by the church on 40th and State Street, where the casket lay open for four days for all to see what the racists had done. My mother took me. She had become part of the fight for desegregation in Chicago. The line wound through the neighborhood for blocks on end. I remember seeing people who had obviously traveled a long way for the event, including Black men wearing African robes, Black youth, Black families, union members.

We stood in line for hours in protest of the lynching. My mother didn’t take me into the funeral home. Later, I saw the photos showing the mutilized face of Emmett Till in *Jet* magazine, which was passed from hand to hand in the schools, in Black churches, at workplaces, and on the streets, reaching millions of people. My friends in Sunday school showed me the tattered magazine.

For months afterward, protests of thousands sponsored by the NAACP and various unions took place from coast to coast. Some of these are described in a book called *The Blood of Emmett Till* by Timothy Tyson. “Jammed into the Garment District on 36th Street between Seventh and Eighth” in New York, he writes, “the twenty-thousand protesters roared their approval when [Congressman] Adam Clayton Powell Jr. proposed a national boycott on Mississippi products and a March on Washington in January to demand that Congress finally pass an anti-lynching bill.”

There were scores of similar actions. The United Steelworkers, United Auto Workers, longshore workers, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, District 65 of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Workers Union, the Jewish Labor Committee and others joined with the NAACP to hold giant protests.

Week after week, the Socialist Workers Party championed the struggles of the civil rights movement and the fight against Jim Crow in the *Militant*. The new film only briefly shows one of these rallies, which was in Harlem.

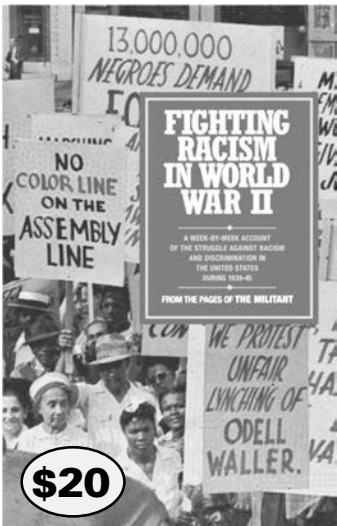
The NAACP pulls back

While the NAACP had spearheaded the protests against the Emmett Till lynching, they began to step back from demonstrations in 1956. It was an election year, and the NAACP was backing Democrat Adlai Stevenson running against Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower. NAACP leaders saw reliance on the Democrats and the capitalist government as the way to secure civil rights. Despite having raised hundreds of

thousands of dollars at the rallies that Mamie Till spoke at, the NAACP pulled back financial support for her. She had given up her job to tour the country full time for the organization. The NAACP and labor unions backed off from the call for a national march on Washington against lynchings. But others stepped forward. The Montgomery Bus Boycott was organized in response to Rosa Parks’ Dec. 1, 1955, decision not to give up her seat and move to the back of the bus. Mobilizing tens of thousands of Black workers in Montgomery, Alabama, winning support from the civil rights movement in the South, as well as unions in the North, this fight was victorious one year later.

Powerful working-class movement

This massive historic social struggle swept not only the South but across the U.S. for well over a decade. It built on the battles that forged the industrial unions in the 1930s, struggles by sharecroppers and tenant farmers, and in struggles during World War II against racism in wartime industries and lynch-mob terror and cop violence — as well as legal segregation of units inside the U.S. armed forces itself. Jim Crow was defeated by the massive force of Black-led working-class power. The working class and our unions were immeasurably strengthened. Mamie Till returned to Chicago, went to school and became an elementary school teacher. While she worked full time, and even after when she began to suffer from kidney failure, she freely gave the rest of her waking hours to the cause, speaking around the country, right until the end. She died in 2003. I recommend the following book on the history of Radical Reconstruction, the victorious fight against Jim Crow, and the fight against racism today: *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* by Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes.



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—ON THE PICKET LINE—

HarperCollins strikers fight for higher wages, union rights

NEW YORK — “We’re fighting for higher wages and union security,” Laura Harshberger, a senior production editor and chair of the bargaining unit at HarperCollins, told the *Militant*. Some 200 workers — hourly employees in editorial, sales, publicity, design, legal and marketing — have been on strike since Nov. 10. New York-based HarperCollins is one of the largest publishers in the country and the only major publisher with a union. The workers are organized by United Auto Workers Local 2110.

Their contract expired a year ago, Harshberger said. It was extended month by month until April, when the company refused to extend it again. “That meant the ‘no strike’ part of the contract also was no longer in effect.”

HarperCollins had record profits in 2020 and 2021, she said. In the third quarter of 2022 the company made \$39 million. “The starting wage is only \$45,000 and the average is \$55,000. With inflation, you just can’t live on that in New York City. Many of us work a second or even a third job just to get by.”

In addition to livable wages, the workers are fighting for “union security,” Harshberger said. “Right now this is an open shop.” Each individual decides whether to join the union and pay dues, even though everyone benefits from having the union.

After a big organizing effort close to 200 of the 235 or so workers covered by the union contract have joined, Harshberger said. “And not a single one of them has crossed the picket line.” This includes some new workers who have been on strike for longer than they had worked there.

“We’ve gotten incredible support,” she said. On Dec. 16 “we had a rally of 100 people.” Several authors, politicians and workers from other unions came. Those joining the picket line include union members from American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees District Council 37; adjunct professors at the New School; workers from the Starbucks Roastery, who

had been on strike; and even nonunion workers from other publishers who are watching this fight closely. “We know we’re going to be here for a while. But we’re ready to stay out as long as it takes,” Harshberger said.

“We have the publishing industry paying attention,” said Kelly Danber, a senior sales support associate who has worked at HarperCollins for five years.

Join the picket lines at 195 Broadway. (Picketing will resume Jan. 3, weekdays 10:30-2:30.) Contributions can be sent to HarperCollins Solidarity Fund, Attn: Lynne Weir, Region 9A UAW, 111 Founders Plaza, 17th Floor, East Hartford, CT 06108.

— Sara Lobman

Nurses strike Sutter Health hospitals over wages, staffing

OAKLAND, Calif. — Registered nurses hit the picket lines Christmas Eve in front of Sutter Health hospitals here and in Berkeley, launching a nine-day strike. The 1,800 members of the California Nurses Association voted to go on strike because the bosses’ proposed contract, while offering a 22.4% wage increase over four years, didn’t address staffing, safety and retirement concerns or keep their wages competitive with other area hospitals.

“The whole hospital is short-staffed,” RN Mike Hill, who works in the intensive care unit and is an on-the-job union representative, told the *Militant* on the picket line outside Sutter’s Alta Bates Summit Medical Center here. “It’s an every-shift thing. It affects the quality of care.”

“Even if the number of nurses in a unit is adequate,” Hill continued, “if ancillary [support] staff is lacking, the nurses’ workload increases.”

“The other day the hospital’s CEO, David Clark, went up to the fifth floor and started urging nurses to vote to approve the contract,” rehab nurse Sudi Azadeh said. “‘Don’t abandon the patients and go on strike,’ he told us. When we answered that they are hiring traveling nurses to cover for us, he complained that that was expensive!”

“If you don’t like it here, then leave,” the CEO told nurses, Azadah said, ex-

Titles on politics, history draw at Montreal Book Fair



Militant/Mary Ellen Marus

MONTREAL — There was increased interest in books about working-class and revolutionary history and politics at the Pathfinder booth at the Nov. 23-27 annual Montreal Book Fair. Volunteers from Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and New York City sold 138 books and 13 subscriptions to the *Militant*, almost 50% more than last year. Some 75,000 people took part in the fair. Sales and discussions were triggered by displays of the *Militant*’s coverage of the courageous fight by 55,000 school workers in Ontario against an anti-strike law imposed by the provincial government.

During the two weeks leading up to the book fair, presentations on the newest Pathfinder title — *Labor, Nature, and the Evolution of Humanity: The Long View of History* — were held, one in French at the Port de tête bookstore and the other in English at the de Stiiil bookshop. Some 30 people attended the events featuring a panel of Josette Hurtubise, a primary school teacher; David Lefrancois, a university teacher in history and theories of education; and Michel Prairie, Pathfinder’s French-language editor.

This collection of articles and writings by Frederick Engels and Karl Marx, founding leaders of the modern communist movement, and George Novack and Mary-Alice Waters, leaders of the Socialist Workers Party, was Pathfinder’s best seller at the fair, with 23 copies sold.

— MICHEL PRAIRIE

pressing the age-old contempt that bosses have for workers. “But when the proposed contract was put to the membership, while all the other Sutter units had approved the contract, we said no.” The CEO’s remark wound up on their picket signs, next to the union reply: “Nurses are not expendable!”

“The CEOs make big money but they won’t offer competitive wages or decent retirement,” Mary Thomas, a nurse who cares for cardiac and stroke patients, told the *Militant*. Since Sutter nurses are paid

several dollars less per hour than Kaiser Permanente hospital nurses, many quit to work at the nearby competitor. “One of our biggest issues is nurse retention, which contributes to the severe staffing shortage threatening patient safety,” Leslie Blanchard, a Sutter nurse, told the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

“We are fighting to keep the Alta Bates Hospital in Berkeley open,” Thomas said. “If they close it people in Berkeley will have to be transported to Oakland. When someone has a stroke, time is brain loss. The more time it takes to get to the hospital, the more brain damage you suffer.”

Sutter has said it will close its 300-bed Berkeley hospital by 2030 to avoid having to renovate it to comply with a state earthquake-safety law. That would leave only Kaiser’s 50-bed hospital in Richmond to serve the densely populated urban corridor north of Oakland, home to about 250,000 people and the Chevron oil refinery.

— Eric Simpson

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



January 12, 1998

The recent actions by immigration authorities seizing hundreds of workers at factories in Georgia for deportations deserve condemnation. These arrests are aimed at dividing working people and intimidating undocumented workers who try to resist the bosses’ attacks on their rights and working conditions. The big-business media made a big fuss about the breakup of an “alien-smuggling hiring ring” that brought Mexican workers to garment shops in Georgia and Alabama.

The denial of rights to a layer of the working class dubbed “illegal” helps the bosses to superexploit those workers in particular and hold down wages for all.

Working people should demand equal rights for all immigrants, the release of those detained, and no deportations. The labor movement should fight for solidarity with those from other countries, not scapegoating immigrants.



January 12, 1973

SAN DIEGO, Jan. 2 — The first court martial of a Black sailor from the USS Kitty Hawk on charges stemming from an incident last October ended today. Hiram Davis, 20, was convicted on the charge of unlawful apprehension.

Davis’ conviction is consistent with the Navy’s racist practices. At a press conference called by the Black Serviceman’s Caucus, a group organized to combat racism in the Navy, three of the sailors charged with riot and assault gave some examples of what Blacks have to live with within the Navy. Black sailors are usually assigned to work in “the hole.” Blacks are never allowed to congregate in groups of more than two or three.

“You get more hardship in the Navy than on the streets. You’re called ‘boy’ and ‘dog.’ We stand up and voice our opinion. It’s time for the world to know what all brothers and sisters want.”

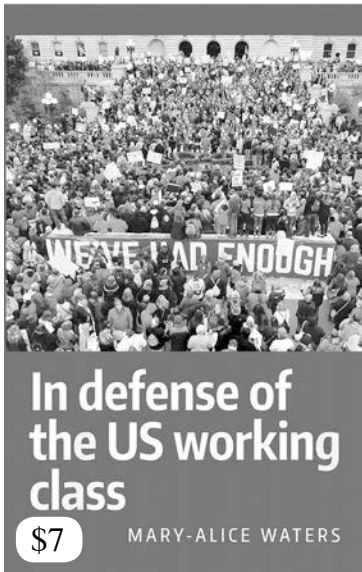


January 12, 1948

The Truman administration has dragged this country to the verge of undeclared war against the Greek people. U.S. Fleet marines are being dispatched to the Mediterranean area to reinforce American armed forces already in Greek waters and threatening direct intervention in the Greek civil war. Since last March the U.S. government has been pouring military supplies and arms into Greece.

Premier Sophoulis — whose regime has suppressed all opposition parties and papers, thrown tens of thousands of rebellious workers and soldiers into prison horror camps and imposed a death penalty for strikers — hailed the latest move of Washington as “encouraging.”

The implication is clear. Wall Street is using warships, planes and marines to intimidate all opposition to the reactionary regimes it maintains in Europe with the taxes of the American people.



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New budget funds US military

Continued from front page
Martin for completing delivery of 118 F-35 warplanes. Earlier in the month, contracts of \$497 million for CH-47F helicopters went to Boeing and another \$431 million to Lockheed Martin for High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems.

The spending will maintain Washington’s “fighting edge over adversaries like China and Russia,” Democratic Sen. Jon Tester from Montana boasted. Whenever Democrats and Republicans talk about protecting “American interests,” they’re talking about the profits and political interests of the ruling capitalist class. Following Moscow’s Ukraine invasion, Washington, like all other capitalist powers worldwide, is seeking new allies and stepping up preparations for conflicts and wars to come.

These include mounting tensions in the Pacific, as the Chinese rulers threaten to use their military to bring self-governing Taiwan under their domination. In the Middle East, Tehran is driving to defend its moves to extend its reactionary military and economic reach across the region. It’s acquiring nuclear weapons and threatens to destroy the Jewish state of Israel. Underlying these clashes, the U.S. rulers and rival powers face mounting competition for markets and resources, as the global economy slows down and more struggles by workers, farmers and the oppressed break out.

Assault on constitutional freedoms

The U.S. rulers’ provisions for more wars abroad are an extension of their profit-driven assaults on working people at home. These are accompanied by efforts to refurbish the FBI — their main political police — to use in growing attacks on constitutional freedoms crucial for working-class struggles.

Some \$2.6 billion in the government package is allocated to U.S. prosecutions related to the Jan. 6, 2021, melee at the Capitol. So far more than 900 people have been arrested. Several figures have been charged with violating notorious thought-control laws like seditious conspiracy, which target people for what they say, not what they do.

A further \$11.3 billion is lavished on the FBI, tasked with targeting so-called domestic terrorists. No matter who they go after first, history shows their main target is the unions and working-class political organizations like the Socialist Workers Party.

For the first time in nine years the National Labor Relations Board gets an increase in funding. The raise was supported and praised by AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler.

But the NLRB isn’t neutral, much less a friend of labor. It’s part of a capitalist government committed to serving the needs of the exploiting class, and to restricting and punishing fighting workers and our unions. It does so under Democratic and Republican administrations alike. Just one example is the \$13.3 million fine it imposed on the United Mine Workers last August for the “crime” of exercising the right to strike at Warrior Met’s mine in Brookwood, Alabama.

Gains workers make are not a result of the workings of the NLRB or any other government agency. They’re won through using union power to fight in the interest of all working people.

The spending bill slashes some social

programs that were extended during the pandemic. Beginning in March, workers who rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to get food for themselves and their families will see benefits cut, on average by \$82 per person per month, just as food prices continue to soar. In April, state governments will be able to throw people enrolled in Medicaid during the pandemic off the rolls. Up to 19 million could lose Medicaid benefits, CNN reports.

To garner enough votes to pass the bill, its bipartisan sponsors grafted \$15.3 billion in “earmarks” onto it. These are over 7,200 pet projects legislators inserted to build their public image and curry political favor in their home states. They include adding to the series of buildings and other facilities named after Nancy Pelosi and a hiking trail in Georgia named after Michelle Obama.

Some are political measures that would be unlikely to pass if submitted on their own. First rejected by Congress in 2009, Bernie Sanders’ Worker Ownership, Readiness and Knowledge Act is stuffed into the spending package. It provides cash to co-operatives and companies that expand workers’ stock ownership, advancing the illusion that capitalist exploitation

Oregon governor ends death penalty, botched executions spread

BY JANET POST

On Dec. 13 outgoing Oregon Gov. Kate Brown commuted the death sentences of all 17 prisoners sentenced to be executed in the state. “I have long believed that justice is not advanced by taking a life, and the state should not be in the business of executing people,” said the governor in a statement. Brown also ordered the execution chamber to be shut down.

“This commutation is not based on any rehabilitative efforts by the individuals on death row,” said Brown. “Instead, it reflects the recognition that the death penalty is immoral.” They will serve life in prison with no chance of parole.

Since capital punishment is written into Oregon’s constitution, future administrations can reinstate it.

Oregon becomes one of 24 states where government officials or legislatures have abolished the death penalty. The other states allow executions, while two of them — California, the state with the most prisoners on death row, and Pennsylvania — have declared a moratorium. In addition, the federal government and military retain the death penalty. There are around 2,500 death-row prisoners nationwide.

Seventeen prisoners were executed in five states in 2022 — Alabama, Arizona, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas. In 2023, 33 executions have been scheduled in four states — Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma and Texas.

In a recent report, the Death Penalty Information Center said that 2022 could be considered “the year of the botched execution.” Of the 20 execution attempts this year, seven were “visibly problematic.”

The center quotes government guidelines for “botched” executions: “Those involving unanticipated problems or delays that caused, at least arguably, unnecessary agony for the prisoner or that reflect gross

THE MILITANT Formerly the SOCIALIST APPEAL Official Weekly Organ of the Socialist Workers Party

NEW YORK, N.Y. SATURDAY, JULY 16, 1941

By the October revolution, the property, will be necessary to defend at all costs.

Indicted Union Leader Indicted Party Leader

FBI Frameup Is Aid To Tobin's Anti-CIO Drive

Crushing Of Minneapolis Truck Drivers Is Aim Of Federal Indictments; Roosevelt Thus Pays His Political Debt To AFL And Tobin

MINNEAPOLIS, July 15.—Arresting the demand of the Minneapolis Truck Drivers, a federal grand jury today indicted seven leaders of the "Red" union, charging against 29 CIO leaders and Socialist Workers Party members.

The leaders of the State Transport and Allied Workers Union, Local 18430 of Minneapolis—President Miles E. Dumas, Vice-President George Young, Secretary Treasurer Kelly Parnell, Organizers W. E. Dumas, Ray Randolph, Harry De Beer, Earl Hanson and Walter Hagen—were among those indicted.

In June 1941, leaders of Socialist Workers Party and Teamsters Local 544 were framed by government, FBI. Aim was to attack opposition in unions to the war drive, curtail legal standing of party.

can be rejiggered to serve the interests of working people. The bill contains changes to the Electoral Count Act to make it harder to block the certification of a presidential election.

The mammoth 4,155 page document is aimed in its entirety at strengthening the capitalist rulers’ government, not protecting working people from the spreading capitalist crisis. New unemployment claims have risen since September. Walmart, PepsiCo, Ford Motors and Amazon all recently cut jobs.

These layoffs, and today’s inflation,

come on top of years of deteriorating living conditions. Life expectancy fell in 2021 to the lowest level since 1996. Deaths from drug overdoses have risen fivefold over the last 20 years. Gambling addiction — widely promoted in newspaper sports sections — has soared. As these conditions continue to bear down on working people, Socialist Workers Party candidates get a hearing when they explain why workers and our unions need to organize independently of the exploiters on all the questions we face.

tempt to kill Kenneth Eugene Smith, Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey halted all executions until a “top-to-bottom” review is completed. But, she said, “I believe that legal tactics and criminals hijacking the system are at play here.”

“The use of the death penalty is a heinous crime, an effort to intimidate working people from fighting to change this inhuman capitalist system,” Chris Hoeppepner, the 2022 Socialist Workers Party candidate for Congress from Pennsylvania, told the *Militant*. “That’s why it’s being used against protesters in Iran today. The SWP campaigns to win a majority of working people to fight for its abolition once and for all.”

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‘Stop executions! Free prisoners!’

Continued from front page
leaders and others; and tortures prisoners, it vacillates, afraid to provoke more widespread protests against its repressive actions.

Before and after the execution of two protesters found guilty of “enmity to God,” tens of thousands took to the streets — and thousands more around the world — calling for an end to the death penalty and freedom for the nearly 20,000 political prisoners.

As of Dec. 28 no new executions have been carried out, while more than a dozen protesters still face charges that carry the death penalty.

In one sign of the rifts in the hard-line regime, the Iranian parliament press office Dec. 20 angrily denounced Shahab Hosseini, a well-known actor and movie director, for criticizing a statement by members of parliament calling for teaching protesters “a good lesson.” Hosseini said their statement unjustly called for imposing death sentences. The press office then claimed that the parliament majority never called for the death penalty, only for “retribution.”

Fight over death penalty

On Dec. 24, the court also ordered the retrial of Saman Seydi Yasin, a Kurdish rapper accused of setting a rubbish bin on fire and sentenced to death.

“Where in the world have you seen a loved one’s life taken for a trash bin,” his mother said in a video.

But the court upheld the death sentence against Mohammad Qabadlo, charged with striking and killing a police officer with a car. He was not allowed to have his lawyer present at the hearings. In a statement from prison, Qabadlo said the verdict was “devoid of honor and justice.”

According to the news site *Bar-tarinha*, radiologist Hamid Ghare-Hassanlou and his wife Farzaneh were driving back from the Nov. 3 funeral of a friend killed at a protest when they came across another anti-government demonstration. They got out of their car to see what was going on, and Farzaneh Hassanlou intervened when some ultra-

left protesters attacked a Muslim cleric and was able to halt the assault.

That night members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps raided the couple’s home and beat them in front of their child. On Dec. 5 Hamid was sentenced to death and Farzaneh to 15 years in prison.

There’s conflicting press reports about whether the sentence against Hamid Ghare-Hassanlou has been suspended.

Taraneh Alidoosti, one of Iran’s most famous actors, was arrested Dec. 17 after she denounced the regime’s use of the death penalty. A number of actors and film directors protested publicly Dec. 20 outside the infamous Evin prison to demand her release.

The protests sparked by Amini’s death brought into the open pent-up anger toward both major wings of the regime, the lack of political freedoms, discrimination against oppressed nationalities and religious minorities, the oppression of women, attacks on unions and the impact of the economic crisis. Like the protests that swept Iran in 2017-18 and 2018-19, today’s actions also reflect opposition to the regime’s military adventures throughout the Middle East as it seeks to bolster its rule at home by advancing counter-revolution in the region.

Its expansionist drive includes the declared aim of eliminating the state of Israel, home to half the world’s Jews. Iran’s state broadcaster aired a video Dec. 17 threatening “Tel Aviv will be razed to the ground” if Israeli Defense Forces attack Tehran’s nuclear facility in Natanz.

Oil workers: ‘We are not slaves’

Every week there are new strikes by workers.

At more than a half dozen oil facilities workers have held short strikes over several weeks, calling for higher wages, restoration of overtime pay, better conditions and back pay owed to them. Based on the success of those actions, the Council for Organizing Oil Contract Workers together with permanent employees called for a strike and rallies at oil centers Dec. 24 under the theme “We are not slaves.” They are demanding wage increases and that more contract workers be given permanent positions.

But when workers got to the rally location in the city of Asaluyeh there were uniformed and plainclothes cops everywhere. Thirty workers were arrested. Fifteen were released that afternoon. Bosses prevented 10 workers from returning to work later.

Workers at the Abadan Oil Refining company, 400 miles north of Asaluyeh, went on strike that weekend to protest the threats to fire and prosecute workers who joined the Dec. 24 actions. The Oil Contract Workers union reports that the strike shut down the complex.

Oppressed nationalities

Nothing the Iranian regime has done has been able to stop the protest movement. On Dec. 27 alone there were actions in Hormozgan province in the south; in the mostly Azerbaijani city of Tabriz;

Jordan: Truckers strike against fuel price increases



Truck drivers in Jordan, above, ended a 17-day strike Dec. 19, after six members of parliament promised that their demands for lower fuel prices and cancellation of a special tax on fuel derivatives would be met. But some workers said they planned to continue the strike.

Under pressure from the International Monetary Fund, the government has been steadily raising the price of both diesel fuel used for transportation and kerosene used to heat homes, as well as imposing new taxes. One liter of diesel increased from about 70 cents last January to \$1.26 today.

“By the end of the month, I’m in debt,” truck driver Khalid Shatnawi told Al Jazeera, saying his income no longer covers his expenses.

The average income in Jordan is \$700 a month. Costs for kerosene is often 40% of a family’s monthly income. Unemployment reached 23% at the end of 2021.

The truckers were joined at times in their strike by bus, taxi and ride-share drivers in several provinces, along with shopkeepers who shuttered their stores for a day in solidarity. Goods piled up at phosphate mines and the port of Aqaba during the strike.

“I’m in trouble,” taxi driver Issa Ahabreh, who works 14 hours to make \$17 a day, told Middle East Eye. “I will have to burn wood and books this winter because I cannot afford to buy kerosene.”

Forty-four people who the government claimed had participated in “riots” against the rising fuel prices were arrested, and government officials claim that a police officer was shot and killed during a clash in southern Jordan.

— SETH GALINSKY

in the Kurdish cities of Mahabad and Bukan; in Tehran; in Sistan-Baluchistan in the south; and in predominantly Persian Mashhad in the northeast.

Some of the largest actions continue to take place in cities and towns, large and small, in areas populated by Kurds and Baluchis, two of the oppressed nationalities in Iran with long histories of fighting for rights.

On Dec. 26 hundreds gathered at the Aichi cemetery in Saqqez City in Kurdistan for the 40-day ceremony to celebrate the life of 17-year-old worker Danial Paybandi, who was shot and killed by government forces there. According to the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers Union, the crowd chanted, “Azerbaijani, Baluch, Kurds, Equality, Freedom.”

Women in Baluchistan, one of the most rural and underdeveloped regions

in Iran, have faced widespread discrimination. Reflecting the impact of protesters’ demands for “Women, life, freedom,” Sunni cleric Shaikh Abdul-Hamid at a Dec. 23 prayer service attended by thousands in Zahedan, the capital of Sistan-Baluchistan province, rebuked the Taliban in neighboring Afghanistan for banning women from universities. Abdul-Hamid has also called on the Iranian government to end the death penalty and to stop the beating and torture of prisoners.

The fight of working people in Iran is winning support from workers in the region. On Dec. 22, members of the Transport Workers Union of Turkey demonstrated in front of the Iranian Consulate in Istanbul to call for freedom for Reza Shahabi, a leader of the Tehran Bus Workers Union who has been in prison since May 12, and for the release of all the union and political prisoners in Iran.

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Counterrevolutionary coup led to US invasion of Grenada

To mark the anniversary of the Jan. 1, 1959, popular triumph in Cuba, the first of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for January is Fidel Castro: Nothing Can Stop the Course of History. It is a wide-ranging interview by Jeffrey M. Elliot and Mervyn M. Dymally with the central leader of Cuba's socialist revolution. These excerpts cover Maurice Bishop and the 1979-83 Grenadian Revolution. The workers and peasants government led by Bishop on this small, largely Black, English-speaking Caribbean island was a powerful reinforcement for the Cuban Revolution. In October 1983, Bishop and others were murdered in a Stalinist coup led by Bernard Coard, overthrowing the revolutionary government. This paved the way for a U.S. military invasion the following week. Copyright © 1986. Reprinted by permission of Pathfinder Press.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY FIDEL CASTRO

In effect, what was taking place in Grenada was not a socialist revolution, but a process of social changes. I believe that the basic factor that opened the door — that served the United States a pretext on a silver platter for invading that country, at a lower political price — were the activities of an ambitious and extremist sectarian group. In my view, the main



Fidel Castro said social program of Maurice Bishop, center, who led 1979-83 workers and farmers government in Grenada, “had support of the immense majority.” Counterrevolutionary coup in October 1983 led by Bernard Coard destroyed the revolution, led to US invasion.

responsibility for the domestic situation created there lies with [Bernard] Coard. An alleged theoretician of the revolution who had been a professor of Marxism in Jamaica, he profited from his reputation as a theoretically well-prepared man and used his reputation as a theoretician to promote his personal ambitions and conspire against Bishop. ...

I think personal ambition was Coard's basic motivation and what really confused many people in whom he inculcated extremist ideas from supposedly revolutionary positions, as a means of gaining support. In the name of the purity of Marxist-Leninist principles, he portrayed Bishop as a man insufficiently prepared to lead the country. Very subtly, he did it very subtly. He worked in the rank and file of the party, the armed forces, the Ministry of the Interior — always presenting himself as an apostle of the purity of ideas — and astutely, little by little, he created the image of a vacillating, reformist Bishop. Thus, he confused many people of good faith in the revolutionary ranks.

Bishop had great popular support and was well liked by the population. But Coard and his group — who belonged to one of the organizations that joined with Bishop to form the New Jewel Movement — didn't work with the masses. That is, the Coard group didn't work with the masses; it worked among the party members — who were a small

group of about 200 — and with the cadres of the army and the Ministry of the Interior. This fifth column, this undermining of Bishop's authority, coalesced at a moment when Bishop — though he had the support of the immense majority of the people — lost the majority within the party, both in the Central Committee and among the membership. This was the fruit of the conspiracy led by Coard and his group. It explains the senseless and mad step of arresting Bishop and, even worse, of firing upon the people and assassinating Bishop. It was that unfortunate event that made it possible for the Reagan administration to perpetrate the cynical and opportunistic invasion of the country.

If Bishop had been alive leading the people, it would have been very difficult for the United States to orchestrate the political aspects of its intervention. ... In short, Coard and his group served the United States, on a silver platter, ideal conditions for the invasion of Grenada.

Naturally, they were not going to be met with the people's resistance, for the simple reason that the people were outraged, traumatized by the attitude of this group that had fired upon the people and assassinated Bishop. Thus, a divorce took place; those involved in the coup gathered the weapons of the militia. They disarmed the militia on various pretexts, precisely for fear of the people after what they had done. ...

[T]he United States had no right whatsoever to invade and occupy Grenada; the U.S. had no right to do it. ...

It invaded Grenada to eradicate the revolution and to reestablish the former regime in that country. That's all.

One more thing: the United States invades a country and violates all international laws to do away with a process that was dead. Why? Because I'm totally convinced that Coard and his group committed political suicide. After they assassinated Bishop and fired upon the people, that process could not endure. I believe that it was the people — the people themselves, the Grenadians themselves — who had to solve that problem, and they were going to solve it.

The government could not have endured. We wouldn't have offered any support to that government after it murdered Bishop and fired on the people. After we had assumed that attitude, it would have been difficult for any other socialist or progressive country to support that group, because Bishop actually had great authority and great international prestige. He had attended numerous meetings of the Commonwealth, the Movement of Nonaligned Countries, and the United Nations. The whole world thought highly of Bishop; that Pol Pot-type group that murdered him would never have been forgiven. ...

[W]hen the people's uprising occurred, they became so frightened and confused that they fired upon the people and shortly thereafter killed Bishop and a group of valuable aides. That is the historical truth.

We fully endorsed Bishop's policies, because they were realistic. They weren't extremist policies. They were based upon the country's situation and its level of development, and they were working for the people's well-being, for Grenada's development. ...

Bishop had a program, but not a socialist program — nor could he have had a socialist program. Rather, it was a program for social justice and for the country's development. Bishop implemented an agrarian reform, but he didn't nationalize the hotels. A country that lived on tourism, did not even have its own currency, and had no industries, could not rush headlong into drastic social changes. Bishop was implementing a rational, intelligent program and was really making progress.

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8 The Militant January 9, 2023

—SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STATEMENT—

Workers need labor party, based on unions

Continued from front page

ing people in check, and to weaken our struggles, today and in the future.

It doesn't have to be this way.

The fight to defend our class starts with building solidarity with striking United Auto Workers at Case New Holland in Iowa and Wisconsin, United Mine Workers at Warrior Met Coal in Alabama and other unionists forced into battle. Through labor struggles workers learn to rely on our own forces and see more clearly our common interests, our own worth, and prospects for building, extending and strengthening our unions.

We need a union-led fight for jobs, with the wages, hours and conditions necessary for families to live and find time to relax, study and get more active in our unions. We need a government-funded public works program to put millions back to work at union-scale pay to build houses, hospitals, child care centers, transportation and other things we need.

As we advance our fight against the attacks by the bosses and their government on the picket line, we need to build a political party of our own, a labor party based on our unions. This is the only way we can chart a political road forward based on the interests of workers and farmers against our class enemies.

The capitalist rulers' foreign policy and expanding military are aimed at maintaining their position



Ilona Gersh, Socialist Workers Party 2023 candidate for mayor of Chicago.

Militant/David Rosenfeld

as top imperialist power worldwide. The working class needs our own foreign policy to extend solidarity to fellow working people on the frontline of class battles from Ukraine to Iran and elsewhere, and to demand an immediate end to Washington's economic war against Cuba.

On Jan. 1 working people in Cuba will celebrate the 64th anniversary of their 1959 Revolution. Led by Fidel Castro and the July 26 Movement, they overthrew the U.S.-backed dic-

tatorship of Fulgencio Batista and went on to establish a workers and farmers government, take control of the factories and banks, implement a far-reaching land reform, and come to recognize they were making a socialist revolution. This is what makes it possible for them to have held Washington at bay for decades.

Workers and farmers in Cuba proved that with communist leadership our class is capable of charting a road to emancipation led by and for the exploited and oppressed. They set an example for working people in the U.S. and across the globe.

The single biggest contribution working people in the U.S. can make toward ending Washington's economic and political war against the Cuban people is to fight to take power here in the world's last empire, establish our own workers and farmers government and join in the worldwide struggle for socialism.

Bosses, gov't disdain

Continued from page 3

about the lack of urgency at my mother's nursing home," she said.

For homebound seniors the situation isn't any better. In Los Angeles County, where an estimated 500,000 residents are homebound, the public health department says it sends out only eight nurses a day to provide in-home vaccinations.

And things are about to get tougher. Informal talks have been ongoing within the Biden administration for more than a year about ending government funding for COVID care. Executives from Pfizer and Moderna are licking their chops in anticipation of the day they can begin selling their shots on the private market.

Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla told investors that sales of Paxlovid, the drug to treat high-risk patients that the government currently pays \$530 a dose for, and the company's COVID vaccine — for which Pfizer plans to charge \$120 a shot — will be "a multibillion-dollars franchise."

On top of this, the bipartisan "omnibus" 4,000-plus page bill passed by Congress on Dec. 23 allows state governments to cut up to 19 million people off Medicaid and its related children's program, which had been temporarily expanded during the COVID pandemic.

The capitalist rulers and their for-profit health system contributed to another drop in life expectancy in the U.S. last year, to 76.4 years, a level last seen in 1996.

While more than 400,000 people in the U.S. have died from COVID, many others lost their lives from what the media terms "unintentional injuries": the scourge of opioid drug overdoses, over 106,000 in 2021; suicides; and the sharp drop in access to quality and affordable health care for millions of working people.

Rail workers discuss fight over crew size, safety, deadly schedules

Continued from front page

protected, with no bells, lights or gates to warn drivers of oncoming trains. The rail barons say it's not their responsibility to install these devices, that it's up to state and local governments to fund such projects. Then they turn around and say they should get the contracts to do the work, since they're experts, and should be paid profitably with public money.

And the prices charged by the railroads have soared recently. "The railroads increased the cost to upgrade a crossing ... to \$300,000 and more," train crash investigator Bob Comer told the *Star*. But federal funding hasn't risen, "so the number of crossing upgrades were reduced greatly, but the railroads were still getting all of the money to do the work every year."

The human costs were brought home in June 2022 when an Amtrak passenger train hit a dump truck on an unprotected BNSF Railway crossing near Mendon, Missouri, killing four people. After the crash, the rail bosses sued the company whose truck was involved.

Of course, the lawsuit doesn't mention the fact that farmers and neighbors had complained for several years about the condition of that crossing, which caused vehicles to get stuck on the tracks. Nor the fact that the same crossing was put on a list in 2021 to have gates and lights installed, but nothing had been done a year later.

Another article in the *Star* took up the potential impact of the proposed merger of the Canadian Pacific Railway and Kansas City Southern.

The paper spoke to residents of Camanche, Iowa, population 4,300. Many have packed City Council meetings to oppose the merger because it could triple the number of trains passing through. The town is 1 mile long, and slow or stopped trains can trap a quarter of the population between the rail line and the Mississippi River.

Paul Varner, the mayor pro-tem, is a retired firefighter and EMT. "I've had all seven of these crossings blocked, we're doing CPR on a guy in the back of the ambulance, and we can't get across the tracks to get him to the hospital," Varner told the *Star*. "It's happened, because I've experienced it."

Urban areas are affected as well. Houston City Council member Robert Gallegos said that already this year "we have over 900 cases where EMS vehicles

could not get through because of stalled trains."

As carriers have increased train lengths — two- to three-mile-long monsters are now common — the problem gets worse.

Bosses disdain for workers, townspeople

Jakob Forsgren, chairman of Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Lodge 1320 in Lincoln, Nebraska, said the issues described in the *Kansas City Star* rang true to his experience. His union builds and maintains the tracks and surrounding areas.

He told the *Militant* that he's had to argue with management to give advance notice to residents about long-planned work that would block crossings for hours. "I was told it wasn't the railroad's problem."

Another *Star* article reported on the death of CSX conductor Paul Payne in Ohio in the fall of 2020. Payne was struck by a tree limb while riding on the side of a car, in a spot where other workers had already reported overgrown vegetation.

"This one hit deep, as maintaining brush near the tracks is something we used to have a machine doing almost year-round," Forsgren said. "The first positions to go every time there is a reduction are machine operator jobs that the railroad doesn't deem essential to keeping the track in a condition where they don't have to limit speed. You'll notice most right of ways have weeds eight feet tall because they cut those jobs. And it causes visibility issues for drivers at train crossings."

The dangers of long trains and maintenance cuts were underlined by one of the latest derailments. Twenty-seven cars on a Union Pacific train traveling on BNSF track through Victorville, California, went off the rails Dec. 20, closing both main lines for a day. Luckily, this time the cars didn't end up on a nearby highway, and the train was carrying iron ore, not hazardous materials.

UP pushes getting rid of conductors

The rail bosses are campaigning to cut freight rail crew size to just one worker, the engineer. They say this significant reduction in workers would be safe because of the recent introduction of Positive Train Control, which monitors and can interfere with train speeds. Union Pacific says it is negotiating with unions to conduct a test program to replace road conductors with a "ground-based expeditor."

This would do nothing to help the engineer drive the train or replace having two sets of eyes on conditions. The "expeditors" would be dispatched to drive out to a disabled train to deal with problems currently handled by the conductor. Think about massive trains blocking tracks in your town.

Into the 1990s, train crews included four or five workers, including a couple riding in a caboose at the rear of the train. Now the bosses have driven that down to a conductor and an engineer on the head end, and they want more. For them, fewer workers means higher profits — safety be damned.

Reporting on the UP "expeditor" test, *Railfan & Railroad* magazine noted, "BNSF Railway tried to negotiate a similar program with its unions a few years ago, but it was flatly rejected."

On Dec. 12 the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen announced that longtime union President Dennis Pierce narrowly lost reelection to Edward Hall, a working engineer and local official from Arizona. A majority of the union's 30,000 members didn't vote. The election result is widely seen as reflecting workers' dissatisfaction with the results of the contract fight.

Four days later Pierce announced he would retire at the end of the year, rather than contest the vote.

"The membership must stand united in the fight against the rail carriers, and stop blaming their union and its officers for the actions of those carriers," Pierce wrote. "You have every right to be enraged at the rail carriers, turn that into being engaged in your union."

These are some of the key issues facing rail workers and their unions on the heels of the government's imposition of their new contract. Discussion and debate on how to defend jobs, safety, and working conditions continue across the industry.

Naomi Craine is a conductor and member of SMART-TD Local 1494.

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