

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Erbil book fair reflects class politics in Kurdistan and Iraq
— PAGES 8-9

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 87/NO. 14 APRIL 10, 2023

Defend Ukraine independence! Moscow out of all of Ukraine!

BY ROY LANDERSEN

Russian President Vladimir Putin's brutal efforts to conquer Ukraine have been deadlocked for months as a result of the courageous efforts of working people in Ukraine. The Russian rulers occupy almost a fifth of Ukraine but the front lines have changed little in recent months despite the Putin regime's continual bombardment of residential areas.

Few Ukrainian cities have been bombed as relentlessly as Orikhiv in Zaporizhzhia. Putin claimed he had annexed to Russia the region last fall despite not controlling much territory there. The determination to repel Moscow's invasion is reflected in the action of volunteers among the 2,000 people left in the city. Most have abandoned their bombed-out homes, having recently finished construction of a massive underground bomb shelter complete with piped water, laundromats, showers, dining facilities and a children's cinema.

Continued on page 7

Support East Palestine fight for control over the cleanup

Rail workers win victory against 1-person 'crew'



"People from all over have been coming together to help," Kaylee Ball, holding a copy of the *Militant* amid donations at her Salem, Ohio, farm, told SWP member Jacquie Henderson March 23. Working people are battling effects of derailment in East Palestine.

BY TONY LANE

EAST PALESTINE, Ohio — Solidarity with working people, farmers and small-business people who have been affected by the Feb. 3 Norfolk

Southern train derailment and their fight to win control over the cleanup and rebuilding here is being expressed through acts of support from working people far and wide.

And the fight they are waging has helped advance long-standing struggles for safety and control over their schedules and conditions by rail workers. Since the outcry over the derailment and toxic burn-off in East Palestine, bosses at two railroads — Norfolk Southern and Union Pacific — have dropped efforts to operate with a "crew" of just one worker.

"These women from Indiana

Continued on page 6

Defend crucial constitutional freedoms from gov't assault

BY TERRY EVANS

While New York City prosecutor Alvin Bragg pushes to indict former President Donald Trump on charges even he admits would be difficult to prove, federal prosecutors announced they plan to charge up to 1,200 more people in connection with the Jan. 6, 2021, melee at the U.S. Capitol.

JOIN FIGHT TO DEFEND RIGHTS WORKERS NEED
— see page 13

These moves reflect the government's deepening assault on crucial constitutional freedoms. Widely described in the press as the most extensive FBI operation ever carried out, it is designed to boost President Joseph Biden's re-election in 2024 and block Trump from ever

Continued on page 7

Beet workers make gains in strike to stop attack by Spreckels bosses



Striking sugar beet workers, members of United Food and Commercial Workers, picket Spreckels Sugar Company in Brawley, California, March 16. Strikers won widespread support.

BY LAURA GARZA

BRAWLEY, Calif. — A lively picket line of some 100 workers on strike at the Spreckels Sugar Company sugar beet processing plant was met with honks of support from truckers, agricultural workers and others passing by. Workers at the warehouse in Imperial County were part of the strike. Their union, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 135, launched the strike March 9.

They were protesting a plan by the company to roll over their pension money into a 401(k) plan. The way the company calculated this would substantially reduce the amount of money they would get. The workers stayed out until March 21, when the company agreed to raise the amount they would put into the new plan. The union estimates the company will pay out more than \$1 million over what

Continued on page 13

National farmers convention takes up crisis facing toilers on the land

BY JACOB PERASSO

SAN FRANCISCO — Some 475 farmers, ranchers and other members of the National Farmers Union held their 121st Anniversary Convention here March 5-7. The NFU includes capitalist, middle and working farmers. The presentations and discussions reflected the consequences of today's deepening capitalist crisis and the deteriorating conditions of life and work in rural areas.

The convention highlighted the NFU campaign challenging "high levels of corporate concentration and evidence of anticompetitive practices," and how "corporate monopolies limit farmers' and ranchers' choices,

Continued on page 10

Campaign to win 'Militant,' book readers, spring fund contributors

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

"You should go talk to the Murphys. They are very outspoken about the train derailment disaster here," Tish McDevitt, a greenhouse worker in East Palestine, Ohio, told Socialist Workers Party members who were bringing solidarity and covering the response of working people to the disaster there caused by Norfolk

Continued on page 3

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Protest marks Lac-Mégantic disaster, land expropriations

BY KATY LEROUGETEL

FRONTENAC, Quebec — Some 70 workers, farmers, area residents and others turned out to a press conference here March 10 called by the Union of Agricultural Producers and the Union of Forestry Producers of Southern Quebec, which represents landowners who grow trees for logging. They were protesting recently announced federal government plans for land expropriations to build a rail bypass around Lac-Mégantic. Frontenac Mayor Gaby Gendron chaired the panel.

So far 33 forestry and farm owners have received expropriation notices, in addition to a number of institutions. Yolande Boulanger, a farmer in her 80s, told the press her land will be cut in two with no guarantee of access between them.

Lac-Mégantic, a town of under 6,000 near the Quebec-U.S. border, was the site of the 2013 runaway crude oil train derailment and explosion that killed 47 people and burned out the downtown core.

Militant worker-correspondents, including Félix Vincent Ardea, a Canadian National Railway conductor and Teamsters union member, attended the press conference and spent several days talking to working people in the area.

Ottawa promised to build the bypass under pressure from many residents concerned about the possibility of another train wreck.

The projected route affects the smaller communities of Frontenac and Nantes as well as the loggers.

Farmers' unions and many resident and environmental groups are seeking

ways to change the route or stop the bypass altogether. Others want construction to move ahead now, with the 10-year anniversary of the July 6, 2013, disaster approaching.

Freight trains, while not yet again transporting crude oil through Lac-Mégantic because of the local opposition, have been carrying hazardous cargo for the past decade — including tankers full of the same toxic vinyl chloride that was released in the Feb. 3 derailment in East Palestine, Ohio.

CP Rail 'real boss' of bypass project

"The real boss of the rail bypass project is Canadian Pacific," André Roy, president of the forestry producers' union, told the press conference.

Michel Brien, local Union of Agricultural Producers president, said that the new bypass "will be ceded to CP, the company will be the sole beneficiary, being able to increase the speed and length of the trains."

Robert Bellefleur, spokesperson for the Coalition of Citizens and Organizations Committed to Railway Safety of Lac-Mégantic, which has fought for a bypass but opposes the proposed operating conditions on the new track that would permit Canadian Pacific to run trains at 40 mph through the industrial park, told the *Militant*, "CP, which is responsible for the tragedy in 2013, will get a nice present of \$1 billion (the current estimated cost of the bypass)."

Canadian Pacific rail officials themselves confirm this assessment, telling *Trains* online magazine that the new track will give them "leverage" to beat out their competitors.



Robert Bellefleur

Tanker cars running through Lac-Mégantic April 2022. Trains carry toxic chemical vinyl chloride, like in Feb. 3 toxic derailment in East Palestine, Ohio. "Canadian Pacific, responsible for 2013 tragedy, will get \$1 billion" for bypass, said Robert Bellefleur of committee for rail safety.

Discussions we had with residents in Lac-Mégantic, Nantes and Frontenac focused on the pressing need for rail and community safety.

Lac-Mégantic and East Palestine

"It's obvious there's a link between Mégantic and East Palestine. In both cases, it's safety," said Gilles Carrette, a retired provincial road repair worker and member of the Coalition of Citizens and Organizations Committed to Railway Safety of Lac-Mégantic.

Residents describe daily problems caused by the increasing length of the trains passing through. "The other day, it took me 40 minutes to take my youngest to the day care," Frontenac resident Myriam Rosa said. "Two level crossings were blocked. Normally, it takes five minutes."

Bellefleur asked Montreal-area rail worker Vincent Ardea what happened in East Palestine. "How do the hot box detectors work? Who gets the message?"

"Everyone hears the message on the radio," he replied. But to save on time and money the mechanical hot axle warning system was set by management to only issue an alarm on temperatures so high, it went off too late for the crew to stop the train.

"Through our unions, rail workers can fight for more inspections and more workers to run the trains, repair the equipment and tracks," he said, pointing to the example of rail workers in

Greece following the deadly crash there that killed over 50 people Feb. 28. "By going on strike and mobilizing thousands in demonstrations, rail unions in Greece are showing how unions can lead the fight for rail safety.

"Working people and our unions need to create their own committees, drawing in farmers and other area residents, to force out the facts and decide how best to defend ourselves and meet our needs, free from ruling-class pressure," Vincent Ardea told the *Militant*. "Rail workers and our unions can play a big part in this."

"My father-in-law was a railway conductor," Frontenac Mayor Gendron said. "He knows the problems on every inch of the track."



The Stewardship of Nature Also Falls to the Working Class: In Defense of Land and Labor in New International #14

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THE MILITANT

Disabled workers win pay from regime in Tehran

Months of protests in Iran for "Women, life, freedom," after Zhina Amini died at hands of hated "morality" police have subsided for now in face of clerical regime's repression. However, struggles of unionists and other workers, like the disabled, got a boost from the upsurge.



Disabled People's Campaign
Protest by Disabled People's Campaign in Tehran, other cities, won gov't payments.

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

Win readers to 'Militant,' books

Continued from front page

Southern rail bosses and the government. "You'll know their place by the big Trump and American flags at the driveway."

"Socialists? What the heck, come on in," Russ Murphy said, answering the door after Candace Wagner and Steve Zamboni, both rail workers, introduced themselves. "First of all, what's this socialism?" he asked.

"We're a working-class party that acts on the fact that if there is to be a future for humanity, the working class in an alliance with working farmers need to lead a revolution to take power and build a society for human needs, not profits for a minority," Wagner said. Zamboni added, "We explain that the Democratic and Republican parties are the parties of the ruling rich. We need a labor party, based on our unions."

Both Russ Murphy and his wife, Linda, liked the paper's defense of constitutional rights, reported Wagner, and were interested in learning more about the Cuban Revolution.

"I know nothing about Cuba, except what the U.S. government tells us," Linda Murphy said. Zamboni answered, "Big business and their government hate this revolution because it's an example for us all over the world. In Cuba, workers and farmers did what is needed here, they took political power into their own hands."

The Murphys signed up for an introductory subscription to the *Militant* and purchased *The Low Point of Labor*

Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward by SWP leaders Jack Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark. They both expressed interest in getting back together again for more discussion.

Party members have been using the *Militant* to campaign in support of efforts by workers and farmers in East Palestine to take control over the cleanup and rebuilding of the area, and of their lives.

Discussions like this on workers' doorsteps in cities, towns and rural areas, as well as on picket lines and at anti-war and other social protest actions, and with co-workers, are part of an international spring campaign by members of the Socialist Workers Party and Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada and United Kingdom. Through these efforts they plan to expand the reach of the *Militant* by getting 1,350 subscriptions, selling 1,350 books by SWP and other revolutionary leaders and raising \$165,000 for the Militant Fighting Fund.

SWP international conference

They are discussing the importance of the upcoming June 8-11 International Educational Conference sponsored by the Socialist Workers Party to be held at Oberlin College in Ohio. At this gathering, SWP and CL members and other workers, unionists and young people will be discussing the big shifts in U.S. and world politics unfolding today, the party's program, its Marxist continuity



Militant/Fredy Huinil

Socialist Workers Party members introduce *Militant*, literature by party leaders at rally of school workers in Los Angeles March 23 on final day of strike winning better pay, work hours.

and the working-class road forward.

This course is explained in the new Pathfinder book *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us*. Getting this book into the hands of as many working people as possible is at the center of the spring campaign. Ten other titles are also on special with subscriptions to the *Militant* (see page 8). All Pathfinder titles are at 20% discount during the campaign.

Communist League members Annette Kouri and Katy LeRougetel spoke with retired truck driver Daniel Hudon at his home in Montreal-East. The area has been the site of com-

munity opposition to refinery bosses' pollution for years. LeRougetel pointed to recent protests in the northern Quebec town of Rouyn-Noranda against arsenic emissions from Glencore's copper foundry there.

"We have the same problem," Hudon responded. "Here it smells like hell sometimes. Wednesdays, when the refinery burns the garbage, you can't see the stars."

Rail workers, residents act together

Kouri pointed to the actions by rail workers and residents in East Palestine, where in response to the rail derailment and release of toxic vinyl chloride, they forced Norfolk Southern to rip up its tracks to remove the contaminated soil. "They won some ground because they organized together," she said.

Hudon expressed interest in the fight being waged by working people in Ohio and by rail workers in North America. He described how a nearby paper company "spent \$72 million on an anti-pollution system. It works, but what's really killing people are the 12-hour shifts." And long distance truck drivers often work well over 12 hours a day, he said. Hudon took the French-language *Militant* article on the actions of working people in East Palestine.

To join in the effort, contact distributors listed on page 12.

Militant Fighting Fund key to financing the paper

BY JOHN STUDER

The *Militant* is 100% financed by its readers — workers, farmers and youth who think the paper's coverage is crucial to help our class find a road forward against the attacks of the bosses, their government and their

state. We accept no paid advertising.

Every year we do one major fundraising campaign — the Militant Fighting Fund — which is at the heart of being able to publish. This year we are seeking to raise \$165,000.

This comes at a time important class battles are being waged. "The Ukrainian people continue to resist every attempt by Moscow to crush their spirit and take their country," a letter seeking contributions for the fund in New York March 20 began. "Bank collapses reflect capitalist rulers' crisis. Working people in East Palestine, Ohio, fight for control over the cleanup of their town. U.S. maternal mortality hits the highest level since 1965. Protests to defend retirement provisions break out from France to Iran. Cuban workers and farmers continue to defend their socialist revolution against Washington's assault.

"The *Militant* is the place every week to learn about and share examples of how workers, farmers and all the oppressed in the country and around the world are discussing how, and beginning to, fight back."

The letter urges readers to get involved. "Help us spread the *Militant's* unique coverage far and

wide. Order some extra issues to get around to co-workers and friends. Write for the paper or send a photo if you are involved in a struggle at work or in your city or town."

And, of course, "Contribute needed funds to keep the paper coming out."

Please give as generously as you can. Contact distributors nearest you listed on page 12, or send your check to the *Militant*, 306 W. 37th Street, 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018, or contribute on line at themilitant.com.

John Studer is the editor of the *Militant*.



Militant/Mary-Ellen Marus

Beverly Bernardo, front right, from the Communist League in Canada, shows *Militant*, socialist literature to a participant at the March 16-19 Association for Asian Studies Conference in Boston. The conference attracted over 3,400 academics, students and librarians.

Campaign to expand reach of 'Militant,' books, fund						
March 18-May 16 (week one)						
Country	Sub quota	Subs sold	Books quota	Books sold	Fund quota	Fund received
UNITED STATES						
Atlanta	50	11	50	14	\$9,500	\$300
Chicago	100	19	100	33	\$14,000	\$2,651
Cincinnati	50	12	50	13	\$6,000	
Dallas-Fort Worth	60	15	60	28	\$5,000	\$25
Lincoln	15	5	15	5	\$500	
Los Angeles	90	34	90	50	\$16,000	
Miami	45	8	45	42	\$5,500	\$858
Minneapolis	70	17	70	28	\$5,500	\$400
N. New Jersey	85	13	85	32	\$7,000	\$520
New York	100	16	115	40	\$20,500	\$2,165
Oakland	90	22	90	17	\$15,000	\$2,550
Philadelphia	50	15	50	23	\$6,500	
Pittsburgh	45	10	45	6	\$6,000	
Seattle	75	14	75	14	\$14,000	\$50
Washington	50	13	50	24	\$4,500	
Other						
Total U.S.	975	224	990	369	\$135,500	\$9,519
Prisoners	50	29				
UNITED KINGDOM						
London	40	13	40	21	\$2,450	
Manchester	35	11	40	12	\$1,200	
Total U.K.	75	24	80	33	\$3,650	
Canada	90	18	90	39	\$12,000	
Australia	35	7	35	11	\$6,000	
Total	1,225	302	1,195	452	\$157,150	\$9,519
SHOULD BE	1,350	169	1,350	169	\$165,000	\$20,625

US bakery workers discuss job safety with unionists in Cuba

BY GABBY PROSSER

HAVANA — Several industrial bakery workers from the U.S., members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers union, had the opportunity to exchange experiences with leaders of Cuba's trade unions earlier this year.

We met with Jorge Luis Fajardo, general secretary of the National Union of Food and Fishing Industry Workers (SNTIAP), and Miguel Ángel Álvarez, from the international relations department of the Central Organization of Cuban Workers (CTC).

Our exchange centered on how production is organized in Cuba and how the working class here confronts the U.S. rulers' bipartisan policy of punishing the Cuban people for making a socialist revolution on Washington's doorstep. In return, we described what class-conscious workers in the U.S. are doing to build and strengthen our unions, and help workers understand why we need a political party of our own based on our fighting trade unions.

In Cuba, working people have

AS I SEE IT

been on the front lines, confronting the conditions caused by the over 60-year-long economic and political war waged against the Cuban people by Washington.

These conditions have been aggravated by the world capitalist crisis unfolding today. That includes the repercussions of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, which has drastically impacted the Cuban food industry's ability to import grain essential for the production of flour.

Fajardo explained to us that four shiploads of grain a month are needed for a stable supply of bread, but only two a month arrive at best, and often just one. This results in widespread scarcity of bread products. Determined to ensure the population's food needs, Cuba's revolutionary government looks for ways to import grain from wherever they can, and food workers work hard to increase production.

The Cuban unionists were interested to hear about our work in the U.S. as members of the Socialist Workers Party as well as industrial workers. They were especially interested in the acts of solidarity extended to workers and farmers who are resisting the bosses' efforts to shift the crisis of their for-profit system onto our backs by driving to lower our

wages, extend the workday and speed up the production line, making working conditions more and more dangerous.

We explained how, as socialist workers, our aim is to transform the unions into fighting instruments as part of leading our class to take power out of the hands of the capitalist owners of industry.

Safety on the job is a constant struggle. Oil refinery workers fight to protect the safety of surrounding communities as well as themselves. Bakery workers say "no" to unsustainable long "suicide" shifts. Nurses have struck for lower patient-to-nurse ratios. Rail workers are fighting for shorter trains and larger crews. All are struggles to take greater control of our working conditions.

I told our fellow Cuban unionists how, after a co-worker of mine got his hand mangled in a machine that didn't have protective guards, the union put safety signs on the machinery despite the bosses' complaints. It was an important lesson for us in using the power of our union to limit the bosses' efforts to force us into situations where injuries can happen. And things like this occur all the time as a result of the owners' relentless push for profits.

I asked Fajardo how their union confronts unsafe working conditions like the incident I described on my job. He responded, "It never gets to that point." In Cuba workers have control of safety



Institute of Cuban History

Che Guevara, in uniform, visits a factory as Cuba's minister of industry in the early 1960s. Along with Fidel Castro, Che was part of Cuba's Marxist leadership that led workers to take control of production to maximize meeting needs of working people, ensure safety on the job.

conditions on the floor. If something is unsafe, they stop production and fix the problem. That's an example of what we need to fight for.

In Cuba, workers are not sacrificed for the profits of a private owner. In 1959 working people made a revolution and took state power, taking the country's industries and land out of the hands of U.S. imperialist owners and wealthy Cuban families. Farmers and workers here are committed to increasing production of food and other necessities, knowing — unlike in the capitalist U.S. — they are working for the people of Cuba.

Workers not only have control over

job safety. Workers assemblies on the job periodically discuss plans for how to increase production not for profit, but in the interest of all Cubans.

We told our union hosts we would bring what we had learned in Cuba back to our co-workers and other working people and youth in the U.S., to explain concretely what a socialist revolution means — what can be done when our class holds state power.

This is what the U.S. capitalist rulers hate about the Cuban Revolution. They fear working people here will learn the truth about its example and begin to see workers and farmers can transform themselves and change the world.

Paris strike boosts fight against gov't raising retirement age

BY JEAN-LOUIS SALFATI AND CLAUDE BLETON

PARIS — After two-and-a-half weeks on strike, workers at three garbage incinerators, including the Paprec Energies plant in Saint-Ouen, a northern suburb, returned to work March 24.

The strike was part of the ongoing mass opposition to French President Emmanuel Macron's push to raise the retirement age from 62 to 64. Macron used his executive powers to impose the change March 20, bypassing a vote in the National Assembly.

"We are against the pension reform. Because our conditions are difficult, we benefit from a special pension setup," Thierry Saussier, a maintenance and production worker at the Saint-Ouen plant and trade unionist in the Confederation Generale du Travail (CGT), told the *Militant* during a visit to the picket line. "Workers of the factory leave at 57.5 years. With the re-

form, they will leave at 59.5 years, and working conditions are getting worse and worse." They also used the strike to demand improved conditions.

Strikers kept up a 24-hour picket line, allowing only 50 trucks into the plant a day, instead of the usual 400.

This isn't the first strike this year, Saussier said. "In January we went on strike to improve working conditions and safety."

Workers are exposed to intense heat, toxic dust and chemical fumes. "We had to fight to get a filtering respirator when we enter the combustion furnace during the maintenance phase," he said. Pointing to a visibly degraded forklift he added, "Safety officers appointed by management look the other way."

Saussier, who has worked for 18 years at the plant, joined the CGT during the COVID-19 pandemic. "I saw the working conditions deteriorate. We could no longer let it happen."

The workers received daily expressions of solidarity from other workers. Professors and students from a nearby university in Saint-Denis visited the picket line and brought a contribution to the strike fund. Several workers from Bosch, a tool factory in Saint-Ouen, also came, as well as rail workers from the train maintenance center there.

Daily protests across the country have continued after Macron's unilateral move, demanding it be reversed. Close to a million unionists and others rallied across the country March 28.

155,000 German transport workers strike for wage raise as prices soar

BY TERRY EVANS

Demanding wage raises to offset soaring prices, transport workers in Germany March 27 held their largest strike since the 1990s. Some 155,000 members of Verdi (United Services Trade Union) and EVG (Rail and Transport Workers Union) shut down most train, tram, bus and ferry services for 24 hours.

Verdi wants a 10.5% pay raise and EVG seeks 12%, but the government is offering an insulting 5%, plus a one-time signing bonus. Inflation ran at 9.3% in February, but price hikes on many necessities are much higher. Household energy prices rose by a whopping 32% over the year,

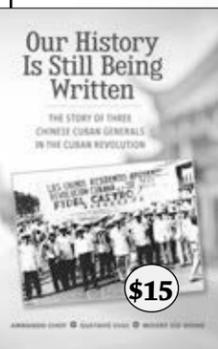
impacted by the sharp cut in fuel imports from Russia since Moscow launched its war on Ukraine. Food prices rose by 22%.

Days before the strike, Christine Lagarde, president of the European Central Bank, sought to scapegoat unionists as responsible for price hikes. If workers "attempt to unilaterally minimize their losses," by pressing for wage increases, this will lead to price hikes, she said.

But winning a raise doesn't cause inflation, it just cuts bosses' profits. Bosses raise prices whenever they can get away with it.

Talks between the unions and the German government continue.

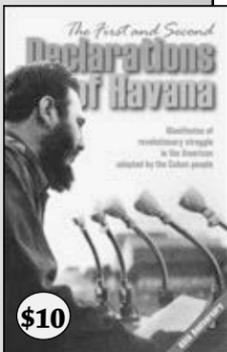
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in the Cuban Revolution**
Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui,
Moisés Sio Wong

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struggle in the Americas
adopted by the Cuban people

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—ON THE PICKET LINE—

Sanitation workers in Denmark strike over onerous work schedule

Some 550 sanitation workers went on strike in Copenhagen, Denmark, March 20 after officials at the municipal trash-collection agency refused to back down on imposing a more onerous work schedule. The strikers set up a mass picket, blocking the entrance to Amager Bakke, the municipal recycling and power plant run by Amager Resource Center.

The members of the 3F union federation work for private contractors, but that work is now being taken over directly by the center, run by local governments. The garbage collectors currently work five hours a day. The bosses want to impose a seven-hour day. Workers say this would mean coming home late to their families every evening and that there is no need to change a schedule that has been working fine.

“As long as they are on strike, we will not negotiate,” Amager Resource Center spokesperson Helena Hasselsteen Nielsen told the press.

Strikers continued to block the plant after they were ordered back to work March 21 following a meeting between officials of 3F and the center’s bosses. “The strike continues,” striker Michael Johansen told the press. “We hope with this blockade that we have created some awareness.”

— Seth Galinsky

Hawaii hospital workers strike wins growing support

Contract negotiations between the United Public Workers union and three hospitals in the Kaiser health system on the Hawaiian island of Maui took place March 17. The nurses’ aides, therapists, technicians, groundskeepers, housekeepers, cooks, laundry workers and other union members went out on strike Feb. 22 at the Maui Memorial Medical Center, Kula Hospital and Lanai Community Hospital after rejecting bosses’ proposed contract.

A lot of the workers have worked at the hospitals for more than 10 years. When Kaiser Permanente took them

over three years ago, bosses cut back on workers’ sick days and personal time off, and cut staffing. The UPW members key demands are for wage increases, hiring more workers to overcome short staffing and an end to mandatory 16-hour days.

“They added involuntary overtime. We don’t like that, that’s why we rejected it. We don’t want this on our contract,” Margarita Javalde, a housekeeper at Maui Memorial Medical Center, told the *Militant*. “They should just go ahead and say ‘mandatory.’ They shouldn’t use the word ‘involuntary.’ They are telling us that we are illiterate.”

“We started this. We want to finish it because we know what we are doing,” said Elen Quema, a housekeeper at Maui Memorial Medical Center.

Support continues to pour in from the community; UNITE HERE Local 5; United Nurses Association of California/Union of Health Care Professionals, the nurses’ union; International Longshore and Warehouse Union; and Hawaii Ironworkers Local 625.

“The community sees now that there is a real problem here,” Quema said.

“Energy on the picket line is great. Members continue to receive daily donations of food and drinks from people in the community,” said UPW Communications Manager Maleko McDonnell. “Many members have said they are ready for a long fight, although no one wants it.”

Message of solidarity can be sent to United Public Workers Local 646, 841 Kolu Street, Wailuku, Maui, HI 96793; phone (808) 244-0815.

— Neil Tupas



Michael Johansen

Sanitation workers on strike in Copenhagen, Denmark, set up mass picket outside gate at municipal recycling and power plant. They oppose government moves to expand work hours.

Teachers strike schools throughout New Zealand

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — Fifty thousand teachers shut down schools throughout New Zealand March 16 in a 24-hour nationwide strike demanding better pay and conditions.

The strike involved primary school and kindergarten teachers organized by the New Zealand Educational Institute and secondary school teachers organized by the Post Primary Teachers Association. It is only the second time the two unions have walked off the job on the same day, and the first time kindergarten teachers have joined them.

Picket lines, rallies and marches took place in a number of cities and towns, with the largest here, drawing up to 10,000 people.

Teachers at Otahuhu College in Auckland held a morning picket near

the school before joining the march in the city. Laura Toailoa, a third-year teacher at the college, told the *Militant*, “The strike really made the union feel like a union.”

The teachers’ unions have rejected a government contract offer that would see a 6,000 New Zealand dollars (\$3,750) pay increase over two years. In real terms the offer is a pay cut, Post Primary Teachers Association Regional Chair Paul Stevens told the Auckland rally. Inflation is currently running at 7.2%, with food prices rising 12% in the past year, the biggest increase in more than three decades. The starting annual salary for new teachers is just above minimum wage.

Teachers are also pressing for smaller class sizes, increased teaching and support staff, and more resources.

— Brigid Mulrennan and Malcolm McAllister

Los Angeles school workers end strike, vote on new contract

BY BILL ARTH

LOS ANGELES — The day after ending a massive March 21-23 strike, Service Employees International Union Local 99 announced that a tentative settlement had been reached with the Los Angeles Unified School District. The contract will be presented to the membership for a vote.

Thousands of public school workers and teachers celebrated the completion of their militant strike with a rally in Los Angeles State Historic Park in Chinatown. Spirits were high as both SEIU Local 99, which includes 30,000 bus drivers, cafeteria workers, janitors, and other school workers; and United Teachers Los Angeles, the 35,000-member

teachers union, prepared to continue contract negotiations with the district. Schools attended by more than 400,000 students were closed during the strike.

Strikers picketed schools and bus yards every morning. Daily midday mass rallies were held — on Tuesday, outside Los Angeles Unified School District headquarters downtown; on Wednesday, at five district offices; and on Thursday, the big rally to culminate the strike. A downpour of rain and a tornado the first two days of the strike failed to dampen spirits.

The strike was called, Local 99 explained, after “our bargaining team has been in contract negotiations with LAUSD since April 2021. The district has essentially rejected all of our proposals and made no significant improvement to our wages and hours. On December 12, 2022, our bargaining team declared an impasse.”

“However, the district has continued to harass and threaten workers for participating in union activities. In February, an overwhelming 96% voted to authorize our bargaining team to call for a strike if necessary.”

Local 99 members earned an average salary of \$25,000 a year under the old contract, which expired July 1, 2020. The settlement would raise the minimum wage to \$22.52 an hour, an average annual salary of \$33,000. A series of retroactive pay increases would increase wages 15% on ratification, and another 15% next Jan. 1. The deal would provide for additional hours of work and for health benefits for part-time employees

Continued on page 11

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



April 13, 1998

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — “Moral authority dictates that we should not abandon those who helped us in the darkest hour in the history of this country,” said South African president Nelson Mandela. “I am not going to betray the trust of those who helped us.” Speaking at a joint press conference with U.S. president William Clinton in Cape Town, South Africa, Mandela was referring to White House attempts to pressure the South African government to break ties to the governments of Cuba, Iran, and Libya.

Mandela forcefully defended South Africa’s ties with Cuba, along with other governments not to Washington’s liking.

“One of the first heads of state I invited to this country was [Cuban president] Fidel Castro. Those South Africans who have berated me for being loyal to our friends, literally, they can go throw themselves into a pool.”



April 13, 1973

The United Farm Workers announced March 26 its opposition to the Rodino-Kennedy bill. The measure is aimed at victimizing workers without proper documentation — the so-called illegal aliens. The action is a reversal of policy for the union, which until now has supported legislation against undocumented workers, maintaining that they are potential strikebreakers.

The law would increase the harassment of these workers, making them more vulnerable and therefore more exploitable by profit-hungry employers. The union statement clarified the union’s position. “We are not opposed to aliens coming into this country, because they are not aliens. They are our brothers.”

Opponents of the deportation laws explained that the only reason undocumented workers are subject to being used by unscrupulous bosses is precisely because they are “illegal.”



April 12, 1948

LOS ANGELES. April 3 — Labor’s first co-ordinated campaign to elect councilmen in five city elections in Southern California has become the high point of independent political action by the unions in this area.

The Southeast Committee for Labor Candidates, composed of AFL, CIO, Railroad Brotherhoods and IAM unionists, was organized several months ago. The candidates are for payment of prevailing union wage scales to all city employees, maintenance of rent controls to prevent sky-rocketing of rents; extension of child care centers for working mothers; an immediate increase in old age benefits and provision for automatic wage increases to meet the rising cost of living.

This campaign has already proven the falseness of the arguments of those opposed to independent labor political action. Good candidates were found in the ranks of the unions.

Support East Palestine fight

Continued from front page

stepped up bringing, with the help of several relatives, two flat-bed trucks, a cargo trailer and an RV full of donated supplies,” Kaylee Ball told *Militant* worker-correspondents Jacquie Henderson and Dave Ferguson when they visited the Freedom Ranch she owns along with Chase Brown outside Salem, Ohio.

“In fact, people from all over — Indiana, Pennsylvania and Ohio — have been coming together to help,” she said. “Another farmer from Ashland, Ohio, just delivered a large load of hay. A farmer near Canfield, Ohio, has opened up his farm to help. A woman from South Georgia just called.”

“You are setting a real example of solidarity because the workers, farmers, small-business people who are all affected by this disaster are joining together,” Henderson, who is a union bakery worker in Dayton, said. “Our unions can get involved. I will take this back to my Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers local to see how we can support your effort.”

Ball and Brown have collected and are distributing animal food and supplies, and are boarding animals for people affected by the derailment disaster and subsequent release of poisonous chemicals in the air, soil and water in the area. They both work other jobs as well as on the farm. They keep horses, chickens, geese and pets whose owners couldn’t keep them for now.

When the government announced a mandatory evacuation right after the derailment, Ball posted on Facebook that she was opening her farm to board animals. They collected feed, pet food, hay and other supplies to make available for those in need. Her offer was shared widely. Other farmers in the Salem area came forward to help.

“I kept thinking, what if it was us? I’d want to know someone was willing to help. What about the farmers in this area and their crops in the spring? No one knows what they will face. It’s their livelihood,” Ball said. “And people affected shouldn’t have to pay for medical testing.”

“It’s beautiful to see everyone coming together, it has restored my faith in humanity,” she said. “And we’re not letting this go. We didn’t do this for the limelight. We want people to know that we’re still here, and we’re not going anywhere, and we’re not going to stop. We will keep it going for as long as it’s needed.”

“As soon as I heard about the derailment I wanted to help,” Lisa Hilbert, one of the women who organized the aid caravan from Indiana, told Henderson in a phone interview. “I grew up in the countryside and thought about how it affected the lives of the animals as well as the people in the area.

“Others we contacted here volunteered feed and other materials,” she said. “My brother, a firefighter, offered to help with equipment to move to Ohio what was growing into tons of donations. We had no lack of people here wanting to help give feed and other supplies. And with driving the trucks. And helping to load and unload them. This is the kind of thing the people who some call ‘deplorables’ do. We help each other. We don’t make speeches from afar. We pay it forward.”

‘We need to keep standing up’

Mallory Aponick, disaster services coordinator for the First Church of Christ in East Palestine and a cook by trade, spoke with Kathie Fitzgerald and Tony Lane in the church’s gym where she was distributing water and purifiers.

“I’ll take water from anybody,” she said. Pallets of water were in the parking lot, alongside the gym. “This time we got gallon bottles. As soon as people find out about that, they’ll be gone. Later this week we’ll be getting 13 more pallets.”

She spoke of the contributions that have been coming in from all over. “I’ve sent emails thanking 129 people who donated online,” she said. Others who she has an address for have been sent written thank-you cards. “And I’ve become friends with people across the country.”

“We’ve distributed 80 water purifiers already, which Norfolk Southern has paid for,” Aponick said, “and we have another 100 here that are all spoken for, but we don’t know yet if Nor-



Militant/Joe Swanson

Struggles by workers and farmers in East Palestine and by rail workers reinforce each other. Nearly 100 rail track workers and supporters rallied March 24 at Berkshire-Hathaway headquarters in Omaha, Nebraska, demanding paid sick days. The company runs BNSF railroad.

folk Southern will pay.”

She explained her approach to the disaster. “I don’t have time for negativity, I’m not worried about what happens in 30 years. I’m worried about today. I applaud the efforts of people to help. We can come out of this and be so much stronger. We need to keep standing up, keep being strong.”

Small-business people in the area told us about the impact of the “Jeep invasion” in East Palestine March 18, where Jeep club members from Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia came in more than 100 Jeeps and other vehicles with their families to bring solidarity to those fighting for control over the rebuilding of the area and to support local businesses.

“There were loads of people in my store, the town was packed,” Joy Mascher, owner of Flowers Straight from the Heart on Market Street, told the *Militant*. “They said it was just the first annual Jeep invasion. I hope they do have more.”

Dianna Elzer, co-owner of Sutherin Greenhouse, who helped organize the day, said, “Antique stores in town did well and the Roadhouse restaurant had a huge crowd.”

In a phone interview with the *Militant*, Dave Anderson, a beef farmer in Pennsylvania just east of the derailment site, said he attended a meeting of farmers with the Environmental Protection Agency that took place in Darlington. “The EPA says everything is fine, but if you ask them, ‘So

it’s OK to plant?’ they say, ‘Well, I didn’t say that.’” Anderson said dairy farmers can’t sell their milk. He can’t sell his beef.

“I hope the tests come back in a way that no one’s life here changes even a little,” Anderson told *Farm and Dairy*. “But when you’re talking about your kids, ‘I think it’s OK’ isn’t good enough.”

Another derailment

Two BNSF Railway locomotives pulling loaded oil cars derailed March 16 near Padilla Bay some 80 miles north of Seattle. The train was traveling across Swinomish Indian Tribal lands, through a sensitive marine ecosystem. The overturned engines dumped more than 3,000 gallons of diesel fuel.

This derailment and potentially dangerous oil spill happened just days before a trial began in Seattle on a lawsuit filed by the tribe charging the rail bosses with violating a 1991 agreement that limits trains through their lands to two a day with no more than 25 cars each.

The 1991 agreement followed a 1970 demand by the tribe for the removal of the tracks. They were laid in 1889 without any agreement with the tribe or congressional approval and had been operating for over 100 years with no payment to the tribe.

Trying to escape their liability, BNSF lawyers told the court, “Mis-

Continued on page 7

BMW rail workers protest in Omaha, demand sick pay

BY JOE SWANSON

OMAHA, Neb. — Members of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees union continue to organize protests at railroad bosses’ headquarters demanding paid sick days.

On March 24, nearly 100 BMW members and other union supporters — from American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 251, Teamsters Local 554 and SMART-Transportation Division — rallied in front of the Berkshire-Hathaway headquarters here. It’s a multinational holding company owned by Warren Buffett, which runs the BNSF railroad.

For almost three hours workers marched behind a giant balloon rat holding a balloon track worker. They carried signs saying, “People over profits,” “Stop war on workers,” and “End precision scheduling railroad-

ing, a profit-making scheme!” They chanted, “Corporate greed has got to go,” “Enough is enough,” and “No justice, no peace.”

Many of the protesters were attending a two-day educational conference organized by the BMW.

Buffett has set an example for all rail bosses, imposing a harsh new point-based attendance policy. It forces workers to be continuously on call and show up for work regardless of their health, family needs or anything else, or face harsh penalties up to losing their jobs.

Most of the railroad workers at the rally work for BNSF, with a few from the Canadian Pacific.

“The management of the BNSF have 80 hours of paid sick days,” George Loveland, general chair of the BMW, told the rally. “We have zero hours. This should be embar-

assing to Buffet, whose wealth is over a hundred billion dollars and BNSF’s net income was nearly \$6 billion in 2022.”

The other Class 1 railroad in Nebraska, the Union Pacific, has reached agreements with nine of the rail unions, including the BMW, to provide workers up to seven paid sick days.

Many workers were discussing the situation facing working people in East Palestine, Ohio, since the Feb. 3 Norfolk Southern derailment and release of toxic chemicals.

“Our union leadership has encouraged labor to aid the people of that community, and it has spoken out against Norfolk Southern not providing protective clothing to its members ordered to do cleanup and repair of the trackage,” Loveland told the *Militant*. “A number have become seriously ill.”

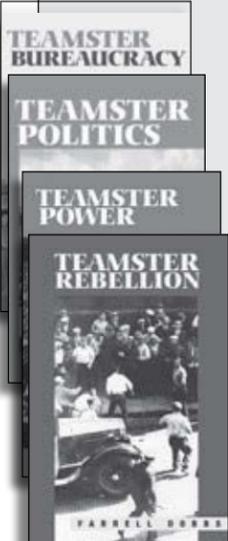
Teamster Series

Lessons from U.S. labor battles of the 1930s

by Farrell Dobbs

“The principal lesson of the Teamster experience is not that under an adverse relationship of forces, the workers can be overcome, but that with proper leadership, they can overcome.”

\$16 each or all four for \$50
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Back Ukraine independence!

Continued from front page

As the war grinds on Putin is being forced to step up repressive measures at home to try to silence anyone who speaks out against the war.

Oleg Orlov was charged March 21 with repeatedly “discrediting Russia’s army.” Orlov was co-chairman of Memorial, an internationally known organization that commemorated victims of Stalinist repression in the former Soviet Union and exposed more recent attacks on political rights. It was shut down by Putin’s regime prior to the war.

After his arrest Orlov’s computer was seized by cops, along with a “No to war” button. His “crime” was publishing an article last November saying, “The bloody war launched by Putin in Ukraine is not only the mass killing of people, the destruction of infrastructure, of the economy, of cultural sites of this wonderful country.”

“It is also the gravest of blows against Russia’s future.”

Hundreds have been charged under Moscow’s wartime censorship laws and 136 jailed. The repression is aimed at instilling fear among working people, but it also fuels deepening distrust of Putin’s regime.

In Yefremov in the Tula region of Russia, 12-year-old Masha Moskaleva drew a picture at school of a Ukrainian

woman and her child standing defiantly against approaching Russian missiles in April 2022. A Ukrainian flag had the words “Glory to Ukraine,” and the Russian tricolor was inscribed with the slogan, “No to war!”

School authorities alerted the police who told Masha’s father, Alexei Moskalev, that “he was bringing up his daughter in a bad way,” town councilor Olga Podolskaya told the BBC. He was fined 32,000 rubles (\$415).

Earlier this year authorities issued charges against him for “discrediting” the Russian army based on his online posts. Moskalev, a single parent, was placed under house arrest March 1 and Masha was sent to a children’s home, where her father is prevented from speaking to her by phone.

Local residents have been packing court hearings to show their support for the family. One held a sign, “Return Masha to her father!” Moskalev was given a two-year jail sentence March 28.

“Our constitution proclaims freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, total freedom for citizens to express their opinions,” Natalya Filatova, a supporter of the Moskalev family, told the BBC. “But now we’re forbidden from doing that.”

As protests like this continue it’s clear that working people in Ukraine have allies among fellow workers and farmers in Russia, advancing possibilities for building solidarity with the fight to end Putin’s war.

Kyiv law boosts state censorship

At the same time, Ukrainians face assaults on their own freedoms at home by President Volodymyr Zelensky’s government.

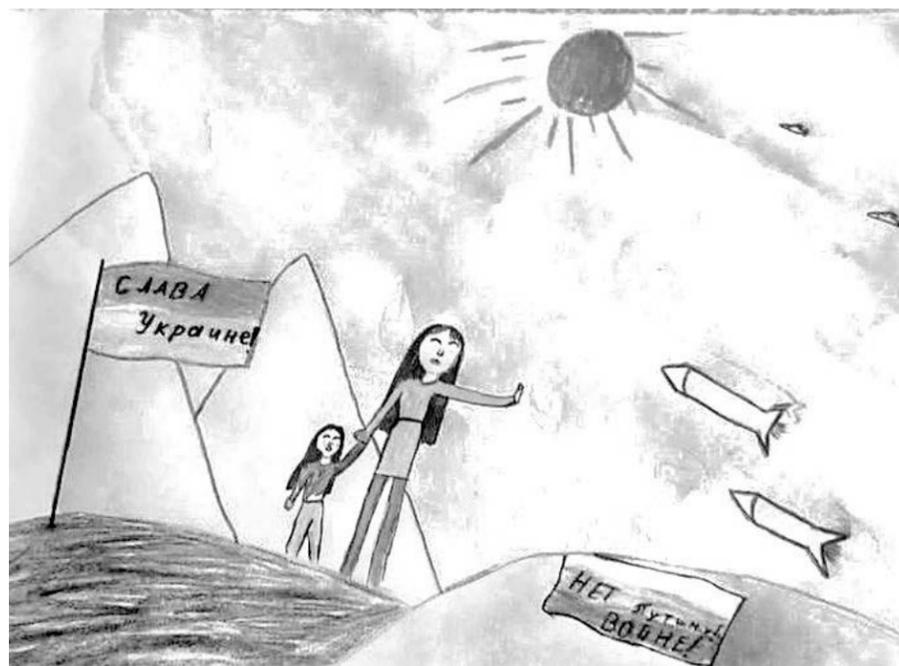
A new law attacking freedom of speech and targeting Russian-language speakers was approved by the Ukrainian parliament in December.

Defend constitutional freedoms from gov’t assault

Continued from front page

holding office again.

That means it’s at least on the scale of the FBI’s efforts to frame up and jail Socialist Workers Party leaders on the eve of the second imperialist World War; its far-reaching anti-communist witch hunt in the late 1940s and early ’50s; its



Olga Podolskaya

Drawing by 12-year-old Masha Moskaleva from Yefremov, south of Moscow. Ukrainian woman and child defy Russian missiles, with “Glory to Ukraine” on Ukraine flag, “No to war!” on Russian flag. Her father has been sentenced to prison while she’s confined in a children’s home.

It extends government authority that regulates TV and radio broadcasts to cover print media and online news, and gives the government the power to shut down media outlets without a court order. The National Union of Journalists of Ukraine has condemned the law.

The law builds on assaults on the language rights of Russian speakers carried out by the Zelensky government just prior to the war. In January 2022 the government compelled all media outlets to publish in Ukrainian. Media outlets printing in Russian or other languages had to print translations of the equivalent content and volume in Ukrainian. Newsstands had to have over half their publications in Ukrainian. Some 15% of Ukrainians exclusively or mainly speak Russian, and another 25% use Russian along with Ukrainian.

“As a national minority,” the Russian-speaking Ukrainian population have a constitutional “right to receive information and education in their language,” said Vsevolod Rechytskyi,

chairperson of the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group.

The Kyiv government has also removed millions of mainly Russian-language books from libraries. All attacks on language rights cut across prospects for forging solidarity between working people in Ukraine and Russia.

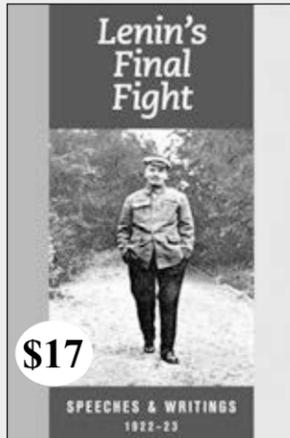
Inside Russia, the Putin regime’s assault on rights has not prevented labor struggles. Recently, 1,500 road construction workers on the M-12 highway between Nizhny Novgorod and Chuvashia went on strike because they haven’t been paid since Jan. 10. Their action forced the Chinese parent firm of the Russian contractors they work for to pay up.

The M-12 toll motorway is meant to be a link in what could be a Europe-Western Chinese transport corridor under Beijing’s Belt and Road scheme. Two and a half years ago, hundreds rallied in Kazan protesting the proposed route that divides their villages, pollutes their water and damages forests.

Lenin’s Final Fight Speeches and Writings, 1922-23

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

V.I. Lenin, 1922



\$17

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Solidarity with East Palestine fight

Continued from page 6

takes? Yes. Losing legal arguments? Yes. Breach of contract? Yes. Trespass? Yes.” Then they tried to claim the railroad is innocent because they never showed any “bad faith”!

The railroad has been running 100-car hazardous trains through the tribal lands since 2012.

Rail bosses pushed back

Rail unions and workers have spoken out demanding an end to unsafe practices by the bosses. “This increase in derailments is what happens when you cut 30% of your workforce in less than a decade, reduce training or outsource work across every rail craft, and run longer, heavier trains that are harder to control,” Clyde Whitaker, Ohio state legislative director for the SMART-Transportation Division union, told a U.S. Senate hearing March 22. “The railroads find every way they can cut costs so they can make

an extra dollar. No matter the cost to safety. And communities like East Palestine are forsaken in the process.”

The widespread outrage over the effects of the derailment and the bosses’ disdain for safety has helped rail workers make gains in control over working conditions. Two of the six large Class 1 railroads in the U.S. — Norfolk Southern and Union Pacific — were forced to back off from their push for one-person, engineer-only crews on freight rail trains.

Norfolk Southern made a joint announcement with the SMART-TD conductors union that they are discontinuing formal negotiations regarding conductor redeployment. SMART-TD President Jeremy Ferguson lauded the move.

The fact is, it falls to the working class, our unions and to working farmers to fight for control over the conditions we live and work under.

extracted from at least 450 people so far.

Defendants pleading guilty received an average 13 months less prison time for the same offenses on Jan. 6 as those who insisted on exercising their right to a trial.

Typical of the way the government dealt blows to the presumption of innocence was the trial of Jacob Chansley. He got a four-year jail sentence after pleading guilty to obstructing an official proceeding, after being threatened with charges of “Violent Entry and Disorderly Conduct.”

But Chansley might not have pled guilty to anything had he or his attorneys been informed of the existence of video footage showing that he was peacefully escorted around the Capitol’s corridors by officers there.

The FBI used the Jan. 6 riot to carry out a huge fishing expedition, dealing blows to Fourth Amendment protections against unreasonable search and seizure. It got a warrant forcing Google to scour the location of millions of smart phone users and then turn over data from 5,700 phones used by people who were found to be at or near the Capitol that day. They got Bank of America to cross reference its credit card records for anyone in Washington and turn the details over.

The government’s extensive use of “confidential human sources” — FBI

Continued on page 13

Book fair reflects class politics in Kurdistan and Iraq

600,000 turn out, interested in titles on politics, culture, history of revolutionary struggle

BY ÖGMUNDUR JÓNSSON

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region, Iraq — On March 16 participants in the 15th Erbil International Book Fair observed a moment of silence, joining people across Kurdistan in marking 35 years since the Saddam Hussein dictatorship attacked the town of Halabja with chemical weapons. Some 5,000 Kurds were killed and thousands more injured.

The 1988 attack was part of the Iraqi regime's genocidal campaign to crush the Kurdish people's fight for national self-determination. It came toward the end of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, in which Baghdad was being backed by Washington, under the cover of "neutrality," in Saddam's bloody grab to capture oil-rich territory from Iran and set back the Iranian Revolution.

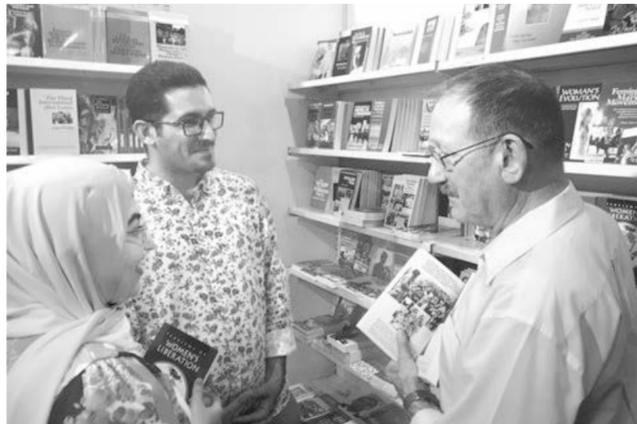
The commemoration was a reminder of the brutal history of oppression of the Kurds by successive regimes in Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria ever since the division of the region by British and French imperialism a century ago. Even more, it underscored how far the still-unfinished struggle for self-determination of the 30 million Kurds living in those four countries has come.

A cultural event such as a book fair attracting huge crowds, 600,000 according to the organizers, would have been unthinkable without those advances.

The 11-day fair, held for the first time since 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, was organized by the Baghdad-based cultural organization Al-Mada. It brought together over 350 publishers, mainly from Iraq and the Middle East. A majority presented books in Arabic, while 60 publishers showcased the flourishing of Kurdish writing. Some dozen English-language stands were eagerly sought out too.

Participants traveled from Baghdad, Kirkuk, Mosul and other Iraqi cities, as well as from across Iraqi Kurdistan.

Erbil, an ancient city and today capital of the Kurdistan region in Iraq, reflects political and social conditions flowing



Militant/Ogmundur Jónsson
Volunteer Joe Young, right, with visitors to Pathfinder booth at book fair in Kurdistan region of Iraq. Participants bought 1,200 books by communist and other revolutionary leaders.

from decades of dictatorship, imperialist invasions and civil wars in both Iraq and Syria and the broader region. This city has been hit by ballistic missiles launched by Tehran or Tehran-backed militias several times since 2020, as have other towns and villages under the Kurdistan Regional Government.

Since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and the years of violence that followed, Kurdistan has been swelled by refugees — Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, Yazidis and others — from other parts of Iraq. Since 2011 they have been joined by refugees from the civil war in Syria.

Interest in the world

Pathfinder Books in London this year participated in the fair for the fourth time. It sold 1,200 books by communist and other revolutionary leaders published by New York-based Pathfinder Press on world politics; working-class, union and anti-imperialist struggles; and a materialist, scientific world view. While some came looking for books on Kurdistan and the Middle East, what was most notable was the broad interest in the world, from Moscow's brutal

war on the Ukrainian people and their country, to the example of Cuba's socialist revolution, and much more.

Among the top sellers were books presenting a working-class political response to the shattering of imperialism's post-World War II order and its consequences for toilers worldwide. This included Pathfinder's latest title, *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward* by SWP leaders Jack Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark (68 copies sold), which was among the books presented on the main stage of the fair (see box). Others were *Labor, Nature, and the Evolution of Humanity: The Long View of History* (94), by the founders of the communist movement, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, as well as by SWP leaders Waters and George Novack; and *Are They Rich Because They're Smart? Class, Privilege, and Learning Under Capitalism* (76) by Barnes.

Many sought out the stand not only for the books but also to discuss these questions and share experiences with the worker-volunteers from the U.S., U.K. and Canada staffing it. *Labor, Nature, and the Evolution of Humanity* was both the most popular and most debated book. Some objected to its defense of

a materialist, evolutionary approach to human biology and society as being against religious teachings, while others — believers and nonbelievers alike — wanted the book for that very reason. Some had heard about debates in the U.S. and other imperialist countries over "woke" views promoted by upper-middle-class meritocratic layers and wanted to read a Marxist rebuttal of these "profoundly anti-working-class, anti-science" views, in the words of the introductory article by Waters. Only a handful were attracted to "wokery." The interest in the title led a Syrian-based publisher to decide to produce an Arabic translation.

High-school student Mina Mahmood bought *History of the Russian Revolution* by Leon Trotsky. "I saw a documentary that showed the people, but not what they were going through," she said. "It was all about the czar and czarina, but I wanted to find out more about when Lenin and the Bolsheviks took over the state," leading the working class in carrying out the world's first socialist revolution. Twelve copies were sold, including one in Russian.

"I read things online, but my sister said I have to read a book, so I'm buying my first one," said Hunar Eshan, who like many young people here is looking for work. "I'll start with *Malcolm X Talks to Young People*, and then read the *Communist Manifesto*."

Workers share experiences

"My father has been in Canada for almost seven years. I was nine years old when he left, and I haven't seen him since," Seroush Mohamoued told Pathfinder volunteer Joe Young, who works in an industrial bakery in Montreal. Mohamoued continued, "Immigrants are there to work but their families can't visit."

Young explained the Canadian rulers' anti-immigrant policies are designed to bring in overseas workers with limited rights, to keep them as a source of cheap labor, but they end up becoming part of working-class struggles and unions.

Others described unsafe conditions at work and irregular wages. "We're paid \$600 a month," said Ahmed, a monitor at an oil refinery who preferred not giving



Rudaw
Protest in Erbil against March 20 killing by Turkish-backed militias of four celebrating Kurdish New Year in Jindiries, Syria. Kurds' firm resolve to win self-determination marks politics across the Mideast.

his last name. "The wages have stayed the same for years, but prices are going up here like everywhere else. During the pandemic, they shut down the refinery for two years and we received no wages." The refinery is nonunion, he said, as others working in oil and construction told Pathfinder stand volunteers. These are the major industries here.

Many were interested in the experience of union struggles in other countries described by volunteers and in many of the books. At the same time, most said it was difficult to organize in Iraq in face of the constant threat of war, with repeated interventions by the Turkish and Iranian regimes and U.S. troop deployments.

A student from Kirkuk pointed to the challenge of building working-class solidarity in face of national divisions. Kirkuk is a multiethnic city had been part of the Kurdistan Regional Government until it was taken by force by the central government in Baghdad in 2017. "When an Arab is head of the oil company, he'll promote Arabs, and when it's a Turkmen or a Kurd they'll do the same for 'their' people." Attempts to elevate Arabic above other languages in Kirkuk have met resistance from Kurds, Turkmen and others.

Books on the working-class fight

against imperialist war, as well as national oppression and bigotry, saw brisk sales. These included issue no. 7 of *New Internationalist* magazine featuring "The Opening Guns of World War III: Washington's Assault on Iraq" (21) and *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* (35), both by Barnes.

The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation by Abram Leon was the fourth top seller (52 copies). Many at the fair knew about the persecution of Jews in Iraq and their wholesale expulsion with the establishment of Israel as a haven for Jews after the genocide of the Holocaust. They wanted to learn more about the causes of Jew-hatred and what could be done to end it. A Baghdad-based publisher signed an agreement to produce an Arabic translation, including Pathfinder's new 2020 introduction by SWP leader Dave Prince. The publisher signed on for four other Pathfinder titles as well.

Books on women's liberation by Evelyn Reed and others were in high demand. Two of those, *Problems of Women's Liberation* and *Sexism and Science* by Reed, were being sold in Arabic translation by Lebanese-Iraqi publisher Nousous, along with *Are They Rich Because They're Smart?* Ayad Hassan at

Gov't court 'reform' paused after protests paralyze Israel



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu put his government's push for judicial "reform" on hold March 27 in the face of growing opposition, including a national strike at the airport, stock exchange and hospitals called by the Histadrut labor federation, paralyzing the country. Thousands of army reservists also announced they would refuse to serve if the reform went through. "When there is a chance to prevent civil war through dialogue," Netanyahu said, "I, as the prime minister, will take a timeout for dialogue."

The regime's decision to "pause" came after 12 weeks of protests by hundreds of thousands, including one in Tel Aviv, shown above. Netanyahu had little choice after associations of capitalist bosses — representing the Israeli ruling class — also came out against the government's push to impose the reforms. And Washington, Israel's key foreign ally, called for a stand-down and negotiations.

The reforms — pushed especially by rightist parties in the Netanyahu coalition — would give his government more say in the selection of high court judges and Israel's parliament the power to overturn high court decisions with a simple majority vote, making the court almost powerless. The justices are currently selected by a committee of nine, in which the sitting ruling coalition is a minority. Israel has no constitution and the liberal-leaning court often justifies its rulings on the basis of "reasonableness" and other unwritten doctrines.

The Netanyahu government hoped to use the reform to ram through its program without judicial interference.

Recent years have been politically turbulent in Israel, with five different governments formed in the last four years. The current government came together when Netanyahu was able to cobble together a coalition that rules with a four-vote majority in the Knesset.

Parliament is now on recess for the next month, as the debate continues.

— SETH GALINSKY

Nousous reported that each had an initial print run of 1,000 a year or so ago, of which only a few dozen are left.

Damascus-based Taakwen brought to the fair two new translations of

Pathfinder titles — *Women in Cuba: The Making of a Revolution Within the Revolution*, and *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, both edited and introduced by Mary-Alice Waters.

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Iraqi Communist Party message of solidarity with Cuba

Below is the solidarity message sent by Raid Fahmi on behalf of the Central Committee of the Iraqi Communist Party to the two-day International US-Cuba Normalization Conference held in New York City March 11-12. Fahmi is secretary of the party's Central Committee. The message was read at the closing plenary session.

10 March 2023

Dear Friends,

We convey warm greetings to your International Conference and express our appreciation for this initiative which contributes to the international movement of solidarity with Cuba.

On this occasion, we reaffirm our solidarity for the just cause of the Cuban people and their struggle for the immediate and unconditional lifting of the unjust, illegal and inhumane economic, commercial and financial blockade which has been imposed by the U.S. for more than 60 years. We also demand that the U.S. government remove Cuba from the spurious State Sponsors of Terrorism List.

We strongly condemn the blockade, which constitutes a flagrant and systematic violation of the Cuban people's human rights. It is the main obstacle obstructing Cuba's development.

We have also rejected the tightening of the unjust blockade on Cuba by the Trump administration, including the 243 measures that reinforced the financial and commercial siege. These measures remain in place.

While wishing your Conference every success, we look forward to developing the international movement of solidarity with the Cuban people and mobilizing the international community in support for Cuba's sovereignty and independence.

Socialist Workers Party author speaks on new title at book fair forum

BY ÖGMUNDUR JÓNSSON

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region, Iraq — Over 50 people attended a March 11 presentation by Steve Clark on *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward*. Clark is editorial director of Pathfinder Press and a member of the SWP National Committee. He is an author of the new title, along with SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes and party leader Mary-Alice Waters. The event was part of a daily series of televised presentations and book signings at the Erbil International Book Fair.

Clark noted the importance of holding a book fair in Erbil, a city both in Kurdistan and Iraq. "The U.S. rulers have brought so much devastation to Iraq," he said, pointing to the killings of hundreds of thousands due to Washington's wars of 1990-91 and 2003 and the destruction still evident in

Baghdad and other cities.

"The Kurdish struggle is an inspiration for toilers throughout the region and around the world," he said. "Massive protests by working people of all nationalities across Iran were sparked by the death in police custody of Zhina Amini, a young Kurdish woman, last September."

Pointing to the collapse the previous day of Silicon Valley Bank, Clark said the volatility of the banking system is part of the capitalist-caused crisis for working people the SWP is responding to. Employment levels have dropped over decades, while inflation surges. The unions have declined in strength. Life expectancy is at the lowest level in

a quarter century, due to an epidemic of drug addiction, among other social ills.

"In face of these conditions, more workers are starting to say, 'Enough!' and organizing to use their unions to resist." *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us*, he said, explains the SWP's response to these new openings to build the unions and to present why the working class must fight for a labor party based on the unions and for workers and farmers government.

"The U.S. rulers continue to assert their domination over Puerto Rico, which is the largest colony in the world today. The Kurdish people are the largest nation without a country, so you have something in common."

"But they have a country right here. You're in it!" the moderator interjected, referring to the Kurdistan Regional Government.

"Yes, that's a big advance. But the Kurdish nation still has no country of its own, neither here nor in Iran, Syria and Turkey," Clark replied, to many nods of agreement in the audience.

After the presentation, visitors to the fair lined up to have Clark sign their newly purchased copies of the book.



Militant/Ogmundur Jónsson
SWP leader Steve Clark signs copies of *The Low Point of Labor Resistance is Behind Us*, following March 11 presentation at Erbil International Book Fair in Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

National farmers convention

Continued from front page

pay them less, and charge them more.”

The policy document pointed to a lawsuit against the four largest beef processors, which control 80% of the market, charging they agreed to set buying practices to artificially affect both cattle and beef prices to increase profits.

Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack told the meeting that the last couple years have seen “record farm income” nationwide, but he had to admit that 50% of farmers had a “negative income,” and 40% made money only by adding in jobs worked off the farm or from other sources.

The perspective Vilsack and other featured speakers presented was to rely on litigation, legislation, regulations, government programs and capitalist parties and politicians, like himself.

“Only 10% made an income from farming and ranching! After so many years of supporting and relying on Democratic and Republican party politicians,” Socialist Workers Party member Joel Britton told those he talked to. The SWP participated in the convention to meet working farmers, showing people a Feb. 21 SWP National Campaign statement by Ellie García, the party’s 2022 candidate for U.S. Senate from California headlined, “Build an alliance of workers and farmers!”

“To move forward,” Britton said, “workers, working farmers and ranchers — all exploited producers — need a fighting alliance against the capitalist class, which benefits from pitting farmers against workers. Our fight is class against class. After decades of farm bills in Congress, no meaningful relief has come to those toiling on the land. Government reform measures and lawsuits in the absence of struggle divert our efforts into reliance on our class enemy.

“We need to break from the Democratic and Republican parties altogether and look toward building a labor party based on the unions that would champion the cause of working farmers and ranchers,” Britton said. “Such a party could lead a fight for a workers and farmers government.”

Farm debt has soared, reaching levels not seen since the 1980s. “It’s hard for the little guy to compete,” Dave Berger, a retired rancher from Center, North Dakota, told the *Militant*.

“It’s getting impossible to farm because of the cost of grazing land, electricity and gas. If you are starting out brand new you will be a few hundred thousand dollars in debt for the land, tractors, cattle, etc.”

Giant agricultural implement com-

pany John Deere won’t give farmers or independent mechanics access to information they need to fix their equipment, forcing farmers to lose time and to pay exorbitant prices for repairs.

Michigan farmer Dennis Kellogg told the *Militant* that he and many other farmers “have postponed purchases of new equipment to avoid the software technology that prevents farmers from working on it.”

Farming vs. solar panels

One conference session featured a panel of “nonprofit” groups hailing the expanding solar energy industry and its promises to help cut carbon emissions

“A Princeton net zero study shows we can be 100% carbon free, but it will take 10.4 million acres of farmland,” said Anna Slager from The Nature Conservancy.

“Eighty-three percent will have to be on existing farmland and 50% of that on some of the most productive farmland,” Samantha Ley, from American Farmland Trust, added. She admitted farmers are being displaced because they couldn’t pay the rent solar farm developers are demanding.

“I was offered a contract for \$12 million for 35 years. In 60 years of farming that land I never made \$12 million,” Kellogg said in the discussion period. “This is some of the best farmland in Michigan, 200 acres. It’s tearing my heart out. How can they pay this much to use my land?”

Another convention topic was the risk ranchers face from fires and other disasters that can ruin the land where they graze their herds. “Ranchers are improving the public lands we graze on,” said Charles Hibner, a rancher from New Mexico. “Fires are much worse when we are not grazing the land because we keep fires to isolated periodic burns that are clean and don’t get too hot.”

Many of the discussions at the convention reflected the growing crisis rural communities face. Drought conditions affect ranchers in New Mexico, who said they haven’t had water for irrigation and have to truck water in for their herds. This requires them to rely on distant grocery stores for food they could grow themselves. A delegate from Minnesota explained that it is a three-hour drive to get to a dentist from where she lives.

Others spoke about recent closures of maternity hospitals in rural areas and the need for early childhood care and education resources.

Safety of farmers and communities



Militant/Carole Lesnick

Socialist Workers Party members Ellie García and Joel Britton with farmer Will Scott in Fresno, California. García and Britton participated in National Farmers Union convention, talked to working farmers about need for a labor party, based on the unions and worker-farmer alliance.

alongside the railroad tracks was on the mind of people here in the wake of the derailment and social disaster in East Palestine, Ohio. Many were critical of Norfolk Southern railroad.

Nebraska delegate and farmer Vern Jantzen won support for adding language to the National Farm Union policy document saying, “Any train or light engine used in connection with the movement of freight must be operated with a crew consisting of at least two individuals,” and calling for “mandatory modern safety sensors on rail car axles.”

“Good, reliable and safe rail service is in the interests of the American farmer,” Kellogg told the *Militant*. “I didn’t know rail workers didn’t have enough time off work,” he said, until he learned about the issues in their contract battle last year. “How can you plan ahead for illnesses and family deaths?”

“We need to fight for workers control of rail operations to guarantee safety of the workers and those who live near the tracks,” Britton told Kellogg. “And we should support the workers and farmers in Ukraine fighting to defeat the invasion by Moscow.” Kellogg was interested in Britton’s description of Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin’s fight for the right of nations to self-determination.

National Farmers Union President Rob Larew announced that \$135,000 was donated by NFU members to the World Food Program USA to help Ukrainians since Moscow’s assault began.

Immigrant rights, farmworkers

Julie Keown-Bomar, executive director of the Wisconsin Farmers Union, told *Militant* correspondent Carole Lesnick that her organization participated with Voces de la Frontera in a walk for immigrant rights in Wisconsin. She said that many dairy farmers are “totally dependent” on immigrant workers. “The exploitation of immigrants allows some farms to grow. It’s easy to target immigrants. I say blame the system not them.”

The capitalist class uses the immigration question to deepen divisions among the exploited producers. The Socialist Workers Party calls for amnesty for undocumented workers, support for farmworkers’ struggles against low wages and bad conditions, and backs their fights for a union. The only future for working farmers is to join forces with the working class and build a worker-farmer alliance.

Lesnick spoke to Keown-Bomar about the need for solidarity between workers and farmers. Keown-Bomar said she wrote op-ed contributions to the media in support of the strike of

John Deere workers in 2021.

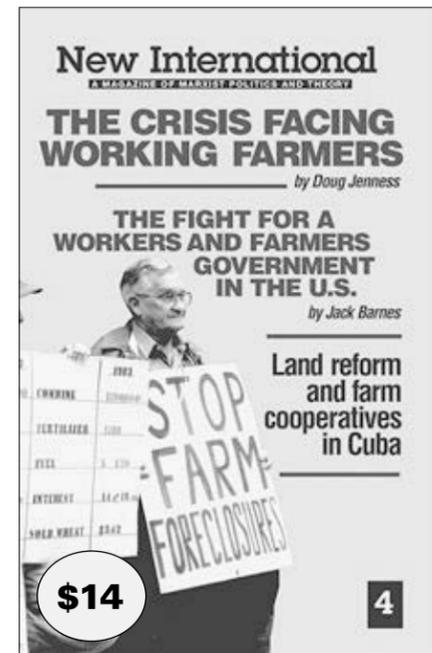
“We are losing two dairy farms per day in Wisconsin. There are 6,000 now and still the same number of cows, so the bigger operations are buying up the others,” she said. Lesnick showed her a letter of solidarity signed by farmers in North America sent to the National Association of Small Farmers of Cuba (ANAP) on the 63rd anniversary of the first agrarian reform of the Cuban Revolution. She explained that to this day Cuban farmers can’t lose their land as long as they farm it.

“There are different classes of farmers,” *Militant* worker-correspondent Jacob Perasso told Tommy Hexter, who works for the Iowa Farmers Union. I showed him a copy of *New International* no. 4, where Socialist Workers Party leaders put forward a program to defend the exploited farmers and farmworkers based on an alliance with the working class as a whole. Hexter said he wanted to read about that and the farming cooperatives in Cuba discussed in that issue.

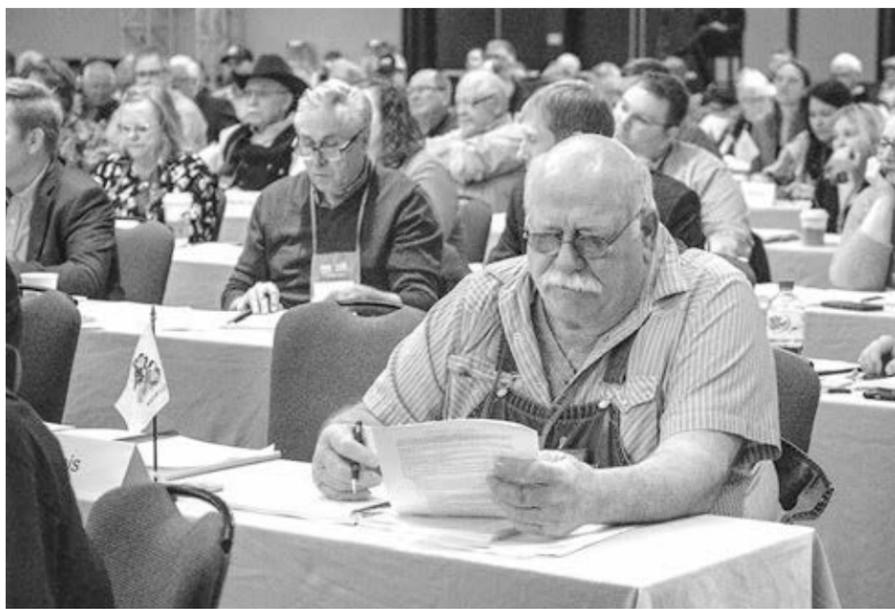
There was interest among some working farmers in the politics the SWP raised and discussed, both about what exploited producers face and on the big political, social, and economic changes in the U.S. and the world.

Hexter and Keown-Bomar were among several conference participants who got copies or a subscription to the *Militant*, *New International* no. 4 and *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward*. A few farmers and other participants exchanged information with SWP members to visit and continue discussions.

Recommended reading



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National Farmers Union

Delegates participate in National Farmers Union convention, held March 5-7 in San Francisco.

Farmworkers fight for gov't aid for flooded communities

BY BETSEY STONE

WATSONVILLE, Calif. — “They don’t care about us.” This is how farmworker Jose Narvaez summed up the attitude of governmental agencies responsible for the unfolding social disaster after the flooding of Pajaro, just south of Watsonville, where many farmworkers live.

“My two brothers and I have been sleeping in my truck,” he told Socialist Workers Party members visiting the area March 11. “All I have are the clothes I’m wearing. People have lost their cars, everything. We need aid, NOW!”

Water poured into the town March 11 after a levee holding back the Pajaro River failed. For decades, authorities have known the levee was not going to hold in the face of severe storms, yet they did nothing to reinforce it.

SWP members met Narvaez and other evacuees who were gathered at the foot of a bridge connecting Watsonville to Pajaro. They were waiting for the go ahead to be able to cross over and see what was left of their homes and belongings. Many remembered being evacuated from Pajaro in 1995, when two residents lost their lives in a similar flood. Finally, last year a proposed date for the repair was set, but for 2025.

Hundreds of the 2,800 residents of Pajaro have been crammed into a shelter at the county fairgrounds while others have spent nights in cars, sheds or paid for hotel rooms with the little money they had or could borrow.

Barbara Padilla, who works with the organization Puentes de la Comunidad, said churches, small businesses and working people in the community have brought food, clothes and other necessities. At the bridge, people line up to receive food from a local meat

market. When we visited the fairgrounds, a mariachi band was playing in solidarity with evacuees.

The rich agricultural valleys around Watsonville and nearby Salinas produce a significant percentage of the strawberries, lettuce and other vegetables consumed nationally. Now fields are inundated or too wet and muddy to be worked. Farmers are losing crops and farmworkers have had their work hours reduced or cut entirely.

Heated town hall meeting

Almost no aid has come from the state or federal governments. At a heated town hall meeting March 20 at the fairgrounds, angry evacuees berated county officials and emergency personal for refusing to give them information or financial aid.

The only assistance available to some residents was from the \$300,000 the state had allocated to the Monterey County United Way three years ago for COVID relief. It is now being made available, but only for farmworkers. One worker said that her assistance, a \$600 debit card, would not arrive for two or three more weeks.

Organizers tried to shut down the meeting when many residents still wanted to speak their mind. Workers surrounded officials asking for updates, demanding to know when they would be allowed back into Pajaro.

Under pressure, evacuation orders were lifted a day earlier than expected, allowing people to begin to clean up and take stock of their losses.

They found houses and businesses damaged, with some red-tagged as unsafe to occupy. Belongings were destroyed, mud was everywhere, with no clean water or functioning toilets. Residents say they need help with re-



KSBW Channel 8

At bridge between Pajaro and Watsonville, California, residents lambast government officials March 17 for inadequate response, lack of information and aid in face of flooding in Pajaro.

moving sludge and moving furniture.

Going door to door in Watsonville, we shared copies of the *Militant* that had news about East Palestine, Ohio. Working people there have also been treated with contempt, this time by the Norfolk Southern rail bosses and government authorities after toxic chemicals were released in a completely preventable train derailment.

Farmworker Maria Vigil invited us in for hot chocolate when we described the outcry of East Palestine residents that forced the rail bosses to back down on steps to get the trains running as quickly as possible, instead of first removing the contaminated soil that is under the tracks.

We said workers in Watsonville can help fellow working people by demanding aid for the evacuees in Pajaro. Unemployed farmworkers could be given jobs to help residents with the cleanup.

Vigil is from a family of farmworkers and has been able to get unemployment insurance. But, she said, many workers lack the necessary immigration papers to do so. We said it’s crucial for the union movement to get behind the fight

for amnesty for workers without papers and to fight for aid to be given to all evacuees, regardless of status.

We talked with Alex Parra, whose mother is a farmworker, about struggles of strawberry workers here in previous decades to win recognition for the United Farm Workers, struggles that showed the capacities of working people to join together to fight for what we need.

The levee in Pajaro wasn’t fixed because the federal Army Corps of Engineers prioritizes funding of construction projects according to the value of the land involved. Levees in affluent areas where land is higher priced have gotten funded while the needs of workers who live on cheaper land have been discounted. “For the rich, it’s all about the dollar,” Parra said.

There are 1,758 levee systems throughout California. Many need repair. Because it’s working people who live on flood plains where housing is cheaper, workers have borne the brunt of the flooding that has accompanied this year’s strong winter storms.

Working people can’t rely on the bosses and their two big political parties to ensure that basic precautions are put into place to prevent flooding and social disasters. To meet the needs of the toiling majority, workers need to organize independently to fight for our own class interests, to build unions, to ally with working farmers and win solidarity.

Washington tree farmers take on new government attacks

BY JACOB PERASSO

SEATTLE — Small logging farmers in Washington state are waging a battle with the state Forest Practices Board that controls logging on private land. It involves state regulations enforcing excessively large buffers that the farmers are required to maintain next to area streams. Buffers stabilize riverbanks, hold back sediment and farm chemicals, and protect fish and other animals.

A parallel battle is taking place against efforts by Gov. Jay Inslee to impose new and similarly large mandatory buffers on agricultural farmland statewide.

The Washington Farm Forestry Association, which represents thousands of small tree farmers and forestland owners, spent eight years building its case that well-managed 50- to 75-foot buffers, rather than the state required 90- to 200-foot buffers, will be just as effective at protecting fish and water, while allowing farmers access to more of their land for harvesting.

About 5,000 landowners are affected. Over 200 small tree farmers testified in writing in support of narrower buffers.

“Our forest legacy relies heavily on effective and economical environmental generational ownership. We are Stewards of our forest and would like the opportunity to manage our land

(for generations to come),” the members of the Goodman family wrote to the board. “As family forest owners, we strongly believe that we care about the environment more than most, AND we care for all those depending on forestland.”

Last November, the Forest Practices Board rejected the proposal for the smaller buffers in an 8-4 vote with no explanation. Ken Miller, who has led the fight to reduce the size of the buffers, staged a sit-in protest after the board’s vote. “I respectfully decline to leave this table,” he said, adding, “I don’t know any other way of getting meaningful attention. All of our options are bad.”

Washington Farm Forestry Association Executive Director Elaine Oneil told the board that other farmers were watching. “I can’t imagine that this is going to go down favorably in the rural hinterlands.”

Inslee backed a bill in January imposing 200-foot buffers next to waterways on all farms.

“If it’s 200 or 220 feet, 30% of the state’s agriculture would be taken out,” Fred Likkell, executive director of Whatcom Family Farmers, told the *Militant*. “Too many would lose, and for some guys that would be it [for farming].”

Landowners who don’t plant and

maintain buffers would face fines of up to \$10,000 per day. Inslee says opponents of the measure would be responsible for greater loss of salmon.

“My answer to that is bullsh--t,” said Washington State Dairy Federation Policy Director Jay Gordon, “we have groups of farmers and tribes who have met for years on this and continue to meet.” Gordon says the buffers would take up too much land, particularly in western Washington, for dairies to grow feed for their cows.

An alternative bill was proposed this year on behalf of farm groups and many tribes, but is opposed by Inslee. The bill would compensate farmers for voluntarily taking land out of production and planting buffers.

Inslee administration officials criticized the new bill for leaving state agencies off a task force that would monitor the program.

MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

PENNSYLVANIA

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LA teachers strike

Continued from page 5

who work four or more hours a day, including coverage for their dependents.

Negotiations between the school district and the United Teachers Los Angeles continue. The union is seeking a 20% raise over two years, starting retroactively with the 2022-23 school year.

“This strike shows the growing resistance by workers to the deteriorating conditions the bosses are imposing on us,” Laura Garza, Socialist Workers Party member and rail worker, told strikers at the rallies. “The *Los Angeles Times* and other voices for the ruling class try to convince us that these workers were offered a better contract because of the intervention of Mayor Karen Bass. No. Any gains are the result of relying on their own strength, their unity in the strike.”

“Unions are essential. It’s not just about this, but about everybody,” Edelyn Ortiz, a 37-year-old substitute teacher at Sheridan Street Elementary, told the *Militant*. “Fighting with dignity is what is going to help our community.”

No to Russification! Yes to self-determination for oppressed peoples!

Marking a year of the fight for Ukrainian independence against Moscow's invasion, the Books of the Month this week features Samizdat, Voices of the Soviet Opposition. It contains clandestine writings circulated in the Soviet Union challenging bureaucratic domination and repression. The excerpt is from a 1972 open letter, "Against Russification," by 17 Latvian revolutionaries defending the proletarian internationalist course of the Bolshevik Revolution led by V.I. Lenin. They point to the oppressive rule Moscow imposed on Latvia and other nations under the Stalinist regime, as it had been in the czarist prison house of nations. Russian President Vladimir Putin is seeking to reimpose Russification on Ukraine today. Copyright © 1974 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Latvians in Riga, March 5, 2022, say "We stand with Ukraine! Together against Putin!" shortly after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Defending the right of national self-determination against "Russification" was integral part of 1917 Bolshevik revolution led by V.I. Lenin.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Dear comrades,

We are seventeen Latvian Communists, seeking your help. We are writing to you because we do not see any other way of affecting certain actions and events which cause great harm to the Communist movement, to Marxism-Leninism, and to our own and other small nations.

Many Communists have voiced in their party organizations the concerns we are expressing here, and some

have appealed to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Repressions have been the only results. ...

With a clear conscience, we did everything in our power to carry out the teachings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. However, it became painfully clear to us that with each passing year their ideas became more distorted, that the teachings of Lenin are used here as a cover for Great Russian chauvinism, that deeds no longer agree with words, that we are complicating the work of Communists in other countries, that we are impeding this work instead of facilitating it.

Originally we believed that this was due simply to the errors of a few individual local officials who did not realize the harmful effects of their attitudes. With time, however, it became apparent to us that the leadership of the Soviet Communist Party had deliberately adopted a policy of Great Russian chauvinism and that the forcible assimilation of the small USSR nations had been set as one of the most immediate and important domestic policy goals. ...

[T]he Russian czars always dreamed of capturing the ice-free ports of Ventspils, Liepaja, Riga, and Tallinn. Czar Peter I fulfilled this dream and our ancestors came under Russian domination. From time to time various areas of Latvia were also occupied by the Poles and the Swedes. All these conquerors tried to assimilate the local tribes,

but without success. Later these tribes evolved as the nations of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, gaining their independence in 1918, after World War I. ...

During World War II, approximately 40,000 people were evacuated to the interior of the Soviet Union. Two Latvian divisions fought in the ranks of the Red Army. The rest of the indigent population remained in Latvia. Some of the people who had remained in Latvia were annihilated by the German fascists. Some died on the front in battle against the Red Army, and at the end of the war, some emigrated to Western countries (West Germany, Sweden, Australia, United States, etc.).

After World War II, the CPSU CC [Communist Party of the Soviet Union Central Committee] established as its goal to develop a permanent power base in the territories of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, and began the forcible colonization of these territories with Russians, Byelorussians, and Ukrainians. It also began the forcible assimilation of Latvians, Lithuanians, and Estonians, as well as other minority nationalities, disregarding the fact that such actions clearly speak against the principles of Marxism-Leninism. ...

In achieving the first basic aim, the increase in the number of non-Latvians in the republic, steps are also being taken to achieve the second basic aim, which is to assimilate the Latvians and lead to the Russian way of

life throughout Latvia. ...

Those Lithuanians, Estonians, Jews, Germans, Poles, and other minorities (except Russians) residing in Latvian territory do not have their ethnic heritages at all respected. Until 1940 (until the establishment of Soviet rule) in Latvia these minorities had their own elementary and secondary schools where they studied in their own language. They issued their own language newspapers, magazines, books; they had their own clubs, theaters, and other cultural and educational institutions. Now, in disregard of pertinent Marxist-Leninist principles dealing with ethnic questions, and contrary to the statements of USSR leaders that ethnic problems in the Soviet Union have been solved and that each nationality has been guaranteed complete freedom and equality, nothing of that kind is evident. In every republic the Russians have everything, people native to their republics have something, but others nothing at all. The 3,500,000 Jews residing in the Soviet Union have only one magazine in their native language, and that only in their autonomous region. They are denied the right to have their own theaters, clubs, cultural and educational institutions, even in those cities where they number tens of thousands. ...

[W]e gradually realized that much of the official written and spoken output of the government was for display purposes only — deliberate distortions and outright lies. All party conferences, meetings, and assemblies are carefully prearranged and executed shows. They are convened only to create an illusion of democracy within the party. In reality, these conferences, meetings, and assemblies merely have to approve everything that has been dictated from "above"; subsequently they expound the individual opinion of a single person — the head man in the government. Every attempt to object to these opinions is regarded as opposition to the ideals of the party and Leninism. Those who dare to object not only lose their positions but also their freedom, and often end up suffering subhuman conditions in prisons and concentration camps, are deported, or sometimes vanish without a trace. ...

The present policies of the Communist Party leaders in the Soviet Union are destroying the world Communist movement.

March
BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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Join fight to defend rights workers need

The following is an excerpt from the Political Resolution adopted by the SWP at its convention last December and printed in *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward* by Jack Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark. Copyright © 2023 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

Defending and extending the freedoms protected by the US Constitution is at the center of the class struggle today. Workers and farmers must organize and act to prevent the federal government's assault on these freedoms, which we have won in class battles over some two and a half centuries. We must oppose the US rulers' relentless drive to refurbish the reputation and expand the use of the government's political police, first and foremost the FBI.

The political course of the current Democratic administration includes an open assault on these very freedoms. Employing violent and provocative demagoguery, President Biden, in his September 1, 2022, "Battle for the Soul of the Nation" speech in Philadelphia, condemned as "a threat to this country" tens of millions of US citizens who voted for former President Donald Trump in 2020 or who would have done so if they had the chance (74 million people cast ballots for him). The "MAGA Republicans," Biden said, are carrying out an "ongoing attack on democracy." They represent "a clear and present danger," he warned, "an extremism that threatens the very foundations of our republic."

A week earlier, Biden had branded "MAGA Republicans" as "semi-fascists." There is no rise of fascism in the US today, but Biden's Philadelphia performance did call up images of Nuremberg

rallies. It was staged against the backdrop of garish red lighting, with two active duty Marines in uniform flanking an American flag. In defiance of government and US Armed Forces policy against uniformed soldiers being used at political events, the Democratic administration mobilized Marine sentries and had the Marine Band play "Hail to the Chief" as Biden walked to the podium. ...

Class-conscious workers, the trade unions, and organizations of the oppressed and exploited must unconditionally oppose anti-constitutional assaults by the government on freedom of worship and speech; freedom of the press, association, and assembly; prohibition of "unreasonable search and seizure"; and other liberties needed and used by the toilers. ...

In August 2022 the Biden administration's "Justice Department" staged a nine-hour raid on former president Trump's Florida home, carried out by more than thirty FBI and Secret Service agents, many of them heavily armed. Long experience has taught class-conscious workers that when the government, in a violent or threatening manner, takes aim at a rival capitalist politician or party, the same methods and worse have been and will again be used by the rulers to harass and disrupt union battles, struggles by working farmers, opponents of Washington's wars, fighters for Black liberation, and communists.

As Leon Trotsky forcefully reminded us in 1939, "Under conditions of the bourgeois regime, all suppression of political rights and freedom, no matter whom they are directed against in the beginning, in the end inevitably bear down upon the working class, particularly its most advanced elements. That is a law of history."

Defend constitutional freedoms from gov't assault

Continued from page 7

jargon for informers — during and after Jan. 6 was revealed during the recent trial of five members of the Proud Boys. They're charged under thought-control sedition laws of plotting to overthrow the government.

As of March 22 at least nine government finks were known to be informing on the Proud Boys. Informer Jennylyn Salinas, a former official of Latinos for Trump, held regular discussions with the defendants, suggesting possible defense witnesses and taking part in group prayer meetings with their families. She met with their defense attorneys and made "detailed inquiries" about the defense, one of the lawyers reported. The government says it was getting information from her from April 2020 up until this January.

Court officials are doing everything possible to cover up their unconstitutional spy operations. After what they've been through, some of the FBI's informers in this operation now say they want to testify on behalf of the defendants. But, in another blow to political rights, Judge Timothy J. Kelly refused to let defense lawyers put FBI snitch Kenneth Lizardo on the stand.

Alongside its widespread use of the FBI as a partisan political police, the Democrats are also going after the basic right to have privileged, private dis-

cussions with your lawyers. They got a cooperative judge to compel Evan Corcoran, one of Trump's main lawyers, to be grilled before a grand jury March 24. It targets the former president's alleged possession of classified documents.

The judge's ruling violates the Sixth Amendment, which protects the right of any person accused of a crime to a defense counsel.

'Get Trump at all costs'

"No one is above the law," Democrats repeatedly say as they demand Trump be prosecuted. What they're actually saying is that no constitutional protections should stand in the way of their drive to destroy his political life and his family.

"Donald Trump Must Be Prosecuted," demanded *New York Times* columnist Charles Blow March 15, when leaks indicated New York District Attorney Bragg was about to file charges against Trump. The former president's "crime" was making payments back in 2016 to Stephanie Clifford in order to get her not to reveal their alleged relationship. But the statute of limitations for such a charge had expired.

Attacks on constitutional protections by the FBI, prosecutors, judges and the government have been the norm throughout the Democrats' Jan. 6 hearings and trials. Today they're targeting Trump, a leader of one of the capitalist rulers' two main parties, and hundreds of his supporters, who have been spied upon and denied rights they need to defend themselves.

Every time the rulers chip away at these freedoms, regardless of the target, the end result will be used to go after workers, farmers and their vanguard fighters. Standing guard against any infringement on these protections is crucial for the working-class struggles that lie ahead.

Beet workers make gains

Continued from front page they originally offered.

"The major issue in this strike is the attack on the pension. I'm 61 and was planning on retiring in a few years. But I'll lose close to 50% of what I was promised if we don't fight this," said Salvador Solorzano, a mechanic and maintenance worker with 25 years seniority, when we visited the picket line the first week of the strike. While the workers' current contract goes through 2025 and allows the company to make a 401(k) plan available, it does not say the funds accrued in their pensions would all be transferred to the 401(k).

"We went into the contract with good faith and were promised the pension funds would be frozen," Clarissa Zavala, 31, a picket captain and shop steward said.

"This is the first time I have been on strike," said Felipe Rodriguez, a welder with 20 years working in the plant. "It's very sad to see this situation." There is a \$60,000 difference in what he previously would get in his pension and what the company would put into a 401(k).

"We're striking at a good time," Zavala said. "The sugar beets can't stay in the ground too long or they get over-ripe and rot, or they get too hard and lose sugar content." The season for harvesting and processing the beets is just gearing up and the plant would normally be operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week from April through July or August. When the harvest is on, they produce 9,600 tons a day.

During the harvest, seasonal workers could bring the workforce up to 300 or more. It's the only beet processing plant in the valley. The bosses filed for an injunction to halt the strike, but the judge ruled against them.

'Bosses must comply with contract'

"We want them to comply with the contract," said fabricator Miguel Ramirez. His pension would have been cut by more than half. "They said it would be frozen."

Many of the workers commute daily from Mexico, he said, which often takes three hours. During the harvest workers are on seven days, off three days, on seven, off two the next week, and off only one day the third, and they change shifts each week.

"We've been receiving a lot of support from the community," said Ramirez.

I talked to two pickets who were seasonal workers. One said she worked in the fields the rest of the year. They make \$17 an hour. The full-time workforce includes skilled workers who do maintenance year-round. Zavala, a boiler maker who learned her trade working in the fisheries in Alaska, makes \$27.50 an hour. These are still among the higher-paying jobs in an area that has the lowest per capita income in the state, and is one of the few jobs where there is a union.

Spreckels Sugar is a subsidiary of the Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar Cooperative. Zavala said the unions are stronger in Minnesota. "There a worker doing my job makes \$42 an hour.

"Two years ago, I never thought I'd be a picket captain," she said. "But one of the other shop stewards told me that I should get active in the union because I stood up for myself against the bosses."

The Imperial Valley, with roughly half a million acres of farmland, is where most of the winter vegetables in the U.S. are grown. In spite of all the wealth created here, the county, which is 85% Latino, is one of the poorest in the country. Unemployment rates are four times the state average.

In these conditions the fight was closely watched. While the settlement means the company had to pay thousands of dollars more to workers, some were not happy it didn't guarantee them everything they had in their pensions.

"I feel like the victory is us showing we are united and can come together and that we will stand as one to fight for our rights," said Zavala. "It was a hard process to put the strike together." Some people were fearful of losing their job or facing retaliation.

"People are now thinking of what we can win in the next contract," she said. "The only way we can get something is solidarity and we showed this time we can do that."

50 Years of Covert Operations in the US

Washington's Political Police and the American Working Class

How Socialist Workers Party exposed decades of spying by FBI targeting working-class organizations and opponents of government policies. How expansion of "national security" state used to maintain capitalist rule had bipartisan backing.

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