

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Nine years after IS slaughter,
Yazidis fight for rights in Iraq
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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SWP campaigns with 'Militant,' new book, fund for the paper

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

"I remember you from last time, when I got a subscription to the *Militant*," Pete Bastounes, a member of Operating Engineers Local 150, told Socialist Workers Party members Dan Fein and David Rosenfeld when they knocked on his door in Morris, Illinois, April 8.

Rosenfeld showed Bastounes *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. The book points to new opportunities for working-class struggles, Rosenfeld said, "as more workers say 'enough is enough' to the drive by the capitalist rulers and their parties to shift the burden of their crisis onto working people's backs."

"We need to regulate capitalism like they do in Europe," Bastounes said.

"But government regulations are written by the corporations they're supposed to regulate," noted Rosenfeld. "We look to Cuba where they overthrew

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East Palestine: 'Get out truth about derailment, cleanup'

Residents, rail workers seek control over their lives



Trains/Sol Tucker

Cleanup of toxic spill in East Palestine, Ohio, after Feb. 3 Norfolk Southern derailment. Working people there are fighting to open rail bosses' books, take control of health and cleanup.

BY TONY LANE

EAST PALESTINE, Ohio — Working people, small farmers and small-business people here, as well as rail workers across the country, continue to discuss steps to advance

their interests after the Feb. 3 Norfolk Southern train derailment and ensuing toxic chemical burn-off.

The fight they are waging points the road to establishing committees of working people and their allies to pry open the secrets of the rail bosses, how they make profits, their behind-the-scenes deals, and how they endanger the lives of rail workers and those near the tracks.

Socialist Workers Party members Kathie Fitzgerald and Candace Wagner on April 7 met with Tammy and Dave Reidy, who farm just a few miles from East Palestine. Like many of the farms in the area, it's not far from Norfolk Southern tracks.

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Louisville, Indianapolis Teamsters make gains in strike against Sysco



Militant/Amy Husk

In Louisville, retired teacher Mary Thurman joins Sysco pickets April 6 with hot lunches she brought as an act of solidarity. Teamsters voted by 98% to approve new contract.

BY AMY HUSK

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Members of Teamsters Local 89 at Sysco here ratified a new contract April 8 by an overwhelming 98% vote. Some 100 truck drivers, who make food deliveries to area schools and businesses, had been on strike for 13 days over wages, benefits and brutal working conditions.

Teamsters in Local 135 in Indianapolis, who struck Sysco at the same time, also settled, voting 110-10 in favor of a

new five-year contract April 10.

On April 6 Sysco management here threatened workers with arrest for "trespassing" if they didn't move away from the entrance to its warehouse. The union members regrouped and set up their picket line at the end of the street leading to it. Members of amalgamated Teamsters Local 89, who work at a UPS facility on the same street, refused to cross their picket line.

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Support Ukraine independence! Moscow get out of all of Ukraine!

BY ROY LANDERSEN

After 10 months of bloody fighting for Bakhmut, currently the central battle in Ukraine's defense of its independence, Moscow's forces are using scorched-earth tactics to shell more of the city to rubble. They're inching forward against Ukrainian troops holding high-rise buildings in the west. Ukrainian forces, including large numbers of working-class volunteers, are determined to defend Ukraine's sovereignty.

Their resolve stands in sharp contrast to the conditions of Moscow's forces. President Vladimir Putin is sacrificing tens of thousands of Russian soldiers in human wave assaults. The combat potential of the private mercenary Wagner group used by the Russian regime is nearly spent, forcing Moscow to throw more of the army's own elite forces into the fray.

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Democrats leading attack today against constitutional rights working people need

BY TERRY EVANS

The 34 copycat felony charges filed against Donald Trump by Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg are the latest installment in a six-year-long drive by the Democrats and middle-class left to drive him out of politics and destroy his family. In doing so, they continue to deal serious blows to political rights working people need.

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Seniors on Medicaid face eviction from assisted-living homes

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

To the profit-driven capitalist rulers, the lives of retired workers, especially those with disabilities, don't mean much, as there's no longer any profits to be made through exploiting their labor. One reflection of the social and moral crisis of their system is the rising number of assisted-living home residents who are being kicked out because they have nothing left but Medicaid to pay their bills.

Shirley Holtz, 91, was one of 15 residents ordered to vacate Emerald Bay Retirement Community near Green Bay, Wisconsin, after the facility stopped accepting state-sponsored Medicaid payments. Thrown out, her health deteriorated and she died three weeks later.

Continued on page 11

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For first time since 1959, Cuba plays baseball vs. US in Miami

BY JANET POST

For the first time since the 1959 Cuban Revolution, a baseball team representing Cuba played in Miami March 19. They were participating in the World Baseball Classic semifinals against the U.S. team. The Cuban team played with dignity in the face of repeated provocations by a small number of rightists in the crowd, while local authorities looked the other way.

The rightists were especially incensed that in another first, five of the players on the Cuban team are current or former players in Major League Baseball — as well as some from minor league teams — in the United States.

Cuba’s socialist revolution greatly expanded access for working people to art, culture and sports. Unlike in the United States, where star athletes can make millions of dollars a year, in Cuba sports is not a profit-making business and athletes play primarily for the recognition and love of the sport. But capitalist sports leagues in the U.S., seeking to boost profit margins, continuously try to lure Cuban athletes to defect to the U.S., holding out the incentive of big payouts.

Miami is home to the largest population of Cubans in the U.S., and the game was played in a stadium built on the site of the old Orange Bowl in Little Havana. “The crowd was, on the whole, on the Cuban team’s side,” the *Los Angeles Times* had to admit. “Fans roared during pregame introductions and after the Cuban national anthem. They exploded with each hit off a Cuban’s bat.”

Rightists — egged on by some local politicians such as Miami Mayor Fran-

cis Suarez — tried to disrupt the Cuban team and the game. A couple hundred protesters calling themselves the “Assembly of Resistance” rallied outside the ballpark, carrying banners calling the players “Traitors to Their People.”

Inside the stadium counterrevolutionaries hurled insults at Cuban players in the dugout and the outfield bullpen, calling them “murderers.”

“A video has surfaced of a handful of young game-goers throwing beer and cups at Cuban delegation officials,” the *Miami Herald* said.

A March 24 statement by Cuba’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Minrex) gave a more accurate picture of the harassment. “Objects were thrown at the players and their families — which included women, children and elderly persons — and at members of the delegation and the Cuban press corps, and at supporters of the Cuban team.”

When these attacks were reported to stadium police, “no action was taken against the offenders,” and “no attempt was made to enforce the stadium rules for maintaining order and good behavior.”

Three different times individual rightists ran onto the field. Each of the three was arrested on misdemeanor trespassing charges, then rapidly released on bond.

A U.S. State Department official told Reuters the U.S. supports “freedom of expression.”

The Cuban government had to get special permission from Washington to include the U.S.-based Cuban players on Team Asere (“Team of Brothers”), due to regulations that are part



AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko

Cuban players celebrate win in World Baseball quarterfinal against Australia in Tokyo, March 15. Four days later, they played with dignity in Miami semifinal loss to U.S. team. Most fans backed the Cubans, but city officials turned blind eye as rightists tried to disrupt the game.

of Washington’s more than 60-year economic war on Cuba.

Cuba invited players who had emigrated from Cuba with or without visas, but did not invite players who had abandoned the Cuban national team during previous international competitions.

Major league players joining Team Asere were Yoán Moncada and Luis Robert Jr. of the Chicago White Sox; Roenis Elias of the Chicago Cubs; Yoenis Céspedes, who last played with the New York Mets in 2020; and former Los Angeles Dodger Erisbel Aruebarrena, who now lives in Cuba. They were joined by Triple-A players Andy Ibáñez of the Toledo Mud Hens, Miguel Romero with the Las Vegas Aviators and Ronald Bolaños of the Omaha Storm Chasers.

This, and the positive response to the team by the Miami fans, reflects opposition to Washington’s embargo.

Moncada told the press he was “very hopeful that this is a first step for the Cuban players that are in the major leagues to represent their country in future tournaments.”

Cuba lost the game to the U.S. by 14-2. The conduct of the U.S. team was “respectful and consistent” with sporting spirit, the Minrex said. “Its victory was well deserved.”

But “the Cuban team did not participate in the event on equal footing,” the statement noted, citing the “repeated actions of various kinds ex-

pressing hostility” as well as the “direct acts of aggression, threats, vulgar and offensive language.”

When the team returned to Cuba March 20 thousands in Havana welcomed them, cheering as they passed through the streets of the capital and then at an official ceremony at Ciudad Deportiva Coliseum. Washington made it an explicit condition for members of the Cuban team who play in the U.S. that they couldn’t travel to Cuba with their teammates after the game.

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel greeted the team at José Martí International Airport. “You faced a powerful opponent with dignity, and amid a tremendous hostility promoted by haters who wanted to overshadow the sporting spectacle grotesquely and indecently,” he told the players.

Cuba’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the country looks forward to playing in the 2026 World Baseball Classic. “Cuba has no intention of giving up its right to complete on equal terms on U.S. soil.”

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THE MILITANT

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

‘Militant,’ books campaign

Continued from front page capitalism. They didn’t regulate it.” Bastounes described the solidarity actions he participated in to support the strike by Operating Engineers Local 150 at three Chicago-area quarries last year. Some 300 unionists had walked out demanding improved work conditions and safety. Rosenfeld showed Bastounes photographs from *Teamster Rebellion* by Farrell Dobbs, which recounts the class-struggle battles by the Teamsters in Minneapolis in the 1930s. They won a union, relied on themselves and extended solidarity to workers and others exploited by capital. “This is the kind of unions we need today,” Fein said, “ones that rely on the mobilization of the workers — not reliance on capitalist politicians. We need a labor party based on our unions.”

Bastounes renewed his *Militant* subscription and purchased *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us*, *Teamster Rebellion* and *Are They Rich Because They’re Smart?* Discussions like this on the key political questions today with workers, farmers and youth is at the heart of the international spring campaign to get 1,350 subscriptions to the *Militant*, sell 1,350 books by SWP and other revolutionary leaders, and raise \$165,000 for the Militant Fighting Fund. Members of the SWP in the U.S. and Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada and the U.K. are talking to workers on their doorsteps in cities, towns and rural areas; on union picket lines; and at other protests. The eight-week effort runs through May 16.

The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us and 10 other titles published by Pathfinder are available at substantially reduced prices for subscribers. All other Pathfinder books are discounted 20% during the campaign. “*Militant* readers really appreciate the paper’s coverage,” SWP member Joe

Swanson said by phone from Lincoln, Nebraska, April 10, “especially the articles on the fight for control over health and the cleanup in East Palestine, Ohio, following the Norfolk Southern derailment and release of toxic chemicals there. And articles on the Ukrainians’ fight for independence, demanding Russian troops out now.” Lincoln is ahead of schedule through week three of the campaign. “All nine subscriptions we’ve gotten so far have been renewals,” Swanson said, “including at least two from rail workers. “The majority of the books sold have been *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us*,” he said, “through discussions at a coffee shop or while visiting people at their homes.”

SWP campaign in the news

In Fort Worth, Texas, the SWP campaign of Alyson Kennedy for mayor is drawing a lot of interest. “Meet the candidates for Fort Worth mayor: Challengers push platforms ranging from socialism to cultural divide,” headlined an April 6 article in Fort Worth Report, an internet news site. Kennedy “is a perennial candidate who has run for president, senator and Dallas mayor,” the Report said. “Now, she’s taking her campaign to Fort Worth, where she is promoting the platform of the Socialist Workers Party. “The big reason we do this is to be a voice for working people in the elec-

SWP Int’l Educational Conference set June 8-11 in Ohio

BY SETH GALINSKY

The Socialist Workers Party 2023 International Educational Conference is less than two months away. The conference will take place June 8-11 at Oberlin College, in Oberlin, Ohio. The conference will include reports by leaders of the party, classes and discussion that will help deepen participants’ political understanding of the party’s communist continuity and Marxism. It will project the next steps in the party advancing the road forward for working people today.

At the center of the conference will be discussion of the political course of the party presented in *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward* by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes and party leaders Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark. The book includes the political resolution adopted by the party at its December 2022 convention. Waters explains in the preface that the book “is the product of trade union and broader political work over the last year by SWP members responding to deepening cracks in the world order established by the victors of the inter-imperialist slaughter known in the United States as World War II.” A lot has happened in the class struggle and world politics since the book was published in January.



Militant/Dan Fein Pete Bastounes, left, a member of Operating Engineers Local 150 in Morris, Illinois, told SWP member David Rosenfeld April 8 about supporting striking members of his union in Chicago area last year. He renewed his *Militant* subscription, bought three books on special offer.

tions,” Kennedy said. What’s needed “is to build a working-class movement in this country, based on the unions.” “Kennedy calls for a large public works program funded by the government to provide jobs with high wages and build necessary infrastructure, such as hospitals, affordable housing and railroads. Amnesty for workers living in the U.S. illegally is also key to Kennedy’s platform,” the news site reported. “I think any worker who lives and works in the United States should be treated like anybody else,” Kennedy said. “Most workers we talk to have no confidence in the U.S. government

or the politicians to do anything about our situation.” Party members in New York have been campaigning weekly outside the UPS depot in Manhattan, getting the *Militant* into the hands of Teamsters union members. National negotiations between the Teamsters and UPS bosses begin April 17. Their contract expires July 31. To join in the campaign to expand the reach of the *Militant* and books and contribute to the Militant Fighting Fund, see page 10 for the party branch nearest you. Donations to the fund can also be made online at themilitant.com.

We’ve seen more confirmation of what Waters notes are “mounting global conflicts among rival capitalist powers, with explosive ramifications for workers and farmers” the world over. *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us* is also a key part of the party’s campaigning this spring, using its election campaigns, the *Militant* and books by party leaders and other revolutionaries, as well as raising \$165,000 for the Militant Fighting Fund. Members of the Socialist Workers Party and Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada and United Kingdom have been taking this campaign to workers on union picket lines, at protests in solidar-

ity with the fight to defend Ukraine’s sovereignty and defeat Moscow’s invasion; at actions in solidarity with the struggle of working people in Iran for political rights and to defend their class interests; and to those they meet door to door in working-class neighborhoods in cities, towns and rural areas. Party members are meeting workers, farmers and young people who are interested in joining together in the fights to advance the course of the working class toward wresting power out of the hands of the capitalist war makers. Some will be interested in the conference. For more information, see page 10 to contact the party branch nearest you.

‘Militant’ gets around in the prisons

BY SETH GALINSKY

For the first time in decades, the *Militant* now has over 200 subscribers in 66 state and federal prisons across 28 states. Since the paper is often shared as part of what some workers behind bars call the “newspaper train,” it’s safe to say many times over that number of people who got caught up in the capitalist rulers’ criminal “justice” system read the paper every week. The *Militant* is proud of this readership and fights to defend the right of every one of its readers to get and use a paper “published in the interests of working people.” “I like the world news of our struggles against oppression and movement of the Cuban Revolution,” wrote one prisoner from Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, Florida. “I enjoy reading the *Militant* and share it with other prisoners.” “Keep up the good work,” said a prisoner at California State Prison in Corcoran. “Many inmates like your paper!”

The respect for the *Militant* has grown every time prison authorities have attempted to ban the paper, claiming its coverage and editorial opinions are somehow a “threat” to the “security” of their system. That’s especially true in Florida, where the majority of attempts to bar the *Militant* have come down. We have won most of these fights. “The injustice I go through in this place and what I see our capitalist rulers doing, or not doing, just makes my fight for humanity more meaningful,” wrote one Florida prisoner. “I know that what your core values stand for is the purest form of humanity and my heart goes out to all of you at the *Militant* and those fighting for what’s right in the Socialist Workers Party.” The *Militant* offers a special rate for prisoners of just \$6 for six months. Prisoners who cannot afford that can receive a complimentary subscription. Special contributions to the *Militant*’s Prisoners’ Fund help underwrite this effort.

Campaign to expand reach of ‘Militant,’ books, fund
March 18-May 16 (week three)

Country	Sub quota	Subs sold	Books quota	Books sold	Fund quota	Fund received
UNITED STATES						
Atlanta	50	18	50	19	\$9,500	\$3,461
Chicago	100	36	100	77	\$14,000	\$7,447
Cincinnati	50	22	50	33	\$6,000	\$750
Dallas-FortWorth	60	23	60	41	\$5,000	\$2,071
Lincoln	15	9	15	10	\$500	\$272
Los Angeles	90	59	90	74	\$16,000	\$1,862
Miami	45	16	70	56	\$5,500	\$2,238
Minneapolis	70	29	70	38	\$5,500	\$435
N. New Jersey	85	32	85	52	\$7,000	\$2,264
New York	100	38	115	69	\$20,500	\$9,206
Oakland	90	51	90	47	\$15,000	\$3,572
Philadelphia	50	24	50	34	\$6,000	\$370
Pittsburgh	45	17	45	15	\$6,000	\$1,154
Seattle	75	32	75	22	\$14,000	\$400
Washington	50	23	50	24	\$4,500	\$907
Other						
Total U.S.	975	429	1015	611	\$135,000	\$36,409
Prisoners	50	46				
UNITED KINGDOM						
London	40	21	40	34	\$2,450	
Manchester	35	18	40	25	\$1,200	\$360
Total U.K.	75	39	80	59	\$3,650	360
Canada	90	37	90	68	\$12,000	\$3,300
Australia	35	13	35	20	\$6,000	\$2,400
Total	1,225	564	1,220	758	\$156,650	\$42,469
SHOULD BE	1,350	506	1,350	506	\$165,000	\$61,875

Immigrant workers protest gov't disdain after California flooding

BY BETSEY STONE

PAJARO, Calif. — On March 30, dozens of angry victims of flooding here, many of them farmworkers, marched down muddy and debris-covered streets in a protest demanding government aid and equal treatment for undocumented workers. Ramiro Medrano, who helped organize the protest, told reporters that for weeks he had been hearing the same story — people seeking aid being turned away and endlessly calling helplines that weren't answered.

Residents of Pajaro were evacuated in the middle of the night March 11 when a levee broke and river water poured into their town. Since then, people who suffered tremendous losses received little or no government help. They received some donated food, clothing and other assistance, but were basically left on their own.

On April 3, a federal declaration finally made it possible for them to be eligible for Federal Emergency Management Agency assistance programs, including grants for temporary housing and home repairs, as well as low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses. But to get the funds you have to have papers the government considers legitimate, as well as be able to navigate the daunting bureaucratic obstacles put in your way.

When members and supporters of the Socialist Workers Party visited Pajaro April 1, the waters had receded and residents were cleaning up mud-coated yards and making repairs. Piled in front of the houses were giant stacks of muddy and water-soaked mattresses, rugs, book cases and other household items.

We met Alfredo Espinosa and his

family cleaning up the mess left by flooding that had risen up to two feet in their home. He expressed the working-class solidarity seen whenever any disaster strikes.

"It's important for all of us to do this together, from neighbors, to children, to the older folks," he said. "It builds friendship and we are stronger that way." Espinosa and his wife, Elodia, were concerned that the city had not picked up the piles of damaged goods lining the streets. They said rats and raccoons come at night in search of food.

An estimated 67,000 undocumented workers live in the two-county area where Pajaro is located. A lot of the fruits and vegetables that make California a key agricultural center are produced here. Compounding the disaster is the fact that with fields still wet, the farmworkers who grow and pick the crops have had their hours slashed or eliminated.

We spoke with Santiago Moreira, who has worked for decades picking strawberries and other crops. Originally from El Salvador, he benefited from the amnesty fought for and won in 1986 by close to 3 million immigrants under President Ronald Reagan. "I like that you are about doing something," Moreira said when we told him we were campaigning for the unions to get behind the fight for amnesty for immigrant workers.

Erick Narez, who works for the non-profit Salud Para La Gente, showed me the inside of his apartment. It was empty, with the water-logged sheet rock and floors torn out. "Our problem is that we're in Monterey County, not Santa Cruz County where the govern-



Militant/Raul Gonzalez

Santiago Moreira, who has picked strawberries and other crops for 40 years, talks to SWP campaigner Betsey Stone beside belongings destroyed by flooding at his home in Pajaro, California.

ment is better," he said.

"What matters," I said, "is how much working people are organized to fight for what we need. The immigrants who marched for aid and equal treatment here have set an example to be emulated."

Narez is proud that his farmworker father is a member of the United Farm Workers union and said he believes that gaining legal status would aid efforts for

farmworkers to unionize. Another issue, he said, is the need for translation for the many workers who speak Mixteco, Triqui or other indigenous languages.

On our visit here and to the adjacent city of Watsonville, we found interest in the *Militant's* coverage of how the residents of East Palestine, Ohio, are fighting to get control of the cleanup and rebuilding after the disastrous train derailment there.

Hawaii hospital workers continue strike over pay, overtime, staffing

BY NEIL TUPAS

WAIANAE, Hawaii — Nearly 500 nurses' aides, groundskeepers, housekeepers, cooks and other hospital workers have been on strike at Kaiser's three facilities on the island of Maui since Feb. 22, fighting for higher wages, no forced overtime and safe staff-patient levels. The members of United Public Workers

Local 646 voted down the bosses' fourth and latest proposed contract March 20.

The company's wage offer did "not keep up with the inflation rate," the union's state director, Kalani Werner, said in a statement.

Ever since Kaiser took over seven years ago, "the pay was really low for the new people," but in some other departments it's the opposite with new hires paid more than longtime workers, Andy Quema, a cook at Maui Memorial Medical Center, told the *Militant* by phone April 10. "They also cut down on the number of sick days."

"We are going to fight now or we are just going to be stuck like this forever and we are never going to improve," he said. "We can see now how Kaiser works, how they treat their workers. It's all about the money. They are trying to get the least number of workers to do a lot of things."

"There are a lot of Filipinos on the picket," noted Jonathan Cala, an air conditioning mechanic at Maui Memorial Medical Center. "We have Mexicans, Japanese, Thai, Hawaiians, it's a very mixed group. The strike made us stronger. I got to know the people more. It's like a strong friendship, because we are out there and it's not easy day in and day out walking the picket."

"It's not just for us, it's for the future," he said. "To strengthen the other unions and other workers as well."

Send messages of solidarity and contributions to United Public Workers, 841 Kolu Street, Wailuku, Maui, HI 96793 or call (808) 244-0815.

Sysco strikers in Louisville, Indianapolis win new contract

Continued from front page

Sysco is one of the largest food-delivery services, with 330 locations around the world and 170 in the United States. Company bosses have refused to negotiate a nationwide contract, forcing workers who organize in the union to fight for contracts city by city. Drivers here joined the Teamsters last year and this is their first contract.

"There are a lot of safety issues at Sysco," Local 89 President Avral Thompson told me on the picket line April 6. "The trucks are so overloaded drivers can't get to the freight to unload it. We demanded the back of the truck have 18 inches clearance so the driver has room. They refused."

"The Department of Transportation laws say a driver should get 10 hours off work after driving for 14, but the company gets around this

sending out another driver while forcing the original driver to unload the truck," he said. "Sometimes drivers work 18-20 hours."

"I had been driving for 19½ hours the last time I got injured," driver Emanuel Gilliam said. "I was trying to unload the truck and some boxes fell and I got a big gash on my leg. They told me to keep driving and they would get someone else to unload."

"This wasn't the first accident I was involved in. The company wasn't concerned about getting medical treatment for me. They just wanted to drug test me," he said.

Mike Brown told me he has been driving for Sysco for eight years. "Things started getting bad two or three years ago," he said. "They increased the number of cases and the number of stops. We used to carry 600 cases and now they might have us carry as many as 1,200. That means a longer day, sometimes 12, 13 or 14 hours. And a lot more accidents."

Driver William Anderson said only two or three union drivers crossed the picket line.

The new contract includes an immediate pay increase of \$4.35 an hour for delivery drivers and \$5.35 for shuttle drivers. Wages will go up another \$3.50 an hour by the end of the five-year agreement. Health care insurance premiums for workers were reduced to 20% of the cost, compared to 50% before.

As part of the new contract, Sysco Louisville must now hire nine additional delivery drivers and maintain a new minimum staffing level of 96. Anytime there are fewer than 96 drivers, the bosses will have to pay double time for all hours worked in excess of 13.

The drivers got a lot of support during the 13-day strike. Along with Local 135 members from Indianapolis, strikers here went to other Sysco facilities in the San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles and Seattle, where workers honored their picket lines.

After voting up their first union contract, Thompson swore in all the drivers as the newest members of the Teamsters local.

A number of restaurants here refused delivery from trucks driven by scab workers. Many other workers came out to the picket line with food and solidarity, including Teamsters members from UPS, FireKing and Caesars Southern Indiana Casino, and United Auto Workers members who work at the big Ford truck plant here.

"It took us about a year to get to this point, but I don't regret a single minute of it," driver Cory Browning said. "We never gave up fighting, and Local 89 supported us every step of the way. We won a contract that's going to change our lives, and we'll only get stronger from here."

Anthony Dutrow from Cincinnati contributed to this article.

Build May Day actions

The *Militant* has heard about a dozen actions planned for May Day in solidarity with labor battles and for the rights of immigrants, in California, Minnesota, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and in Canada and the U.S. colony of Puerto Rico. The *Militant* will run a calendar listing the main actions in an upcoming issue. Send in reports of actions in your area to themilitant@mac.com.

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—ON THE PICKET LINE—

Australian unionists fight for ban on debilitating silica dust

SYDNEY — Chanting “Union power!” over 1,000 workers marched through the central city here and rallied at the New South Wales state parliament April 5. The protest was part of a national day of action demanding a ban on the manufacture and use of engineered stone products that produce silica dust.

“Silica is killing our workers throughout the country,” said Darren Greenfield, New South Wales state secretary of the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union. This rally kicked off a national campaign to end silica production, he said.

Silica dust is a common hazard when working in construction, tunneling, quarrying, excavating, mining, road construction and some manufacturing. It is a danger when cutting engineered stone to install kitchen and bathroom countertops. The fine particles can cause silicosis, the potentially fatal scarring of the lungs, and lung cancer.

Some 600,000 workers in Australia are exposed to silica dust at work, of whom about 350 will contract silicosis and 230 lung cancer each year.

“Unions were at the forefront of the fight to ban asbestos, and we will be at the forefront of the fight to ban silica stone,” New South Wales assistant secretary of the Plumbers Union, Chris Seet, told the rally.

Large protests by Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union members and other unionists took place the same day in Brisbane, Melbourne and other Australian cities.

At the rallies its leaders also called for cost-of-living wage increases for workers to counter rising inflation. “We are in the midst of the most serious cost-of-living crisis in decades,” CFMEU National Secretary Zach Smith said in a statement released by the union.

—Mike Tucker

UAW members fight for first contract at Chicago-area plant

BEDFORD PARK, Ill. — “We’re here to show the company you can’t treat us like this,” William Gehrig told *Militant* correspondents visiting the picket line

outside the Metal-Matic plant here April 7. Gehrig and some 120 other members of United Auto Workers Local 588 have been on strike at the steel tubing plant here since Feb. 22. They are fighting for their first contract and to stop attacks on pay and health insurance.

Workers voted to join the UAW in June 2021. A year later, with contract talks stalled, PTC Alliance bought the four Metal-Matic plants in Illinois, Minnesota and Ohio. “It’s disrespectful that the new owners came in and demanded a pay cut,” said Gehrig. “This company thinks so little of the people who put out so much work for them.”

PTC wants to force workers to cross-train on several additional machines, or else see their pay slashed by \$4 per hour. They also want to increase the insurance deductibles that workers have to pay.

Marco Aguileta, with 26 years in the plant, said workers voted to join the Teamsters once before, but the company dragged out contract talks for three years, and enough workers became discouraged that the union was decertified. He and others are determined not to let that happen this time.

Aguileta told us the previous owners had imposed a pay cut five years ago, and they’ve had few raises since. “We’re extremely lucky we got the union in before the sale,” he said. “I think we’re going to see even more strikes because the cost of living keeps going up and people revolt against it.”

The strikers are keeping the picket lines up 24/7. Workers from nearby plants and trucks coming out of the neighboring rail yard bring food, water and wood for burn barrels.

Striker Brian Sutton said safety is another big issue, describing several serious injuries that occurred in the plant.

Workers in some departments have been forced to work nearly every Saturday, Sutton’s co-worker, William Dodd, said. “They expect people to come in, as if they don’t have families and kids. One of the managers asked, ‘Why do we have to pay them overtime to come in Saturday?’ It’s the law! They already worked Monday to Friday! We’re not going back in until we get a contract.”

Show solidarity! Visit the picket line



Militant/Mike Tucker

Unionists march in Sydney April 5 demanding ban on manufacture, use of stone products that produce silica dust. These particles can cause silicosis, a potentially fatal scarring of the lungs.

at 7200 S. Narragansett Ave. in Bedford Park. Messages of support can be sent to UAW Local 588, 21540 Cottage Grove Ave., Chicago Heights, IL 60411.

—Naomi Craine

Seattle rally backs mushroom workers fight for union rights

SEATTLE — Over 100 students and unionists rallied together at the University of Washington here March 31 in support of mushroom workers in Sunnyside fighting to win recognition of the United Farm Workers at Greenwood Mushrooms, formerly known as Ostrom. Workers there had voted the UFW in as their union last year, but the bosses refused to recognize it.

The workers renewed their fight for a union contract after bosses fired 140 workers, most of whom were women with years of experience.

On Feb. 14, as Canadian-based Windmill Farms took control of the company, all Ostrom workers were called into a Valentine’s Day meeting and fired. They were given a letter offering “new” employment, but at lower wages, in worse jobs, and saddled with a mandatory arbitration program to settle any labor disputes. Additionally, workers were required to sign new I-9 forms, which a UFW statement explains was “a transparent attempt to use documentation status to intimidate workers who had

been involved in labor organizing.”

The UFW built the rally, explaining the mushroom workers are fighting for a contract with better wages and safe working conditions, and free of threats, discrimination and unjust firings and need support. Some 20 workers and youth from the Sunnyside area caravanned to Seattle for the rally. High school students from both Sunnyside and Seattle joined the action.

The rally and march were organized on Cesar Chavez Day by Students For Farm Workers, a UFW support group at the university. “Thanks to the youth for showing your support,” Isela Cabrera, who works at the mushroom farm, told the rally. “The new bosses are worse than Ostrom. Starting April 1, if you don’t pick 50 pounds of mushrooms an hour, you will lose your job.” Cabrera told the *Militant* the new bosses have also imposed a harsher attendance policy and a new 90-day probation.

“We need your support,” said Greenwood farmworker Ramon Castillo. “We want no discrimination, especially against women. Farmworkers feed the nation. We need to feed our families. We need better conditions, treatment and justice. The union is our strength.”

“We call on Greenwood to recognize the union,” Diana Paula from campus MEChA told the rally. Student Advocates for Immigrant Justice, Progressive Student Union and the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies were among the campus groups that spoke.

In August 2022, Washington state Attorney General Bob Ferguson filed a lawsuit against Ostrom Farms after an investigation found the company had systematically fired 80% of its workers and replaced them with “guest workers” with H-2A visas that offer little protection against the bosses.

Martin Rios, speaking for the UFW, told the rally the union was in solidarity with the H-2A visa workers, fighting for better conditions for all workers.

“After decades of retreat, we are seeing stronger labor resistance in recent years,” Socialist Workers Party member Jacob Perasso told the rally. “Strikes and battles by BCTGM, UMWA and rail workers show you aren’t alone. We need to build broad union solidarity for this fight.”

“The owners may be different, but it is the same farm, the same mushrooms, the same workers and the same struggle for justice,” Teresa Romero, president of the United Farm Workers, said. The union has called a rally April 18 at Greenwood Mushrooms in Sunnyside.

—Michele Smith

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



April 27, 1998

The governments of Britain and Ireland, and the parties participating in the talks in Northern Ireland published an agreement at the conclusion of their negotiations on April 10. The agreement establishes a Northern Ireland assembly, to be elected by proportional representation. It states that there will be “checks and balances to ensure unionists cannot dominate nationalists as they did in the previous parliament, abolished in 1972.”

“The agreement registers a weakening of British rule,” said Pete Clifford, Communist League candidate in the May council elections in London. “It is a tribute to nationalist fighters over the last 30 years that Westminster can no longer rule in the old ways. Now is the time to stand with these fighters for self-determination and press for the withdrawal of the source of violence in Ireland: British troops.”



April 27, 1973

ATLANTA, April 15 — In a unanimous standing vote today, a meeting of more than 300 strikers vowed to continue their strike and boycott against Rich’s department stores. The strike is now going into its third week, with about 1,500 workers, mostly Blacks, participating in the walkout.

The strike is one of a series in Atlanta. All have been initiated and organized by Black workers. In addition to wage demands, an important part has been demands to end racial discrimination in hiring, firing, and promotion practices.

On April 11 Rich’s management agreed to 31 of the 37 demands presented to them, primarily dealing with racial discrimination. Rich’s refused to concede on wage demands, which would cost some of their extremely high profits. The key to winning the strike is the mass picket lines, which have cut deeply into Rich’s sales.



April 26, 1948

Enraged and vindictive, the capitalist government has framed up the United Mine Workers and John L. Lewis on trumped-up charges of criminal and civil “contempt” for their defiance of federal strikebreaking injunctions.

From start to finish, the government has appeared crudely biased in favor of the operators and malevolent in its open hostility to the miners. Spearheading the conspiracy of the government and operators is the Democratic Truman Administration.

It is up to the ranks of every union to take action. Pass resolutions in support of the miners and denouncing the government’s frame-up. Mobilize united labor mass meetings and other protests in every community. Demand that the top union leaders call a United Conference of Labor to map out an immediate action campaign in defense of the miners and to smash the Taft-Hartley Law.

Deepening crisis of capitalism drives political turmoil in Peru

BY RÓGER CALERO

While the protests that erupted across Peru after the Dec. 7 ouster of President Pedro Castillo have receded, the issues behind the social unrest and ongoing political crisis remain.

Castillo was deposed and jailed on charges of “breaching constitutional order” after he tried to dissolve Congress hours before he was to be impeached, saying he would rule by decree. His vice president, Dina Boluarte, was sworn in as the new president with the support of Congress, the courts and the army and police.

Street protests grew to include Indigenous organizations, trade unions, agricultural workers federations and peasant self-defense committees. Boluarte’s government responded with brutal repression that left 67 people killed, including 17 on one day in Puno province Jan. 9, which sparked more public anger.

“They removed him against the will of the people,” José Quispe, a Quechua-speaking potato farmer, told the *Wall Street Journal* March 23. “No one can humiliate us so easily.”

Thousands of Peruvians, many from the country’s poorest southern regions, descended on the nation’s capital, Lima, in January to demand Boluarte’s resignation, immediate elections and a new constitution. To defuse the protests, Boluarte announced elections would be held in 2023, but so far Congress has rejected all such proposals. Meanwhile, Castillo remains in prison and both he and Boluarte face new accusations of campaign finance violations and money laundering.

Peru’s current turmoil is part of a long string of political crises reaching back decades. Every president elected in the last four decades has been impeached, imprisoned or faced criminal charges. The sharp polarization in Peru is part of a trend in bourgeois politics in which rivals resort to impeachments, jailing opponents and dissolution of government branches to stay on top and serve local and international capitalist interests. “Anti-corruption” crusades have been used by capitalist political forces as a pretext to seek the exclusion of their opponents from the

political arena, as happened in the case of Brazilian President Luis Ignacio Lula da Silva in 2018.

Underneath this political crisis in Peru is the capitalist rulers’ incapacity to reverse the deepening calamities the global crisis of capitalism imposes on working people there.

Castillo’s narrow electoral victory in 2021 was seen by millions from rural, working-class and Indigenous populations as the election of a “true man of the people” with high hopes that his presidency would confront the social crisis battering working people. He ran on a platform promising to raise taxes on the rich, increase mining royalties from foreign companies and rewrite the country’s constitution, which dates back to the Bonapartist regime of President Alberto Fujimori in the 1990s.

He campaigned on slogans like “No more poor people in a rich country,” but once in office kept reshuffling his cabinet to appease various blocs of bosses. None of the capitalist political figures in Peru have a program to relieve the crisis workers and peasants face.

Capitalist growth = exploitation

In the recent decades Peru has occupied business news headlines for its “uninterrupted” economic growth, fostering the myth that capitalist growth equals improved conditions for all. In fact, even before the country’s economy turned sharply down in 2020, conditions for the majority of working people have been devastating.

Peru is one of the world’s top producers of copper, zinc, silver and gold, and has significant oil and natural gas resources. It is also a major



Reuters/Sebastian Castaneda

Agricultural workers block Panamericana Sur highway in Villacuri, Peru, Dec. 3, 2020, in protest over unjust agrarian law. Banners demand higher wages, end of mistreatment on the job.

exporter of fruits and vegetables, textiles and fishmeal. The benefits that reach working people, however, are paltry, as Peruvian and foreign capitalists fatten their pockets.

In rural regions of the country 46% live in poverty. Some 16.6 million people — more than half the population — don’t have regular access to enough safe and nutritious food.

The number of Peru’s workers who are “informal” — self-employed and temporary and seasonal workers without benefits — is around 50% of the working population. Of the 234,000 workers in the mining sector, 72% are subcontractors who don’t have a union, receive less pay and benefits and often do the most dangerous jobs.

Workers’ resistance

“There is no stable employment,” a protester in an agricultural workers strike in the southern department of Ica told *El Comercio* in 2020. When we work, “we have a starting time,

but never an ending time,” he added.

Working people in Peru, however, have not accepted these conditions and have fought against austerity and anti-working-class measures imposed by bosses and their governments. Fed up with conditions, protests erupted four months after Castillo took office, sparked by rising fuel prices and spiraling inflation. Prices had jumped by 8.46% a year, the highest in a quarter century. Vegetable oil and sugar went up by 35% to 50%.

A social disaster is currently unfolding as torrential rains have been hitting Peru since February. They have triggered deadly mudslides and floods in the northern regions that tore through shantytowns, destroying homes and livelihoods of thousands of people. These are not casualties of a “natural disaster,” but of an exploitative capitalist system that forces people to live in marginal areas.

This sharp class differentiation is also caused by Peru’s “economic miracle.”

Jailed migrants in Mexico killed in fire as guards watch

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

Thirty-nine migrants seeking to find a place they could live and make a living died in a Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, detention center March 27 when officials there walked away and left them locked up during a fire. Another 27 remain hospitalized.

Most of the men killed had been picked up that day by city authorities in a crackdown on migrants waiting for their U.S. asylum applications to be reviewed or who had been sent back from the U.S. border. The 15 women in the detention center were evacuated when the fire broke out.

Mexican authorities first tried to blame the migrants, claiming they started the fire because they feared they would be deported. But security footage from the detention center came to light, showing men kicking on the bars of a locked door as their cell filled with smoke. Three uniformed guards can be seen walking past without trying to open the cell door. Among the dead were 18 Guatemalans, six Hondurans, seven Salvadorans, seven Venezuelans and one Colombian.

Because of public outrage, three government migration officials and two private security guards have been arrested, along with the person accused of starting the fire. Reuters reports that Mexico’s top migration official, Salvador Gonzalez, had been alerted to the fire and ordered the migrants not be re-

leased. He denies the claim.

Migrants have organized ongoing protests outside the detention center, some wearing placards bearing photos of individuals lost in the fire. On March 30 some who knew him marked the birthday of Joel Alexander Leal Peña, a native of Venezuela who died just shy of turning 21. “I would call it an operation of death,” said his friend Benites. “He committed no crime.”

Ciudad Juárez, across the border from El Paso, Texas, has long been a transit hub, but the deepening crisis of capitalism worldwide and the U.S. rulers’ immigration policies have caused the number of migrants seeking access to the U.S. at the Mexico border to climb sharply.

In March 2020 President Donald Trump approved Title 42, a measure called for by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to counter the spread of COVID-19. The law was expanded by President Joseph Biden to cover migrants from Venezuela, Haiti, Nicaragua and Cuba, while offering small numbers the right to emigrate if they travel by air and have U.S. sponsors. Title 42 guts the right of asylum-seekers who get to the U.S. to stay while their claims are reviewed. Some 2.5 million migrants have been summarily expelled.

Biden signed an order April 10 ending a number of special COVID pandemic programs, but left Title 42 provisions on

immigration in place until May 11. His administration is moving to implement other deterrents applying to migrants.

Under new rules proposed Feb. 21, asylum would be denied to migrants who show up at the U.S. southern border who haven’t first sought residency in a country they passed through. The rule would establish “a rebuttable presumption of asylum ineligibility,” meaning the burden would lay on immigrants to prove why they shouldn’t be denied asylum.

And on the U.S.-Canada border, a new deal was passed March 24 that expands the right of either country’s rulers to turn away migrants at any point on the border, not just at official crossing points.

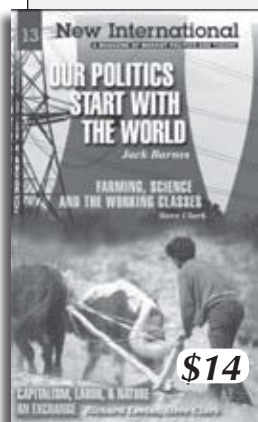
In January the bodies of an Indian family, Jagdish Patel, Vaishaliben Patel and their 3- and 11-year-old children, were found frozen to death 13 yards from the border when they attempted to cross into the U.S.

Under the impact of the deepening worldwide crisis, and in the absence of any serious struggle in their home countries to force changes in the conditions they live under, growing numbers look to the U.S. in the hope they can find work here and make a better life for themselves and their families. U.S. government figures say 2.76 million migrants attempted to cross the southwest border in 2022, a million more than the year before.

Our Politics Start With the World

by Jack Barnes

In *New International* no. 13



\$14

“All the questions posed by the ongoing crises and breakdowns of international capitalism can only be understood clearly, and answered in practice, if we start from a world perspective.”

— Jack Barnes

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Defend Ukraine independence!

Continued from front page

Deaths have skyrocketed among Russian troops in recent months, military veteran Vitaly Votanovsky told the BBC from Armenia. He fled from Russia after receiving death threats for exposing the growing number of gravesites of Russian soldiers in Krasnodar, southwest Russia.

If the Russian people “were to find out the true numbers of battlefield losses, they’d go crazy,” he said.

To replenish its exhausted forces the Kremlin aims to conscript hundreds of thousands more. It hasn’t declared a new mobilization for the same reason it’s hiding the truth about casualties — to try to avert protests by working people.

Several hundred paratroopers from the 331st Guards Parachute Regiment in Kostroma have been killed. The regiment’s casualties from the 14-month invasion are far higher than from the nine-year Soviet occupation of Afghanistan that ended in 1989 when 56 of its soldiers lost their lives.

Two Russian conscripts, Yury Degtyarev and Alexei Selivanov, were sentenced to three years in a penal colony by a Kursk military court Dec. 22, for refusing to fight in battle. A video shows their arrest at a lineup of conscripts in Belgorod. Over 700 similar cases are before military courts, with half already convicted.

Russification of occupied areas

Since the invasion, tens of thousands of Ukrainian children have been taken from their families by Russian forces in occupied areas of Ukraine, under the pretext that they’re being “rescued” from a war zone that Moscow created.

Dasha Rakk, a 13-year-old girl, said she and her twin sister left Moscow-occupied Kherson to attend a summer camp in Crimea for a few weeks last year. On arrival they were told they’d be staying longer. Then officials “said we will be adopted, that we will get guardians,” she told Reuters. Both sisters were part of 30 children who were reunited with their parents April 8.

“We were treated like animals,” said Vitaly, another child from Kherson. He said they were told their parents no longer wanted them. After the disappearance of her son Artem, Natalya Zhornyk and other women traveled to Moscow-occupied Ukraine in March to get him and 15 other children back. A direct car trip is only hours. But they had to make a 3,000-mile journey by traveling through Poland, Belarus and Russia. On arrival in Moscow they were grilled by immigration cops, but eventually got their children back.

Both rescues were assisted by Save Ukraine, an organization founded in 2014 to move children and their families away from intense fighting after Russian forces led pro-Moscow separatists to seize territory in eastern Ukraine.

Moscow has a long record of trying

to brutally Russify countries it tries to subjugate. As part of these efforts today, the Kremlin’s forces have closed down or taken over at least 26 places of worship in Moscow-occupied parts of Ukraine. Some church buildings have been turned over to the Russian Orthodox religion. At least 29 religious leaders have been killed or seized by Moscow’s forces, and 13 places of worship desecrated, looted or destroyed.

Inside Russia Putin has stepped up arrests, trials and long sentences against opponents of his war. In the face of this, some continue to raise their voices. Outside a court in Yefremov, Yelena Tarbayeva was detained and fined \$600 April 6 for holding up a drawing with “Putin eats children” written underneath. She had traveled 600 miles from St. Petersburg to protest the prosecution of Alexei Moskalyov for anti-war protests by both him and his 12-year old daughter, Maria.



Yelena Tarbayeva holds sign, “Putin eats children” at court in Tula region south of Moscow April 6. She traveled 600 miles from St. Petersburg to support Alexei Moskalyov and his daughter, Maria, persecuted and separated for their anti-war views after Maria drew picture like this.

Protests continue against retirement age hike in France

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

AMIENS, France — Thousands of workers in this small city in northern France took to the streets as part of a nationwide day of work stoppages and demonstrations April 6. More than 130 protests were held around the country, involving hundreds of thousands. It was the 11th day of actions called by trade union federations against the government of President Emmanuel Macron’s imposition of a new law raising the retirement age from 62 to 64.

Macron’s decree will go before the Constitutional Council April 14. The unions have called another action the day before. Previous strikes have involved largely workers in the public sector.

“If the government is successful, the employers will redouble their efforts in attacking wages, conditions and rights,” health-center worker Michael Cauwet told the *Militant*.

“The attack on pensions will increase competition for jobs,” said Safia Ouabaio, one of 200 students from the university in Amiens on the march. Youth unemployment in France is already more than 17%.

“In rural Friville-Escarbotin, population under 5,000, the last protest was joined by 1,000,” Kevin Crepin, general secretary of the department of Somme’s Confederation Generale du Travail (CGT) union federation, told the *Militant*.

“We are not dogs,” read a sign outside the MetEx factory here where members of the Confederation Francaise Democratique du Travail (CFTD) are on strike. Bosses at the company, which makes amino acids, are demanding cuts to wages, benefits and rest days for older workers.

In addition to raising the retirement age, Macron is increasing the number of years someone has to work in order to receive the full state pension, from 42 to 43. This hits women who take time out from work to raise a family, and recently ar-

rived immigrants.

Some demonstrators said they support holding a referendum on Macron’s law, a proposal touted by parties on the left of capitalist politics. But this “would only serve to demobilize the union actions that must continue to be the backbone of the fight,” Crepin said.

Joining the protest was Pete Clifford, a rail worker from the U.K. and Communist League candidate for Manchester City Council. He brought solidarity from the Manchester South branch of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers union.

“King Charles didn’t come but you have,” Bryan Duval told Clifford, referring to the cancellation — because of the pension protests — of a visit to France by the British monarch. The rulers in France and the U.K. “pursue their own class interests internationally,” Clifford said. “Workers must pursue ours, too.”

Duval was on the march with his son, Nicolas, both CGT members at the local Mersen electronics plant. “The factory of 300 is running today, but we come

with the backing of workers there,” he said. “Workers see that the problem is more than the pension reforms.”

Clifford was welcomed by Christophe Lecomte, a secretary of the CGT rail workers union in Amiens.

“Rail workers across the U.K. have held 18 days of work stoppages,” Clifford told Lecomte. “Other workers have taken action too, including nurses for the first time in 106 years! The focus may be different from France’s but the challenge is the same: How to keep expanding the numbers involved in the union actions.”

Countless protesters took photos of Clifford’s solidarity sign. An article on his participation was run in the *Courrier Picard* newspaper.

Clifford found interest in the protest march from co-workers on his return to Manchester. “CGT rail workers joined our picket in Manchester last August,” said Clayton Clive, secretary of Manchester South RMT union branch. “It’s important we give them solidarity.”

“Just like here the fight is on for building the actions,” Clifford said.

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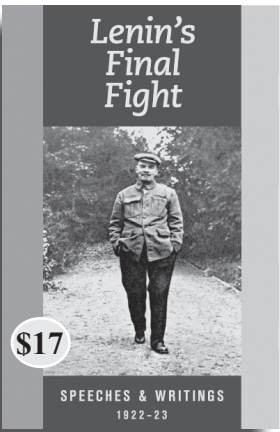
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Nine years after IS slaughter, Yazidis fight for rights in Iraq

BY ÖGMUNDUR JÓNSSON

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region, Iraq — At the end of March, Yazidis gathered on the grounds of Lalish Temple in northern Iraq for a religious ceremony, the extraction of olive oil for illuminating the temple. It was a reminder that almost nine years after the reactionary Islamic State attempted to wipe them out, the Yazidi people are not going away.

Yazidis are an ethnic minority that practice their own ancient religion. Hal-west Karim, who works on aiding their rebuilding efforts, spoke to the *Militant* at the Erbil International Book Fair in March. She described murderous atrocities committed by IS as it conquered swaths of northern Iraq and Syria in August 2014. “At Kocho and other villages they killed all the men and kidnapped the women and children,” she said.

IS left 80 mass graves during its rampage.

Nearly 1,300 Yazidis were killed and over 6,000 people, mostly women and children, taken and forcibly “converted” to Islam, then pressed into domestic and sexual slavery. Young boys were indoctrinated to try to turn them into IS soldiers. Hundreds of thousands fled to the Kurdistan region of Iraq where most still live in camps. Over 2,700 remain unaccounted for and many families claim they are still in captivity.

The attempted genocide was the culmination of years of attacks by Islamist terror groups, which gained ground in Iraq in the aftermath of the 2003 U.S.-led invasion and occupation. Initially, both Iraqi and Kurdish government forces stood by as the Islamic State attack unfolded. “They abandoned the Yazidi people,” Karim said. “That was the main reason IS could do it. People were begging for weapons.”

Over a year later, a coalition of Syrian Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG), Iraqi Kurdish peshmerga (under Kurdistan Regional Government command) and Yazidi Protection Forces retook the Yazidi town Sinjar. They were backed by Washington’s air assaults, which destroyed large parts of the town, a preview of the 2017 bombardment of Mosul and Raqqa, which sealed the fate of the IS territory.

Yazidis fight to rebuild

“When I went to Sinjar in 2018,” Karim said, “the men told me they’re sleeping at day and staying on guard during the night to protect the women.” Elsewhere, Yazidi families have taken abandoned land and buildings and started to rebuild.

Sinjar is among the areas of Iraq under dispute between the federal government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government in Erbil. Both governments have been vying for influence there, along with the Iranian and Turkish governments and a range of militias, including those backed by Tehran.

Yazidis have made efforts to move back to their hometowns and rebuild despite widespread destruction, lack of basic infrastructure and ongoing clashes between the forces intervening there. Iraqi government forces launched attacks on Sinjar last year, prompting residents to demand the withdrawal of all armed groups.

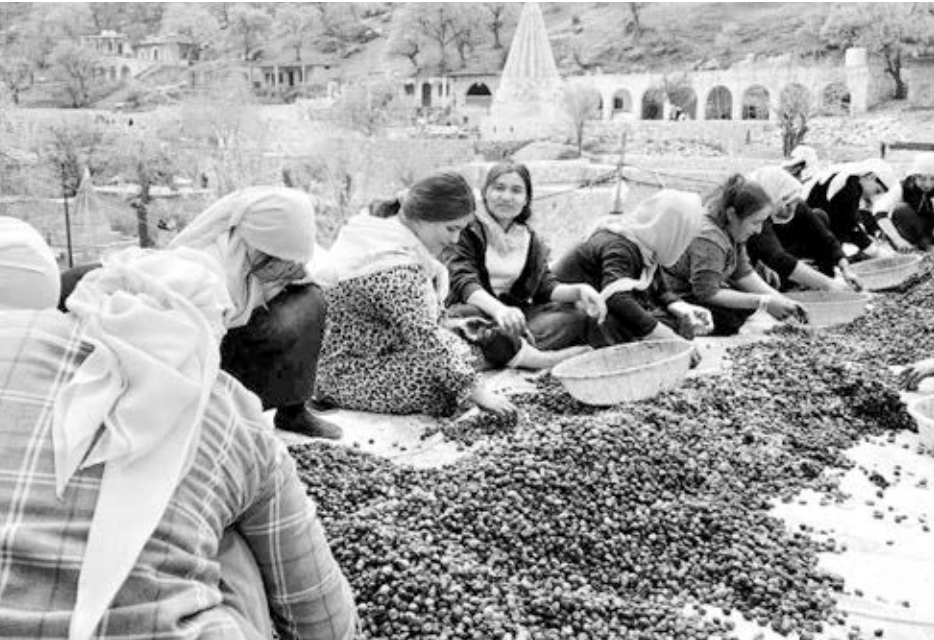
“Yazidis don’t feel safe,” Karim said. “There is little support socially or mentally. What they’ve been through is traumatic.”

Karim said authorities and international organizations justify pulling back from providing support by saying the area is unsafe. “But that’s no real answer.”

Two years after the Iraqi government approved a law providing financial support to victims of IS, only some 400 women have received payments. “We have been waiting for two years without receiving a single dinar,” Laila Shammo, a Yazidi woman who with her two daughters escaped IS captivity in 2015, told KirkukNow. “We feel that things are going very slowly.”

With these obstacles to rebuilding in Sinjar, and few openings to integrate into other communities, many Yazidis want to emigrate, Karim said. Some 150,000 fled to Germany from 2015, but that route of emigration has declined sharply in recent years.

“In the Kurdistan region, all camps for others who fled violence elsewhere in Iraq are being closed,” with people being assisted by the Iraqi government to return to the areas



Yazidi women preparing for celebration at Lalish Temple in northern Iraq, at the end of March.

they fled. Not the Yazidis.

“Many people in Iraq think this is just a country for Muslims,” Karim said. “But this is the Yazidis’ land! They should be helped to rebuild.”

Islamic State also targeted Christian, Shabak and Turkmen minorities. “Christians never thought about leaving Iraq before, but after the IS attack that changed,” Karim said. Before 2003, there were up to 1.5 million Christians in Iraq. Less than 300,000 remain.

Karim also spoke about efforts to reintegrate women who were kidnapped by IS, especially those who had children as a result of sexual slavery. According to Yazidi tradition, any woman who has

sexual relations with non-Yazidis or is raped by a non-Yazidi is excommunicated. While religious figures said they would welcome the kidnapped women back, the same did not apply to their children. Conversion is “impossible,” a religious leader recently told Al-Monitor. Under Iraqi law, a child is considered Muslim if the father is Muslim.

“This is a big issue,” Karim said. “There is a campaign called ‘My mother’s name is my name.’ It calls for the right of women to give children their name if they want to keep them.” She said the Kurdistan Regional Government should change the law, regardless of what authorities in Baghdad do.

Despite threats, Tehran can’t stop expressions of opposition

BY SETH GALINSKY

The reactionary capitalist government in Iran is trying to reimpose its dress code for women and beat back the widespread political debate that exploded after the hated morality police took Zhina Amini, a young Kurdish woman, into custody, leading to her death. But opposition to the regime’s attacks on democratic and political rights continues to percolate.

The regime had backed off from enforcing the dress code — which requires women to completely cover their hair — after five months of mass “Women, life, freedom” protests. These actions — brutally attacked by the regime — have largely subsided.

More than 22,000 protesters were arrested and more than 500 killed by the Shiite-based regime’s repressive forces, especially in areas populated by oppressed nationalities and Sunni Muslim minorities, including the Kurdish and Baluch regions. The government claims that most of those arrested in the protests have been released.

But the government’s threat to reassert the dress code is not having the desired effect.

A video of an attack in Mashhad on

a young woman who was not wearing a hijab and her mother, whose hair was partially exposed, went viral March 31. They had been followed into a store by a man who insisted they cover up their hair. When they turned away from him, he picked up a bucket of yogurt and dumped it on their heads.

He was pushed out of the store by store workers outraged at his thuggery.

The next day the thug was arrested for “disturbing public order,” as were the two women. Store owner Mahmoud Hajarpour was arrested and then released on bail and his store briefly shut down.

Flowers for opposing regime thug

But Amir Shahla, a former member of the Mashhad City Council, says “customers from near and far have gone to Mr. Hajarpour’s dairy and the shop is full of flowers, chocolates and sweets” in an outpouring of support for the store owner’s defense of the women.

The regime responded, with Iran’s Judiciary announcing that “unveiling is tantamount to enmity with our values.” Women violating the diktat



Gathering in Kamiyaran city, Kurdistan province, a few days before Iranian New Year at grave of Fawad Mohammadi, killed in November protest. People brought gifts to cemeteries around Iran on New Year’s Day to honor those murdered at recent actions and protests in 2018, 2019.

“will be punished and will be prosecuted without mercy.”

Despite the regime’s repeated threats to enforce the code, women without hijab joined in dancing along side their hijab-clad friends and relatives during the 13-day celebration of Nowruz, the Iranian and Kurdish New Year, with little controversy. Nowruz began March 21, marking the beginning of the Iranian year 1402. On the last day people all over the country join in outdoor festivals.

The Nowruz tradition includes visits to the graves of loved ones. This year they reflected the deep opposition to the bourgeois clerical regime’s repression. On March 21 a stream of people brought flowers, pastries and other gifts for the dead, commemorating those killed in the recent protests or executed by the regime, as well as for those killed during mass protests in cities and rural areas across the country in 2018 and 2019.

At two cemeteries just outside Tehran, handwritten notes were placed on the graves. “Very soon, instead of tears of mourning, we will pour out tears of joy, tears of victory,” read one.

“The year 1402 is the year of consciousness and diligence,” read another. At one grave there was a composite photograph of some 40 youth who have been killed by the regime.

At the gravesite of Zhina Amini in Saqqez in the Kurdish region, scores of mourners put their hands in the air and chanted “Women, life, freedom”

in Kurdish along with slogans demanding equal rights for Kurds and other oppressed nationalities.

28 weeks of protest in Baluchistan

The 28th consecutive week of mass protests after Friday prayers took place April 7 in Zahedan in Sistan-Baluchistan. The province is home to the Baluch people, one of the Iran’s oppressed nationalities. Prominent Sunni cleric Maulana Abdul-Hamid has repeatedly called for freeing all political prisoners, an end to torture and for equal rights for all who live in Iran.

On March 31 Abdul-Hamid noted that during mass protests in Israel against the government’s judicial “reform” plan, demonstrators were not shot by the police. But in Iran, he said, peaceful protesters are fired on with “live ammunition and shotguns.”

On April 7 Abdul-Hamid called the beating days earlier of Palestinian worshipers by Israeli police at the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, “disrespect to God’s house.” But he added, anyone who is extreme “creates problems for himself.”

Unlike the Iranian government, which calls for the destruction of Israel, Abdul-Hamid calls for negotiations and a “fair agreement” that would lead to peace between Israel and an independent Palestinian state. “Some have criticized why you say peace,” he said. But “we have said a just peace, where rights are respected.”

Teachers in Iran demand wage hikes, free political, union prisoners

The Iranian government arrested Mohammad Habibi, a leader of the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers Trade Unions, April 5, at the school where he teaches in Shahrivar near Tehran. He was just released from jail on Feb. 8 after nearly a year’s imprisonment. This is at least the fourth time the regime has arrested him.

Cops threatened to beat his wife and then took him to the infamous Evin Prison in Tehran.

Teachers, retirees and other workers have been holding protests across the country demanding higher wages amid an official inflation rate of at least 40%. Workers say the real inflation rate is much higher.

“Free Mohammad Habibi!” teachers chanted outside the Department of Education of Kermanshah Province April 6 during one of many protests nationwide for higher wages that day. Teachers were outnumbered by police at the protest in Alborz province and were dispersed.

The Teachers Union in Tehran stated that Habibi has committed no crime except “insisting on the right to organize the teachers union without destroying others.” Other leaders of the union have also been arrested.

— S.G.

Legless veteran set example in battle against McCarthy witch hunt

The Case of the Legless Veteran by James Kutcher is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for April. In the decade after World War II, the Socialist Workers Party, Communist Party and others were targeted as part of the government's expanding anti-working-class witch hunt. Kutcher, an SWP member and Veterans Administration worker who lost both legs in World War II, became part of growing resistance to the U.S. rulers' assault on the unions and constitutional rights. The book records the battle to win back his job and pension, supported by thousands of unionists and other supporters of political liberties. The excerpts below are from the book's preface and Kutcher's final chapter, "Summing up." Copyright © 1973 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

This book tells the story of a battle for workers' rights and civil liberties during the height of the cold war witch-hunt in the United States.

In 1948 James Kutcher, a worker who had lost both legs in World War II, was fired from his job as a clerk with the Veterans Administration. The stated reason was Kutcher's membership in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), which had been included on a list of "subversive" organizations compiled



James Kutcher, right, with George Novack at news conference Sept. 1, 1948, in Newark, New Jersey, launching campaign to win back his job and push back against government attacks.

by the U.S. attorney general the year before. Later the government revoked Kutcher's disability pension and tried to evict him from public housing.

In response to these attacks, defenders of democratic rights launched the Kutcher Civil Rights Defense Committee, winning support from hundreds of organizations and thousands of individuals holding many different political views. After a long and hard-fought battle, the case ended in victory in 1956 when Kutcher was ordered reinstated in his job. He subsequently was awarded back pay.

This eight-year fight was waged from within the labor movement — the central target of the McCarthy-era witch-hunt — reaching out broadly to all supporters of democratic rights. During a period of political victimizations and of relative quiet within the unions, the Kutcher case dealt a blow to the witch-hunters and opened valuable space for working-class fighters to function within the labor movement.

The Case of the Legless Veteran was first published in 1953, as the fight was still going on. In 1973, when the book was republished, two chapters (18 and 19) were added to complete the story. The following year the attorney general's list of subversive organizations — one of the justifications for the attack on Kutcher — was abolished. In 1986, after a thirteen-year court fight, a federal judge declared in a landmark ruling that

the government's massive, decades-long efforts to spy on and disrupt the SWP were illegal and constituted a violation of the socialists' constitutionally protected rights. James Kutcher remained a member of the Socialist Workers Party until 1983; he died in 1989.

In today's world of wars, capitalist depression, and deepening social conflicts, the fight for democratic rights is a vital part of the struggle by working people internationally to defend their interests. *The Case of the Legless Veteran* offers an invaluable account of one such battle that ended in victory.



BY JAMES KUTCHER

Our victory, partial though it was, also heartened and gave ammunition to those who had not been directly victimized themselves but wanted to stop the repression. It tended to undermine the morale and self-confidence of at least some of the witch-hunters and their followers or dupes. And it had a healthy impact on the great mass of the people who stood in the middle and had not actively committed themselves to either side, whose support both sides were trying to win.

Another factor that must not be overlooked in drawing up any balance sheet relates to the overall aim of the witch-hunt, which was to root out or prevent the development of movements that might oppose Washington's plans to make the

world safe for capitalist investments. A corollary was the complete annihilation, if possible, of parties or groups seeking to pose a socialist or communist alternative in the United States. This last objective came closer to being reached than many young people today realize.

The Socialist Workers Party, the Communist Party and all other radical groups in this country were very badly damaged. Part of their members and supporters were intimidated, and dropped away. Another part became demoralized, and dropped away. Worst of all was the isolation that surrounded them. Inability to get a response to their work strengthened the internal dangers that can destroy any radical movement: opportunist adventures to break out of isolation and sectarian adaptation to isolation.

Although both its ranks and influence were seriously reduced by the witch-hunt, my party managed to survive, with its revolutionary perspectives and integrity intact, until the 1960s when the political climate improved and it began to grow again. ... [O]ne of the elements enabling it to survive was the defense campaign waged around my case, which, although it was "only" a civil liberties case, could not be separated from the right of revolutionary socialists to exist and function legally. At the very least it enabled us to break through the shroud of silence and reach millions of people with arguments in favor of that right. If it did nothing else, even if it had not ended with my winning back my job, this alone would have justified our defense work. I know of additional results, because some people have told me that their first interest in socialism was aroused by curiosity about my case and the ideas for which I was being persecuted. ...

[O]ur resistance to the witch-hunt undoubtedly had some effect on the calculations of the ruling class. ... How much effect our resistance had I cannot say. ... [I]t was not the sole cause of the change that was made in the mid-1950s and may not have been the main cause. The ruling class decided on that change, in my opinion, only after a careful consideration of all factors convinced it that a continuation of the witch-hunt along the lines initiated after the war was neither necessary nor in its own best interests.

April

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End US rulers' economic war against the Cuban Revolution!

Why are the U.S. rulers waging an economic war against the people of Cuba?

“Not fear of the Cuban Revolution,” Fidel Castro told a meeting of a million in Havana in 1962. “But fear of the Latin American revolution.”

Fear that workers and farmers elsewhere in the Americas would be inspired by the socialist revolution made by Cuban workers and farmers. Washington wants to crush the example they set of wresting political power from the capitalist class, taking over the running of industry, the land and the banks, of transforming themselves and of forging a communist leadership. That’s why the brutal U.S. embargo continues to this day, imposed by *every* Democratic and Republican president over the last 63 years, to try to silence the example set by the Cuban people.

The embargo not only prevents Cuba from purchas-

ing materials directly from the U.S. It also blocks foreign companies from selling to Cuba anything that has as little as 10% U.S.-origin components. U.S. threats of retaliation against foreign banks make it hard for Cuba to open up bank accounts and pay for what it needs, even if there are no “U.S. components.”

It’s a big part of why there are shortages of oil, medicines, fertilizers and other basic necessities, causing tremendous hardship in Cuba. Cuba’s inclusion on Washington’s odious list of State Sponsors of Terrorism prevents Havana accessing credit.

The U.S. rulers’ drive against Cuba has been worsened by the soaring prices and drop in production that mark the world capitalist crisis, as well as the consequences of Moscow’s war on Ukraine. The subsequent hardships are reflected in the rising number of Cubans who are emigrating.

This week’s *Militant* notes even baseball games aren’t immune from attacks. Despite the disruption and harassment facing Cuban players from rightist thugs — who were given free rein in the Miami stadium — the Cuban team played with dignity in their historic match against the U.S.

In fighting to end the U.S. embargo of Cuba we’re fighting against the same class enemy assaulting us at home, and for the interests we share with working people everywhere. Building a revolutionary working-class party to lead millions to take power from the U.S. rulers is at the center of what working people here can contribute to ending their economic war against Cuba.

Join in building support for the fight to bring a halt to Washington’s assaults against the people of Cuba! Help win more working people here to protest the embargo!

Attack on political rights working people need

Continued from front page

From our own experiences millions of workers know that the bosses disregard our rights and constitutional protections when they go after us and our unions. And whenever one of the two capitalist parties tosses these rights aside in an effort to deal blows to their opponents, the same and worse will be done against our class and anyone who the rulers think stand in their way.

After unsealing his indictment, Bragg was asked what exact laws were broken. “The indictment doesn’t specify it because the law does not so require,” he replied, tossing aside the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution that gives anyone accused of a crime the right “to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation,” in order to defend themselves.

Bragg’s case, and the entire drive of the Democrats, is a classic example of picking a target and then finding a “crime” to pin on them. This has driven every single one of the Democrats’ moves against Trump — from the FBI’s spy operations and fake “Russian control” probe against his 2016 campaign to the armed raid on his Mar-a-Lago home last year.

Bragg claims “Trump repeatedly and fraudulently falsified New York business records to conceal criminal conduct that hid damaging information from the voting public.” To cover up the lack of any legal standing for the charge, and make his case look weightier, he turned them into 34 separate counts. But they’re all for the same “crime,” strung out by listing every invoice, check stub and statement recording monthly payments made by Trump in 2017 to his former lawyer, Michael Cohen, which Bragg says were repayment for “hush money” paid to Stephanie Clifford.

Bragg tries to twist these payments into “illegal campaign contributions,” saying they were aimed at suppressing stories that would have a negative impact on Trump’s 2016 campaign.

If the case against Trump doesn’t get thrown out — as it should be — hearings are slated to begin in December and run through the 2024 campaign. This is designed to feed the liberal media with fodder to try to make Trump *the* issue in the race.

The indictment is built on the frame-up plea bargain deal prosecutors forced on Cohen to get him to turn on Trump. Prosecutors threatened to charge him with crimes that carry up to 65 years in prison. His lawyer, Lanny Davis, described how prosecutors bullied him. “On Friday afternoon he was given an ultimatum: Either plead guilty to everything. We’re not even going to show you the tax documents. Or, by Monday morning we’re going to indict you and your wife.” This story rings all too true to many workers who face similar experiences at the hands of prosecutors when we’re

caught up in the capitalist “justice” system.

Cohen now denies the tax evasion charges he pled guilty to in 2018.

For good reason, the Constitution demarcates a clear separation of powers between federal and state governments — and their prosecutors. Bragg is turning this protection on its head, claiming he has the power to prosecute a federal campaign finance violation after federal prosecutors rejected doing so.

Commentators in the liberal press and middle-class left web outlets are filled with glee about the indictment. *New York Times* columnist Pamela Paul writes that it’s good regardless of the outcome, because Trump should have been stopped from running way back in 2016, not for any crime, but for “Lying. Cheating, personally and professionally,” and for “sexism.”

Writing in the Communist Party’s online People’s World, Mark Gruenberg claims Trump’s payments to Cohen were an “obstruction of justice.” He throws in charges that Trump “instigated” the Jan. 6, 2021, “insurrection, invasion, and coup d’etat” and should be barred from ever running again.

‘Setback for the rule of law’

But others are wary. Their concern is to defend the capitalist legal setup, which rests on a veneer of impartiality that is used to mask the class character of the courts. The indictment is a “setback for the rule of law and established a dangerous precedent for prosecutors,” Jed Handelsman Shugerman writes in the *Times*. Many Never-Trump conservatives also oppose the indictment — not because they’re outraged by its flagrant abuse of rights, but because they worry it might help Trump get the Republican nomination.

The indictment is accelerating the abuse of subpoenas and the courts by both bosses’ parties against each other. The Republican-dominated House Judiciary Committee summoned Mark Pomerantz, a former New York prosecutor in the Trump investigation, who wrote a “tell all” book complaining about Bragg’s handling of the case. In response, Bragg filed a lawsuit against committee Chair James Jordan April 11, demanding a judge block the subpoena.

Bragg says Congress has no right to look into his investigation, even though it’s improperly based on federal statutes.

In response to the liberals’ claims that Jan. 6 rioters broke the law by disrupting Congress, Tennessee’s Republican-led House expelled Democratic representatives Justin Jones and Justin Pearson, who joined a protest over gun control and disrupted a session of the legislature March 30. Jones has since been reinstated.

The liberal-led assault on constitutional rights of Jan. 6 defendants continues apace. A federal appeals court ruled April 7 that prosecutors could now charge hundreds with “obstruction of government proceedings” for the riot. If convicted they face up to 20 years in prison, as opposed to just a year for trespassing.

Safeguarding presumption of innocence, free speech, separation of powers and many more constitutional protections is crucial for workers and our unions. Regardless of who the capitalist parties target today, we are the real target.

Seniors face eviction

Continued from front page

Holtz had been living there for four years. “She had dementia and was enrolled in hospice care,” reported the April 6 *Washington Post*. She worked much of her life as a secretary, raising her family in the nearby small town of Algoma. Like almost all older workers in assisted living, she lost her entire life savings to the facility’s bosses to pay for her stay there. So she turned to Medicaid to pay for the last two years.

The federal government does not provide any data on the frequency of these evictions. But about 4.4 million people have some form of long-term care paid for by Medicaid, and nearly 150,000 are in U.S. assisted-living facilities. And today a wave of 73 million “baby boomers” is hitting an age where this is likely to be their future, as they need more day-to-day care than families can provide.

At the same time, President Joseph Biden’s administration has announced the COVID-19 pandemic is over — despite thousands of hospitalizations and over 1,500 deaths weekly — meaning state governments are tossing some 15 million people off Medicaid.

Evictions have become common in many states. In Wisconsin, at least four facilities have canceled Medicaid managed-care contracts in recent months. One of them being Cedarhurst of Madison, where 28 residents were called together in a group meeting and told to evacuate, the *Post* reported.

“Residents were in tears to hear they had to find another place to live,” Elizabeth Burnette, 80, told the *Post*. “Most of us are incapacitated in some way, with walkers and in wheelchairs or mobile beds.”

Nursing homes drive for profit

The Cedarhurst facility is owned by a real estate investment firm, Diversified Healthcare Trust. Bosses there decided to dump Medicare patients, allowing 100% of the spaces at the Madison facility to be filled at much more profitable private pay rates.

The median operating profit for U.S. assisted-living facilities in 2019 was a huge 29%, the National Investment Center for Seniors Housing & Care reports.

For many of those seeking a spot in assisted-living facilities, they’re told that if they pay full rates until all of savings are exhausted, and anything remaining, like their homes, is turned over, then they can remain under Medicaid. But contracts drawn up by facility owners bury in fine print exceptions, including the “right” to change their policies at will.

“It’s appalling,” Megan Brillault told the *Post*. Her mother, Nancy Brillault, was evicted from HarborChase of Shorewood after spending most of her \$120,000 savings. “They said, ‘Here, let us take your money, all your life savings, and you can live here forever,’ and 10 months later they’re saying, ‘We miscalculated, and we are no longer taking Medicaid beds.’”

Owners of assisted-living facilities promote their facilities as a better and healthier alternative to the wretched conditions facing working people in many nursing homes. While federal law protects Medicaid beneficiaries in nursing homes from eviction, this protection doesn’t apply to assisted-living facilities.

Isn’t capitalism great?

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