

THE MILITANT

INSIDE
Cuban Embassy official speaks in L.A., protests US gov't sanctions
— PAGE 2

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE VOL. 87/NO. 18 MAY 8, 2023

Drop all charges filed against the African People's Socialist Party!

BY TERRY EVANS

Striking a serious blow at constitutional protections, Department of Justice prosecutors got a federal grand jury in Florida April 18 to indict three members of the African People's Socialist Party and Uhuru Movement on trumped-up charges of being "foreign agents." This pretext has been used by the government for decades to go after militant workers, Black rights fighters, the Socialist Workers Party and others.

Omali Yeshitela, Penny Joanne Hess and Jesse Nevel are charged with acting "as an agent of a foreign government and foreign officials, to wit, the Russian Federation," and doing so "without prior notification to the Attorney General." Along with former APSP member Augustus C. Romain, now a member of Black Hammer, they are also charged with defrauding the U.S.

Three Russians — no longer in the U.S. — are named in the indictment. Federal prosecutors claim Aleksey Sukhodolov and Yegor Popov work for the

Continued on page 9

Back public workers on strike all across Canada

Workers fighting for pay raise to offset inflation



Militant/John Steele

Members of Agriculture Union in Public Service Alliance of Canada picket Port of Montreal April 24, part of strike by 155,000 Canadian federal government workers.

BY JOHN STEELE

MONTREAL — In one of the largest labor actions in Canada in decades, more than 155,000 federal government workers, members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, set up picket lines

from one end of the country to the other April 19 to fight for wage increases to match inflation.

The strikers include firefighters, port workers, maintenance staff and administrative personnel across a number of government departments, as well as 35,000 members of the Union of Taxation Employees, a division of Public Service Alliance, who work for the Canada Revenue Agency.

About 47,000 of the PSAC members deemed "essential workers" by the union and the government, such as those distributing unemployment benefits and pensions, remain on the job. Income tax processing toward the May 1 tax deadline will be affected, as will the issuing

Continued on page 4

Hey, they shrunk the Doritos, and Twinkies, and ...

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

As food prices keep rising, many companies are seeking to maximize profits through "shrinkflation," which some workers call "skimpflation," where they fiddle with the packaging and you end up paying the same price but get less.

Bosses have been doing this for years — yogurt cups have shrunk from 8 ounces to 5.3 — but with growing inflation the practice has spread more widely.

General Mills has shrunk its "family size" cereal boxes from 19.3 ounces to 18.1. Gatorade replaced its 32-ounce bottle with a 28 ounce one — 14% less. A company spokesperson tried to paint this as a big help

Continued on page 4

East Palestine working people fight for control over their lives

BY TONY LANE

EAST PALESTINE, Ohio — Workers, farmers and small-business people here continue to press for action to clean up the area and protect their health after the Feb. 3 Norfolk Southern train derailment, fire and burn-off of toxic vinyl chloride. They're determined to have a say in what is done and to demand the rail bosses and government bear responsibility for it.

VINYL CHLORIDE SPILLED IN 2012 NJ DERAILMENT TOO

— see page 6

Kathie Fitzgerald led a team of unionists and *Militant* worker-correspondents to meet up with farmers in the area. In Petersburg, Ohio, they met with Trish Withers, who runs Honey Creek Farms along with her husband. She also drives a school bus full time. She told us some of the barriers farmers face. Withers said she had been contacted by United Dairy, which purchases milk the farm produces, and told she needed to get

Continued on page 7

Join campaign to expand reach of 'Militant,' books

BY TERRY EVANS

"None of the politicians care about working-class people," office worker Bernadette Keating told Communist League member Ögmundur Jónsson when he knocked on her door in Manchester, England, April 23. "Not just the

Continued on page 3

Back Ukraine independence! Moscow out of all of Ukraine



Tass/Kirill Kukhmar

The Putin regime in Russia has banned demonstrations against its invasion of Ukraine, but a rally against the rise in utility bills drew 300 people in Novosibirsk, 2,000 miles east of Moscow, in March. Similar protest actions were held in other cities, free of cop harassment.

BY ROY LANDERSEN

As the first large-scale war in Europe since World War II grinds on, tensions between the world's major capitalist powers grow and the world order imposed by Washington after the second imperialist slaughter is being shaken. At the same time Moscow faces fierce resistance by working people in Ukraine, it also faces growing sentiment against the war from

soldiers and workers at home.

China's rulers seek to use Moscow's invasion to advance their own interests, against both Washington and the Vladimir Putin regime in Russia. Beijing gives economic but not open military support to the Kremlin. It blames the U.S.-led NATO alliance for the war as it postures as a "peacemaker."

But Beijing is also concerned that its

Continued on page 6

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Cuban Embassy official speaks in L.A., protests US gov't sanctions

BY LAURA GARZA

LOS ANGELES — Alejandro García del Toro, deputy chief of the Cuban Embassy in Washington, D.C., and Javier Levy Hernández, a first secretary there, spoke to a community meeting of 75 people at the International Association of Machinists union hall in the Wilmington neighborhood here April 18, describing the impact of the more than 60-year-long U.S. economic war on Cuba.

“Over 240 added sanctions were imposed on Cuba under Donald Trump and President Joseph Biden didn’t remove them,” García said. “We are suffering from lack of medicine, loss of trade partners. And because Cuba was put on the list of state sponsors of terrorism we can’t access the international banking system.”

The U.S. economic, financial and trade sanctions make it “difficult to sustain our health care system” and “have caused a long-term loss of tourism income.” García noted that in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, Cuba’s facility that produced oxygen for hospitals broke down. The Biden administration turned down their request for a license to import oxygen.

The U.S. rulers have never forgiven the Cuban people for overthrowing the U.S.-backed Fulgencio Batista dictatorship, bringing to power a government of workers and farmers, and making a socialist revolution.

Amid the tightening of U.S. sanctions, Cuba developed its own vaccines for COVID, which it used to vaccinate the overwhelming majority

of the population and made them available to other countries. “We are continuing with life, we approved a new family code, our biotechnology industry continues,” García said.

The sanctions make it impossible to import any product that has as little as 10% material made in the U.S. “The U.S. claims their sanctions are bilateral, but this isn’t true. It affects the world because other countries won’t put at risk their relations with the American economy” to trade with Cuba, García said. “Even friendly countries can’t sell us things we need because of this.”

Kevin Kucera, Machinists District Lodge 190 area director, welcomed the audience of unionists, community activists and others to the meeting. He said his local has donated \$1,000 toward helping to fund a trip for unionists and others to visit Cuba so they can see the revolution for themselves.

Inlandboatmen: ‘End the sanctions’
“The Inlandboatmen’s Union and I stand in solidarity with all of you this evening as we continue to denounce the United States view on Cuba and to call for an end to this cruel and inhumane blockade that has caused so much harm to the Cuban people,” Michael Vera told the meeting. His union — the Inlandboatmen’s Union of the Pacific, a division of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union — has passed a resolution calling for Biden to remove Cuba from the State Department’s list of alleged state sponsors of terrorism. “It is very important that we continue to have discussions that advocate for



Militant/Fredy Huinil

Deputy Chief of Cuban Embassy Alejandro García speaks at Machinists union hall in L.A. April 18. Meeting called for end to U.S. embargo, getting Cuba off “state sponsor of terrorism” list.

the advancement of the Cuban working class,” Vera said.

Removing Cuba from the list “would have an immediate impact on our economy,” García told the meeting. “Banks could be involved in normal activity.”

In response to a question about Cuba’s record of sending volunteer medical personnel on internationalist missions around the world, García said, “We have been in Haiti for some 30 years, through earthquakes, hurricanes, Ebola, and now, even with the violence we are still there. But the U.S. State Department says our doctors are ‘slaves.’”

Vera and Ivan Baez of the Amazon Labor Union organizing effort in the Inland Empire near L.A. reported they would soon be on their way to Cuba, part of a delegation of unionists and youth from the Los Angeles area and elsewhere sponsored by the U.S. Hands Off Cuba Committee. They will meet other unionists and participate in the far-reaching May Day activities in Havana.

Mwezi Odom, of the African People’s Socialist Party, also spoke in solidarity with Cuba. Leaders of the party were recently indicted by federal prosecutors on frame-up charges of not “registering” as foreign agents of Moscow. Party offices were raided by armed FBI agents earlier this year. Odom encouraged people to join in opposing the harassment her organization faces.

Earlier in the day Yvonne Wheeler, president of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, hosted a meeting

with two dozen unionists to hear the two Cubans. Among those attending were Xochitl Cobarruvias, president of United Steelworkers Local 675; representatives of the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement; an official and members of the United Union of Roofers and Waterproofers and Allied Workers Local 36; a representative of the United Teachers Los Angeles; and members and representatives of the Service Employees International Union, Teamsters and workers trying to organize a union at Amazon.

García and Levy described the impact of Cuba being on the list of state sponsors of terrorism. Biden has the power to end this designation with his signature, they explained.

Cuba imports a large amount of chicken to feed its 11 million people, García said, “but we can’t easily buy from the U.S. Because of limits on being able to pay through a bank we have to look for a factory in Portugal that doesn’t have contracts with the U.S., that doesn’t have a bank with U.S. connections.” This makes it much harder and more expensive to buy needed products.

In the weeks prior to the visit by the Cuban representatives, the Alameda Labor Council; Sacramento Central Labor Council; Fresno, Madera, Tulare and Kings County Central Labor Council; and the San Diego and Imperial Counties Labor Council passed resolutions calling on Biden to take Cuba off the state sponsor of terrorism list.

THE MILITANT

Iran-Saudi pact shows cracks in US-led ‘world order’

The capitalist crisis today, exacerbated by the effects of Moscow’s war in Ukraine, has tested old arrangements, leading to moves by rulers worldwide for new alliances to protect their national interests. The Tehran-Riyadh deal negotiated by Beijing shows these changes.



China Daily via Reuters
Iran and Saudi Arabia finalize restoring diplomatic relations March 10 in Beijing.

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2 The Militant May 8, 2023

Socialist Workers Party gets a response at L.A. book fair

BY DEBORAH LIATOS

LOS ANGELES — Hundreds poured up to the Pathfinder booth at the April 22-23 Festival of Books held on the University of Southern California campus here. Participants had a hunger to discuss, debate and find a road forward in the midst of the deepening world capitalist economic, social and moral crisis affecting their lives.

The rail disaster in East Palestine, Ohio; recent strikes in this area by school workers and graduate student assistants; growing conflicts between the rulers in U.S. and China; and Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine were among the topics on many people’s minds. Some said they look for the Pathfinder booth here every year, but for most it was the first time they met the Socialist Workers Party, Pathfinder titles written by SWP leaders, and the *Militant*.

“It’s incredibly important that we get these materials because it’s only through education that we can achieve progress. And you guys are on the ground, taking the right approach,” Abigail Prichard, a 19-year-old USC student majoring in philosophy, told the *Militant*. “This is what we need on a greater scale.”

Prichard said she wanted to join party members in their activities and, after a long stay talking to volunteers at the booth, purchased a subscription to the *Militant* and got *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; *Labor, Nature, and the Evolution of Humanity*; *America’s Road to Socialism*; *Polemics in Marxist Philosophy*; and Frederick Engels’ *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*.

Tomás Chávez, a member of Teamsters Local 63 at the UPS depot in Riv-

erside, spoke at length with volunteers Leslie Dork and rail worker Laura Garza about conditions at the depot, the recent contract the Joseph Biden administration imposed on rail workers, and the just-opened contract fight at UPS.

“What happened during our last contract angered part-timers,” Chávez said. “The company raised their wages during COVID, then took it away. There are more deaths on the job and heat-stroke related issues. Two people on the ramp at the Ontario airport were crushed in the last couple of years.”

“There are more deaths on the railroad too,” said Garza. “After the train derailment in East Palestine we see working people in the community and rail workers give aid to one another and find ways to work together to demand safety and to get more resources out of Norfolk Southern and the government to fund the cleanup.”

Chávez bought the four-part *Teamsters* book series by Farrell Dobbs on the building and battles of the Teamsters in Minneapolis in the 1930s, *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us* and a subscription to the *Militant*.

Sam Frank and Evelyn Holman, students from University of California at Riverside, spoke to Garza and Dork about the Ohio rail disaster. “The railroads can make more profit if there is no cleanup,” Holman said.

“My grandpa worked a railroad job in Indiana until he retired,” said Frank. “When he started no one was allowed to wear hearing protection because they said you had to hear the trains coming. He started losing his hearing, but the company refused to get him hearing aids until they said it was necessary for a job he was doing,” she said.

Interest in world politics

They picked up the leaflet for an upcoming Los Angeles Militant La-



Militant/Deborah Liatos

Visitors to Pathfinder booth at Festival of Books in Los Angeles April 22-23 bought 235 books, 86 *Militant* subscriptions. Laura Garza, left, talks with Sam Frank, right, and Evelyn Holman.

bor Forum, “Conflict Between U.S. and China Rulers Deepens.”

“I’ve got family from Taiwan. It’s the ruling class in China vs. the ruling class in the U.S.,” Frank said. “I have more in common with workers in China than the government here.”

“I see in leftist spheres online people calling those who are fighting Russia’s invasion of Ukraine ‘fascist.’ This is not the case,” Holman said. “I have a friend from Ukraine who also says they’re wrong.”

Dork responded, “Workers in the U.S. should champion the fight of the Ukrainian people against Moscow’s invasion. We should also demand U.S. troops out of Europe.”

Frank got *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us*; *Fascism: What It Is and How to Fight It* by Leon Trotsky; *America’s Railroads*; and a subscription to the *Militant*. Holman got *Woman’s Evolution* and a subscription.

Yousef Abu-Gaza, a student at USC, was born in the Gaza Strip and came here as a child. He is part of the Graduate Students Organizing Committee at the university. They voted by 93% a month ago for the union.

“We do the bulk of the work for the university — grade, teach, organize

office hours, guidance counselors,” he said.

Barbara Bowman explained the SWP’s position on the necessity for the recognition of Israel’s right to exist, and for any Jew that feels threatened having the right to go there to live and work in a world where there are rising antisemitic attacks. At the same time, she said, the party calls for the Palestinians to have their own contiguous state.

Following the discussion Abu-Gaza got copies of *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation*; *The Communist Manifesto*; and *Marx and Engels on the Paris Commune*.

Over the two days 235 books were sold, along with 86 subscriptions to the *Militant*. Top sellers were *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us*, selling out all 29 copies that were brought; 18 copies of *Labor, Nature, and the Evolution of Humanity*; 11 of *Are They Rich Because They’re Smart?* and nine copies each of *The Communist Manifesto* and *The Jewish Question*.

This response was one confirmation of *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us*.

Norton Sandler contributed to this article.

Campaign to expand reach of ‘Militant,’ books, fund

March 18-May 16 (week five)

| Country | Sub quota | Subs sold | Books quota | Books sold | Fund quota | Fund received |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|------------|------------|---------------|
| UNITED STATES | | | | | | |
| Atlanta | 50 | 24 | 50 | 40 | \$9,500 | \$5,511 |
| Chicago* | 100 | 51 | 125 | 94 | \$14,000 | \$9,820 |
| Cincinnati* | 55 | 31 | 55 | 38 | \$6,000 | \$2,400 |
| Dallas-Fort Worth | 60 | 38 | 60 | 45 | \$5,000 | \$3,506 |
| Lincoln | 15 | 10 | 15 | 11 | \$500 | \$272 |
| Los Angeles* | 90 | 87 | 110 | 100 | \$16,000 | \$4,762 |
| Miami* | 45 | 24 | 70 | 67 | \$5,500 | \$3,580 |
| Minneapolis | 70 | 42 | 70 | 58 | \$5,500 | \$2,165 |
| N. New Jersey | 85 | 49 | 85 | 64 | \$7,000 | \$3,722 |
| New York | 100 | 61 | 115 | 87 | \$20,500 | \$12,678 |
| Oakland | 90 | 72 | 90 | 61 | \$15,000 | \$10,479 |
| Philadelphia* | 50 | 36 | 60 | 48 | \$6,000 | \$4,350 |
| Pittsburgh | 45 | 22 | 45 | 19 | \$6,000 | \$2,088 |
| Seattle | 75 | 42 | 75 | 45 | \$14,000 | \$6,650 |
| Washington | 50 | 38 | 50 | 39 | \$4,500 | \$3,283 |
| Other | | 83 | | 235 | | \$600 |
| Total U.S. | 980 | 710 | 1075 | 1051 | \$135,000 | \$75,866 |
| Prisoners | 50 | 58 | | | | |
| UNITED KINGDOM | | | | | | |
| London | 40 | 32 | 40 | 37 | \$2,450 | \$620 |
| Manchester | 35 | 28 | 40 | 30 | \$1,200 | \$360 |
| Total U.K. | 75 | 60 | 80 | 67 | \$3,650 | 980 |
| Canada | 90 | 62 | 90 | 104 | \$12,000 | \$7,060 |
| Australia | 35 | 27 | 35 | 29 | \$6,000 | \$2,860 |
| Total | 1,230 | 917 | 1,280 | 1,251 | \$156,650 | \$86,766 |
| SHOULD BE | 1,350 | 844 | 1,350 | 844 | \$165,000 | \$103,125 |
| * Raised goal | | | | | | |

Join campaign to expand reach of ‘Militant,’ books

Continued from front page government, but the others as well. We need a new party to shake things up.” She was glad to hear the CL is running Peter Clifford, a member of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, for Manchester City Council in the May 4 elections.

“The CL’s campaign is a voice for workers’ struggles,” Jónsson said. Workers need to break from the Conservative, Labour and all the other capitalist parties, he said. “We need to build our own party of labor, based on our unions.

“It would speak and act for the interests of the working class and all the oppressed,” he said. “That starts on the picket line today, with workers using and strengthening our unions.”

Keating decided to get a copy of *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist*

Workers Party Looks Forward and a *Militant* subscription. “This is a real paper,” she said. When Jónsson explained the *Militant* is funded entirely by its working-class readers, Keating kicked in 7 pounds (\$8) for the Militant Fighting Fund.

Exchanges like this are taking place from New York to Los Angeles, London to Sydney, as members of the Socialist Workers Party and Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom expand the reach of the paper and books by SWP leaders and other revolutionaries. And raise contributions to guarantee the paper comes out every week.

We knock on doors in workers’ neighborhoods, at farms and homes in rural areas, go to strike picket lines, protests against Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine and repression in Iran, rallies against Jew-hatred and attacks on immigrant workers, and more. We set up tables at events like the Festival of Books in Los Angeles, reported on above.

Party members find interest when they explain all political questions should be viewed through the lens of the unending struggle between the working class and the capitalist class. On the way they’re finding interest in the party’s In-

ternational Educational Conference set for Oberlin, Ohio, June 8-11.

The goal is to sell 1,350 subscriptions to the *Militant*, the same number of books on revolutionary working-class politics and to raise \$165,000 for the Militant Fighting Fund by May 16.

Contributions come from workers who think the paper’s coverage is crucial to building solidarity with today’s class battles as are its articles on examples we can learn from, like the socialist revolutions in Cuba in 1959 and Russia in 1917. With three weeks to go, \$86,766 has been contributed.

Along with his contribution, *Militant* reader John Martinez sent a note saying he “just re-read Farrell Dobbs’ *Teamster* series. Powerful.” The four books are some of the titles on special offer with a subscription. In *Teamster Bureaucracy*, Martinez says, “Dobbs identifies the workers and their unions that stood up to President Franklin Roosevelt and to the FBI, fought for workers’ rights and against the imperialist war drive. The scope and speed of these developments take your breath away.”

To help get out the *Militant* and books that point the road forward, or to contribute to the fund, contact the SWP or CL branch nearest you listed on page 8.

Canada public workers strike

Continued from front page

of passports and administrative services at ports. Other government services will be halted.

“When you look at the impact of inflation on us, the government offer is a joke,” Jason Meehan told this *Militant* worker-correspondent on a picket line of several hundred in downtown Montreal hours after the strike began. Meehan, who is participating in his first strike, has worked in the passport division for two and a half years.

One striker held up a homemade sign that said, “Inflation affects everyone.”

Workers everywhere are watching the showdown. In front of the Parliament buildings in Ottawa, striker Samantha Basha told the *Ottawa Citizen*, “When federal public servants get the wages we deserve, that sets a precedent for private industry too.”

“When the government represses wages of its own employees, what it’s doing is repressing wages for all workers right across the country,” Chris Aylward, president of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, told the *Globe and Mail*.

Hundreds of unionized nurses, postal workers, educational assistants and others picked up this theme on April 21 in a solidarity march with the strikers through downtown Calgary, Alberta, under the slogan “Workers demand better.”

“There’s a movement in Canada right now, not just in Alberta, where workers are saying we want better, we want better schools, we want better governance, we want better social services, not just at the bargaining table, it’s right across society,” Rory Gill, president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees in Alberta, told the rally.

Anti-union campaign

Since the start of negotiations with Ottawa’s Treasury Board nearly two years ago, PSAC has demanded a 13.5% wage increase spread over three years, which would just cover the current official rate of inflation. The real rate is

much higher. In separate negotiations with the Canada Revenue Agency, the Union of Taxation Employees has demanded a 22.5% increase. Ottawa has only offered 9% — in reality a wage cut given inflation — claiming that any more is “unaffordable.”

Another issue involved workers who since the COVID-19 pandemic have been working from home. The government now wants them to come to the office two to three days a week. Workers say there’s no need, since they’re just as productive from home.

The strikers are facing a government and media campaign that claims they are privileged and have no support from other working people. The Bank of Canada claims workers’ hourly wage increases of about 5% year-over-year are “not compatible” with bringing inflation down to its 2% target.

On April 21 the *National Post* and *Globe and Mail* ran articles saying a complaint by a union member led the federal labor board to claim only a third of the Public Service Alliance of Canada membership participated in the strike vote and that there were “major irregularities.”

Federal workers union leader Aylward dismissed the attack. “The broad support for our strike mandate amongst the membership can be seen in real time on hundreds of picket lines throughout the whole country this week as over 100,000 members showed up to pressure this government to reach a fair contract for Canada’s public service workers.”

“Our unions need to build countrywide solidarity with the Public Service Alliance strike and counter the bosses’ lie that wage increases cause inflation,” Félix Vincent Ardea, Communist League candidate in the upcoming federal by-election in the Montreal electoral district of Notre Dame de Grace, told the *Militant* April 21. Vincent Ardea is a train conductor and member of the Teamsters union at Canadian National Railway.

“Wage increases don’t cause anything except a reduction in the profits of the

Oil workers in Iran strike for better wages, schedules



Contract oil workers went on strike in Iran April 15, demanding a 79% wage increase. And instead of working a debilitating 24 days on with six days off schedule, they are demanding a more humane 20 days of work followed by 10 days off. By April 24 the strike had spread to thousands of workers at 93 workplaces. Above, workers at the Jask Port oil refinery walked off the job April 22. Workers at a copper mine and a steel company also walked out.

Most oil workers work for subcontractors and are paid less than half of what “permanent” workers receive, and get fewer benefits.

“Regardless of where we come from in the country,” the Organizing Council of Oil Contract Workers said in a statement, “we are protesting against the growing poverty, rising prices and worsening of our working and living conditions.”

Winning their two key demands, the union said, will strengthen the fight to “dismantle” the unjust contract system and win permanent status for all oil workers. The union also called on workers to reject attempts by the oil bosses to create divisions among the workers based on their nationality or language. Many oil workers are from Arab, Bakhtiari and other oppressed nationalities.

While official inflation is 53%, the real rate is higher. The Supreme Labor Council, made up of government officials, bosses and government-appointed “workers representatives,” recently approved a measly 27% wage increase. Even the official workers’ representatives denounced this as inadequate.

— SETH GALINSKY

employers. This is why Ottawa, acting in the interests of the capitalist class, is resisting the federal workers’ wage demands,” he said.

“And this is why the strikers are right when they explain that if they win what they need and deserve, other workers will be in a better position to fight for wage increases that keep up with inflation.”

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau refuses to rule out use of the kind of strike-breaking legislation his government used against strikes of postal work-

ers and Montreal port workers and to threaten striking rail workers since his election in 2015.

Go to the Public Service Alliance of Canada website to find the picket line nearest you and go with friends, relatives, and co-workers! Bring the solidarity the federal government workers need to win!

Hey, they shrunk the Doritos, and Twinkies, and ...

Continued from front page

to the consumer, saying it made the bottle “easier to grab.”

Walmart Great Value paper towels dropped from 168 sheets per roll to 120. Hershey cut down its 18-ounce pack of dark chocolate Kisses by almost two ounces.

Frito-Lay shrank bags of Doritos from 9.75 ounces to 9.25 by taking out five chips. “We took just a little bit out of the bag so we could give you the same price,” a Frito-Lay spokesperson said, “and you can keep enjoying your chips.” The list goes on.

Within the span of a few months last fall, a number of these companies, including General Mills, Hostess Brands and PepsiCo Inc.’s Frito-Lay, began selling shrunken “miniature” versions of their wares, including Trix, Twinkies, Ding Dongs and, yes, Doritos.

In Lyons, Kansas, Jenni Dickson was excited when the mini-Doritos appeared at her local grocery store earlier this year, as her 6-year-old loves them. “They’re cute,” she told the *Wall Street Journal*, “but it’s like eating a can of crumbs.”

Some of these new products have become so small they now fit into

places other than a little child’s mouth. In Grandview, Texas, Stephanie Beasley told the *Journal* her 2-year-old daughter recently stuck a mini-Trix up her nose and it had to be removed with a small crochet hook.

Hostess’ Twinkies, Ding Dongs and Donettes have now been cut to golf-ball-size “Bouncers,” the bosses said, to help you eat one in just two bites.

All these hustles are products of the bosses’ drive for profit amid the sharpening competition resulting from today’s worldwide capitalist crisis of declining production, trade and jobs. This has been exacerbated by the effects of Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine over a year ago.

In an effort to slow the climb of inflation, the Federal Reserve has been stoking up interest rates. They made a big fuss over a decline in the consumer price index to 5% in March, most of which was the result of a fall in gasoline prices. Government officials claim this shows that inflation is now coming under control. But working people see something different in the real world.

Prices have continued to spiral up for key necessities, like food, other groceries and rents.

Food prices rose 8.5% from a year ago, with eggs up 36%, frozen vegetables up 20.1%, flour up 17.5% and cookies — whatever the size of the package — 16.6%.

Rents have risen 8.2% and electricity bills have jumped 10.2%, forcing even more workers — especially the young — to move in with family and friends. This means it takes longer and longer to be able to start a family.

And the increasing interest rates, going up at the steepest pace since the 1980s, mean what workers owe on their credit cards, mortgages, car loans and other debts is going up.

U.S. workers haven’t seen a rise in real wages since the 1970s, while inflation is eating away at what we can afford to buy. In the bosses’ drive to keep profits as high as possible, they’re stepping up attacks on workers’ wages, lengthening the workday and week with no increase in pay, pushing punishing speedup, ignoring worsening working conditions and looking to lay off workers and pile their work on the backs of those who remain.

The result is workers increasingly turning to their unions, looking for a way to fight back.

Minn. protest: ‘Free political prisoners in Iran, Belarus, Russia!’

BY GABBY PROSSER

MINNEAPOLIS — Some 60 Iranians, Russians and Belarusians and supporters came together downtown here on April 22 to demand the release of political prisoners in their home countries.

Many spoke — in Russian, Farsi and English — and there were posters with the names and faces of political prisoners held in the three countries, calling for their release. There were also posters against the poisoning of young female students in Iran.

Many spoke out against Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine, and protesters waved the flags of Ukraine and Iran.

The rally was co-sponsored by the Minnesota Committee in Support of a Democratic Iran and Russians Against War Minnesota.

“We came together because we have a shared goal. We are against the dictatorships and political prisoners in our countries,” Parham Alaci, who organized the protest, said. “There is a relationship between the governments of our countries. They work together, so the population of those countries need to work together to oppose them.”

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

Nurses and teachers in U.K. set strike action over pay

MANCHESTER, England — Nurses, members of the Royal College of Nursing union, who before last December had never gone on strike in their 106-year history, voted April 14 to reject the government's most recent pay offer, against their national officers' advice. The nurses union called a 48-hour strike for April 30.

U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak had hoped to get this dispute settled quickly, to put an end to the wave of public sector strikes.

Workers rejected a 5% pay increase this year, plus a one-time lump-sum payout for most workers. Lump-sum payments like this are now being offered by bosses to lure workers to accept deals without further raising their long-term wages. Inflation, hitting an annual 13.5% in March despite government claims it would fall, continues to eat at workers' living standards.

Some nurses, ambulance-service workers and other National Health Service (NHS) workers who are members of the Unison union voted 3-1 to accept the offer.

The government has ruled out improving its pay offer to nurses and said no further talks will be held.

"The government is refusing to listen, to give us the respect and the time, and to even recognize that without staff there is no NHS," Harry Eccles, a nurse from the south of England who voted against the government's offer, told the BBC.

Other workers are also fighting against the grinding effects of inflation and deteriorating working conditions. Teachers in the National Education Union voted by 98% to reject the most recent pay offer of a 5% increase for 2022 plus 4.5% for 2023, along with a lump sum. The four teachers unions announced another round of strike days April 27 and May 2.

Rail worker members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers union who work for 14 different privately owned train-operating companies, known as TOCs, are voting on a proposal to continue strike action in pursuit of a decent wage raise and against brutal attacks on their conditions and jobs.

These workers have now received an offer of a 5% raise retroactive to 2022 with no conditions and 4% for this year, contingent on all workers, except station workers, being saddled with a two-tier wage system.

The rail bosses have for now set aside the demand to impose driver-only trains and the closing of all ticket offices in 2023, although these continue to be their goal. Instead, their latest offer is tied to the attack on station workers, who are the less well-organized.

Neither the government nor the rail bosses had expected the determination of rail workers to fight, nor the support they have gained.

At the same time, Rail, Maritime and Transport union members at the state-run Network Rail voted by 76% to accept an improved offer in March. They had been part of the union's actions for 16 days along with the TOC workers. The deal includes a larger cash lump sum in back pay, plus a 5% pay increase for last year and 4% for this year, backdated to October.

Discussion among workers on all these issues continues. "We started with being offered virtually nothing and have gained," Nick White, a union representative at Network Rail's operation at Manchester Piccadilly station, said. "I'll still be going to the TOC strike picket. We stood together for months."

"It's the first time I've been on strike. We'd got as far as we could. It was worth it," rail worker Alex Burke said. "I don't know how money they said didn't exist appeared by magic after the strikes."

Cleaners who are employed by various rail contractors went on strike April 14 and 15, demanding 15 pounds (\$18.80) an hour, company sick pay and other conditions company-employed rail workers have won.

— Anne Howie

Stockholm commuter train drivers strike over one-man crews

STOCKHOLM — At least 70 commuter train drivers walked off the job here on a three-day protest strike April 17, shutting down over 80% of traffic during the first two days. "By striking for our working conditions and the safety of the passengers we



Militant/Björn Tirsén

Commuter train drivers April 17 in Stockholm on strike against boss push for one-person crews.

are saying that we have had enough and that one-man crews can not be allowed to spread in the rail industry," the strike committee said in a press release before the strike began.

After the municipal government decided in February to remove "train hosts" from the local system, more than 150 drivers met April 14 and decided to strike to demand the return of the second crew member.

"The pressure on you, driving a train alone, and at the same time being responsible for up to 1,800 people, is an unreasonable workload," driver Moa Friman, on the picket line at Stockholm's Central Station, told the *Militant*.

"Going on strike, we're showing where our union should set the bar in upcoming negotiations," driver Nils Westberg Ahlmark explained. "We are putting the bar at the top when it comes to safety."

There has been widespread support for the strike. By the second day 1.3 million Swedish krona (\$127,000) had been contributed to the strike fund.

— Björn Tirsén

Hawaii hospital workers: 'We're proud' voting up new contract

WAIANAE, Hawaii — Members of the United Public Workers union at Maui Memorial Medical Center, Kula Hospital and Lanai Community Hospital in Maui County ended their nearly two-month strike April 14, voting 87% in favor of a new three-year contract.

"We are proud," Reynita Franco, a nurse's aide at Maui Memorial, told the *Militant*. "This is the first time in 40 years working that I've been on strike. It's a good connection to other people, to get to know everyone. It's really important."

"It feels great," Jonathan Cala, an air-conditioning mechanic there, said. "Our bond is really much stronger than before. We actually met up after work for 30 minutes just to exchange stories about our strike."

"When we see each other in the hall, we don't just smile, sometimes we hug," housekeeper Margarita Javalde said. "I can't explain the feelings you have when you realize you are a fighter."

The key demands of the strike were for higher wages, no forced overtime and safe staff-patient staffing levels.

"They removed the mandatory overtime," Javalde said. "Not everything we wanted was granted, but for the near future, we got something. And it's not only for the union. Who knows if in the future our children or grandchildren will work here; at least they will have it as foundation."

— Neil Tupas

Chemical workers strike for pay raise, to reduce forced overtime

HOPEWELL, Va. — Three hundred and forty chemical workers went on strike April 7 at the AdvanSix chemical plant here. The big majority are members of International Chemical Workers Union Local 591C, while others are represented by skilled trades unions, including International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 666.

Workers voted to reject the company contract offer of 6% raises for about 51% of the workforce in the first year, while offering no raises to the rest, claiming those jobs were already paid "market rate." While the unions offered to work under the terms of the old contract, the company refused and workers voted in their big majority to strike.

Spirits were high April 15 when two rail workers from SMART-TD Local 769A joined the chemical workers' picket line to extend solidarity and find out more about their fight. The strikers explained that even though the bosses canceled their health insurance the first day of the strike, they are determined to turn back the company's attempt to divide and weaken their unions.

They explained that a big part of their battle is to reduce the mandatory overtime the company imposes.

Solidarity messages supporting the strikers can be emailed to: ts20bl18@yahoo.com

— Mike Galati

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



May 11, 1998

MELBOURNE, Australia — Defying cops and court orders, mass picket lines continue to block access to and from Patrick Stevedores' wharves across the country in support of sacked Maritime Union of Australia members. The company dismissed its unionized workforce of 1,400 permanent and 700 casual workers April 7 — with the backing of the Liberal-National government — and brought in nonunion labor.

On April 23, a Federal Court upheld an earlier court order to reinstate all the workers, known as wharfies. More than 200 sacked wharfies at East Swanson staged a symbolic march April 25 up to the locked main gates of the terminal.

"This dispute will be won on the picket lines," Victorian Trades Hall Council secretary Leigh Hubbard told the crowd. "Court decisions do not solve industrial disputes."



May 11, 1973

To its long list of methods used to evict Indians from Wounded Knee, the government has now added murder.

Frank Clearwater died of a bullet wound in the head on April 25. Clearwater, a 47-year-old Apache from Cherokee, N.C., was a noncombatant, and was shot while he was inside the church at Wounded Knee. A second occupier, Larry Lamont, was killed while he was unconscious from a government gas attack. Lamont was 31.

In response to the stepped-up government repression, the American Indian Movement has launched a nationally coordinated defense effort. Speaking at one rally in Boulder, Colo., Waubun New Winini explained "the government would have moved in on Wounded Knee a long time ago if it had not been for the support expressed at rallies and on campuses all around the country."



May 10, 1948

NEW YORK — The first presidential campaign of the Socialist Workers Party will be formally launched at the party's 13th National Convention, which will be held in this city on July 1 to 5. Delegates will gather here from all parts of the country to take action on an agenda that will determine the party's policy in this year's election campaign.

It is already clear that the SWP will wage an active campaign bringing its revolutionary socialist message to the attention of millions of workers.

The SWP's main objective in this campaign will be to organize the working people for the struggle to establish a Workers and Farmers Government as the answer to imperialist war, militarism, inflation, Jim Crow, witch hunts and anti-labor legislation. All workers sympathetic to this great goal are urged to contact the nearest SWP branch.

Back Ukraine independence!

Continued from front page

backing for Moscow is undermining relations with governments across Europe where it seeks markets. The rival ruling classes in Europe fear the destabilizing consequences of the war and for some their support for Ukraine has a time limit.

China’s ambassador to France, Lu Shaye, asserted April 21 that states that became independent after the breakup of the Soviet Union lack “effective status under international law,” sparking a furor in Europe. He also questioned Ukraine’s demand that Crimea — seized and annexed by Moscow in 2014 — be restored to Ukrainian sovereignty.

“If anyone is still wondering why the Baltic states don’t trust China to ‘broker peace in Ukraine,’” Gabriellus Landsbergis, Lithuania’s foreign minister, said, “here’s a Chinese ambassador arguing that Crimea is Russian and our countries’ borders have no legal basis.”

Beijing decided Lu’s comments had gotten in the way of the regime’s efforts to expand its influence and retracted them. China’s foreign ministry spokesperson, Mao Ning, said, “Each member republic of the Soviet Union has the status of a sovereign state after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.”

The row exacerbated frictions between governments in the European Union that have different attitudes toward Moscow’s war. Josep Borrell, the EU’s chief diplomat, condemned a move by Beijing and the Brazilian government to seek a peace settlement without involving the Ukrainian government. But the Italian government lauded Beijing’s claim to mediate.

The war continues to have a devastating impact inside Ukraine, as well as in Russia. To replace the heavy losses its forces have sustained, Moscow has

recruited up to 50,000 prison inmates, a tenth of all those imprisoned in the Russian Federation. On offer is a pardon after six months for those who survive.

Many opting to enlist are lured by the promise of better medical treatment. About a third of prisoners are HIV positive or have hepatitis C or tuberculosis.

“Conditions were very harsh” in the Kremlin’s prisons, Timur, a Russian prisoner of war in Dnipro, central Ukraine, told the *New York Times*. He is HIV positive and feared he wouldn’t survive his 10-year sentence with the poor medical treatment in the Putin regime’s Gulag.

‘A quick death or a slow death’

He realized his options were “a quick death or a slow death,” he said. So he signed up for six months with Moscow’s private mercenary Wagner group in exchange for better anti-viral treatment. With only two weeks of training, he found himself on the Bakhmut battlefield. “If you try to leave,” he was told, “we will shoot you.”

Many of his fellow soldiers were killed. After he and other former inmates were captured, Ukrainian authorities treated them with the anti-viral medicine they needed.

Inside Russia, Putin has been unable to use patriotic hoopla to prevent resistance by working people to the broad impact of the capitalist crisis. Demonstrations against the war are banned, but a protest against the rise in utility bills drew 300 people in Novosibirsk, Siberia, last month with no arrests. Similar actions were held in other Russian cities.

Fearing a growth of protests against the invasion, Putin continues to assault basic freedoms. Authorities shuttered the Sakharov Center, a rare meeting point for free debate in the capital’s downtown area for almost three de-



Ukrainian poet and Soviet dissident Vasyl Stus in exile in late 1970s in Magadan, Siberia, the most frigid labor camp in Stalinist Gulag system. After dying in prison in 1985, he was brought to Ukraine and reburied four years later. His poetry has gained in popularity since.

ades. It is named after a prominent Soviet-era dissident, Andrei Sakharov. It had become a focus for opposition to Moscow’s invasion. Along with the prominent rights group of the same name, its final public event was held April 16.

“There is always hope,” Vyacheslav Bakhmin, chair of the center, told the Moscow Times. “The situation [in Russia] will change again — the reality we live in right now has no future.”

Yelena Sannikova, a former political prisoner, read several poems at the event, including some by Ukrainian poet and Soviet dissident Vasyl Stus. Prosecuted for his views on art and politics, he died in a Siberian prison in 1985.

Stus’ “A Poem From Ukraine” is among those gaining in popularity. It

reads in part:

So many words; they are like crippled ghosts!
They strike like bullets, far and close by
But always miss the essence of my life;
They come in rows.
Through these deceitful words I walk and shamble.
There is a fight; I’m on the battlefield,
Where my soldiers are the words I wield,
And treason’s sown by memories that scramble.

“History shows that hard times always come to an end and intense pressure gives even more strength to resist,” Sannikova said.

Same vinyl chloride chemical spilled in 2012 derailment in Paulsboro, NJ

BY TERRY EVANS

PAULSBORO, N.J. — “They had the whole town shut down,” James Lewis Sr. told Socialist Workers Party members visiting this southern New Jersey town. They were asking about the 2012 train derailment and release of vinyl chloride after the collapse of a rail bridge over the Mantua Creek here. That’s the same chemical that was drained onto the ground and set on fire in East Palestine, Ohio, in February. Lewis has lived in Paulsboro all his life.

“You never know when this could happen again,” Lewis said, pointing to long trains that block rail crossings and divide the small town in two. “What would happen if a fire started and the fire brigade couldn’t get across?” Bridges or underpasses could be built, he said, but rail bosses don’t want to do anything that would cut into their profits.

Like many residents here, José Montero, a drive loader at a junkyard, was evacuated after the 2012 derailment. “They put us up in a hotel and offered us money to keep quiet. It’s cheaper for them to do that than maintain the bridge that caused the derailment.”

When the swing bridge failed to close properly, seven of the train’s 83 cars spilled off the tracks and four fell into the creek. One was sliced open, releasing 23,000 gallons of the toxic chemical. Some 250 people went to the hospital, many with respiratory problems. The National Transportation Safety Board says Conrail, which was responsible for maintaining the bridge,

chemical company doesn’t care about people.” In the years since, a federal court ruled against setting up a medical program to monitor long-term health effects on Paulsboro residents. Exposure to vinyl chloride is linked to cancers.

Oil refinery worker Rich Miner lives in Paulsboro. “This is a poor

East Palestine working people fight for control over their lives

Continued from front page

tests on her milk for a list of chemicals that cost about \$175 each. Luckily, she said, the company called when her veterinarian was there so she put him on the phone and he told United the animals were fine.

Fitzgerald said the *Militant* had reported on a similar derailment involving vinyl chloride in Paulsboro, New Jersey, 11 years ago (see accompanying article) and the lack of action and follow-up by the railroad and government afterward. “I’d heard about that too,” said Withers.

“What’s different here,” said Fitzgerald, “is that working people in this area, along with the rail unions, have raised hell about the issues resulting from the derailment. One result is the railroad had to clean up the contaminated soil under both sets of tracks, something they had no intention of doing.”

Withers said she has friends who work on the railroad and they told her how Norfolk Southern tried to ship the contaminated soil out of state without telling the people who live where it was sent.

“When the trains come through it shuts the town down,” she said. “That’s the concern of the railroads.” Fitzgerald responded, “getting the trains running to make money, not our welfare. Look at what they’ve done to their own workers — cut the workforce by 30%, cut maintenance of the tracks and cars, lengthened the trains and pushed for smaller crews. That’s why the rail unions voted to strike, but they were blocked by President Biden and Congress.”



Oil refinery worker Rich Miner, center, and Sheree Artis talk to Socialist Workers Party member Seth Galinsky in Paulsboro, New Jersey, April 23. Miner said he volunteered for the cleanup after 2012 derailment there, when vinyl chloride spilled, same chemical as in East Palestine.

In nearby Darlington, Pennsylvania, Fitzgerald met up with Bill Hawkins, a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, to talk to him about the *Militant*. He was interested in the rallies being held by Teamsters as UPS contract negotiations begin. She showed Hawkins the letter Teamsters Local 70 in Alameda, California, sent to Ohio Gov. Michael DeWine and Norfolk Southern bosses expressing its solidarity with the efforts of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees to win changes in dangerous Norfolk Southern policies. Hawkins liked that. “I’m going to show this to my local president,” he said.

Since the derailment there has been a drop-off in participation from schools outside the city in sporting events hosted in East Palestine. “Historically, we host four large invitationals here each year. They’re a big deal. We typically have between 20 and 30 schools,” Athletic Director Dwayne Pavkovich told WTAE-TV. “This year our largest has been 13. We’re having a meet on Saturday, where last year we had 22. We have 7.”

Gov’t tells people ‘don’t worry’

Environmental Protection Agency Response Coordinator Mark Durno held a meeting with East Palestine residents April 20 to discuss their concerns that dangerous dioxins were created by the fire and burn-off after the derailment. He told them the answer was yes, they found dioxins, but the levels detected weren’t large enough to cause any alarm. *Salem News* reported people at the meeting pushed back at his assurances, with one person pointing out that if a campfire creates low-level dioxins, it isn’t a stretch to assume the controlled burn of 1.1 million pounds of vinyl chloride, like happened here, would lead to a substantial problem.

Others voiced concern over the results of private medical tests they had taken that show high levels of vinyl chloride in their urine.

After Durno claimed there were no longer any problems in area waterways, people told him there were still chemicals in the creeks. Durno changed his tune, telling them to “stay clear of the creeks until further notice.” He didn’t say what would be done about it.

This is what has marked the past two months — the insistence of working people here on having some control over what happens and to protect their lives and homes in the future.

Norfolk Southern CEO Alan Shaw told an Ohio Senate panel April 18 that he supports Congressional efforts to pass new railway safety regulations, but added that there is no data supporting the rail union’s insistence that two-person crews help prevent derailments..

Fight over rail crew size

Rail workers and their unions are fighting to keep at least two-person crews on the engine, an engineer and a conductor, against demands by the rail bosses to cut that to just an engi-

neer. The bosses say new technology — like detectors set up on the tracks to catch overheating on axle bearings — take the place of the conductor. But on the East Palestine line, Norfolk Southern had set the detectors way too high, and no warning was sent to the crew until it was too late to prevent the derailment.

An April 17 *New York Times* article, “Texas to New Jersey: Tracking the Toxic Chemicals in the Ohio Train Inferno,” explains how the railroads have moved to take a greater role in transporting these products. As coal shipments have fallen by almost half over the past decade, the *Times* reports, rail bosses have looked for alternative sources of business and profit, and these chemicals — like vinyl chloride, which is widely used in PVC pipes and other plastics — has risen by about a third over the past decade.

The tank cars of vinyl chloride that derailed and released the toxic chemical in both East Palestine and Paulsboro had originated in an Occidental Petroleum plant in Texas and were on their way to a plastics factory in New Jersey.

This underscores the stakes for working people and our unions — in city and countryside, alongside rail tracks and in the communities surrounding plants processing hazardous materials — in fighting together alongside rail and other workers for control over production and transportation.

This includes rail workers winning the fight to limit train length to 50 cars staffed with a full crew of four, two on the front end and two on the rear.

One person was killed and nearly 100 sickened after a fungal outbreak at the 830-worker Billerud paper mill in Escanaba, Michigan, in mid-April. Every one of them either worked at or had visited the plant. The only advice the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health made afterward was to counsel workers to wear N95 masks.

It is only by workers using our unions to take control over production and transportation that disasters like this can be prevented.

Beware of Jew-hatred

There are ultra-rightist forces who promote a different perspective. Socialist Workers Party members campaigning in Washington, Pennsylvania, talked with workers who had found their neighborhood blanketed with a rightist publication called the *Freedom Times*. Its lead story was “America: Off the Rails” over a big picture of the burn-off in East Palestine. It is filled with Jew-hating pictures and screeds blaming Jews for the crises working people face today.

And in East Palestine, people said they had found antisemitic flyers anonymously thrown on their lawns, which claimed, “Every single aspect of the Biden administration” and “Every single aspect of the LGBTQ+ movement is Jewish.”

“Jew-hatred is a deadly threat to the working class,” Kathie Fitzgerald told the *Militant*. “It is the bosses and their government that are responsible for the crises working people face today. The road forward is to unify the working class, reach out to our allies on the land and chart a course to take political power into our own hands.”

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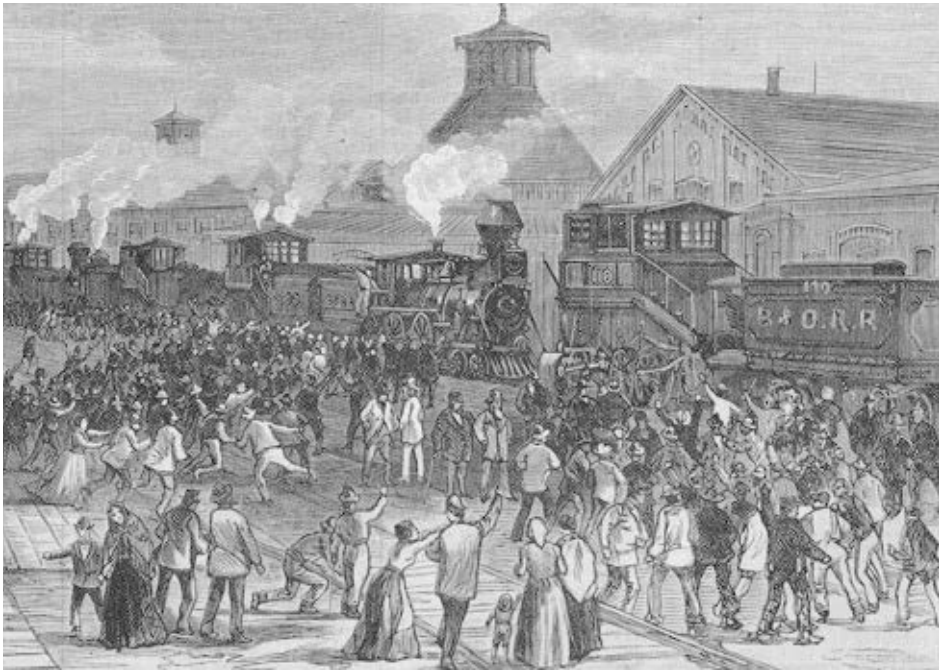
Great Strike of 1877 showed the power of the US working class

The Great Labor Uprising of 1877 by Philip S. Foner is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for May. After five years of economic depression, West Virginia railroad workers went on strike in the face of wage cuts and brutal working conditions. This rapidly developed into a nationwide strike drawing in half a million workers, the first truly general strike in U.S. history. The rulers screamed about "mob rule" and blamed a communist conspiracy. Federal, state and city governments, cheered on by the big-business press, unleashed troops, cops and armed thugs against the strikers. In the course of this mighty class battle some 200 workers were killed. Copyright © 1977. Reprinted by permission of Pathfinder Press.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY PHILIP S. FONER

The speed with which the Great Strike moved across the country was positively breathtaking. On July 18 the strike, which had begun in West Virginia, spread to Ohio; one day later, it reached Pennsylvania, and a day after that, New York. On Sunday and Monday, July 22 and 23, thousands of workers throughout the eastern and mid-western sections of the country went on strike. By noon on Tuesday, July 24, the Great Strike had ripped through West



Harper's Weekly

Rail strike in West Virginia, above, set off 1877 general strike. Karl Marx wrote that the policies of the capitalist rulers would "turn the Negroes" and "convert the farmers of the West" into allies of the workers, forging the class forces that would make a revolution in the U.S.

Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, and even Iowa. The *New York World* estimated that day that it involved more than eighty thousand railroad workers and over five hundred thousand workers in other occupations. Aside from the walkouts of workers in sympathy with the railroad men, thousands of businesses that were dependent upon the railroads for their supplies — factories, mills, coal mines, and oil refineries — were forced to shut down. ...

By Wednesday, July 25, all the main railway lines were affected, and employees of some Canadian roads were also joining the strike. By this time, it was a thoroughly national event. Business in many cities was feeling the effect of the freight blockade; for example, New York's supply of western grain and cattle had been completely cut off. There were strike reports from such scattered points as Kansas City, Chicago, Indianapolis, Terre Haute, Columbus, Cincinnati, Louisville, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, East St. Louis, and St. Louis. ... Governor Cullom of [Illinois] declared in his 1879 biennial message that "the railway trains and machine shops and factories in Chicago, Peoria, Galesburg, Decatur, and East St. Louis were in the hands of the mob, as well as the mines at Bradwood, La Salle, and some other places." ... [T]he railroad managers had pro-

claimed that the demand for the restoration of the wage cut was an infringement on their management rights, and they were determined not to allow the slightest interference with their total domination over the lives of their workers. In this, they were receiving the backing of the nation's press, for those few railroad managers who had rescinded the wage cut were being pilloried as traitors to the nation. ... [T]he capitalists were relying on their "puppets" in city and state governments to do the work for them of breaking the strike and forcing the workers to live at a starvation level. Thus, while they appeared to be paralyzed and helpless, their agents were drowning "the grand uprising of labor" in blood:

Already two hundred lives have been sacrificed. The military powers in different states have been used to shoot like dogs men claiming their God-given rights: at Reading, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Chicago and other points, men, women and helpless children have been massacred by citizen soldiery, employed to enforce the demands of the railroad companies. [Andrew C. Cameron, *Chicago Workingman's Advocate*] ...

Once the strikes were over, the Marxists [of the Workingmen's Party of the United States] insisted that the next immediate task was to create such a national federation of trade unions, with

the eight-hour day as the unifying issue. Executive committees set up during the struggle, and scattered mass meetings were not enough, they argued. Strikers with hungry families to feed required swift relief payments, and hastily established committees could not meet this need. The strikes had demonstrated the indispensability of trade unions capable of holding out against the combined employer-government offensive.

The Marxists also maintained that the strikes had also proven that skilled and unskilled, employed and unemployed, Black and white, American- and foreign-born, men and women — all could join together in a common struggle against the common enemy. Thus, it was possible to build a labor movement that would unite these different sections of the working class for the first time in American history. ...

It is clear that although the strikers returned to work without wage increases, they did not return demoralized. At the end of the Great Strike, the British ambassador wrote to his government from Washington, D.C.: ... "I much fear that the only result of this strike will be to show the labouring classes their strength and to enable them still further to improve for future use the organization which it has now cost so much trouble and bloodshed to subdue." ... The Great Strike ... became the springboard for political and trade union action by the American working class. It was able to assume this character because it was more than a strike movement against wage cuts. It was a social rebellion, the first assertion by a national working class of a common anger against a variety of grievances — years of brutal exploitation, and a system of industrialization which viewed the worker as little more than part of the machine. ... It was the first real evidence of working class collective power capable of imposing its own will upon future social developments. Workers from New York to San Francisco understood, for the first time, their potential power. ...

Writing to Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx called the Great Strike "the first uprising against the oligarchy of capital which had developed since the Civil War," and predicted that while it would be suppressed, it "could very well be the point of origin for the creation of a serious workers' party in the United States."

May

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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PHILIP S. FONER

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8 The Militant May 8, 2023

The low point of labor resistance is behind us

Below are excerpts from the preface to The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward by SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters. Copyright © 2023 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

The articles and documents here highlight the opportunities ahead for class-conscious workers, as a decades-long retreat by the working class and trade unions comes to an end. The intensified speedup, longer and longer hours, attacks on job safety, declining real wages, lack of steady employment, and spiraling social and moral blight — conditions produced by the ruling class families in the United States and capitalism’s dog-eat-dog social relations — are pressing more and more working people to say, “Enough is enough.” Workers have begun using our collective economic power and class solidarity in response. ...

Asserting that “the low point of labor resistance is behind us” is not a prediction about coming struggles. Nor is it a promise about when or where new and more powerful class battles will break out. Instead, that assessment is based on the increased confidence and combativity, as well as the anger demonstrated by working people confronting very

different conditions around the world.

We’ve seen it during the post-COVID economic “recovery” with strikes, organizing efforts, and other union fights in the United States by bakery workers, rail freight workers, coal miners, and other unionists, as well as by others organizing to establish unions where they work.

We’ve seen it in fights by public education workers and truckers in Canada, by rail workers and nurses in the United Kingdom, and by workers and unionists from Australia, South Korea, and Russia to Israel, South Africa, and Puerto Rico.

We’ve seen it in the mass revolt in China against the brutal, anti-working-class COVID policies of the Stalinist regime in Beijing.

In the hundreds of thousands of youth and working people who’ve taken to the streets across Iran in response to the death of Zhina Amini at the hands of the hated “morality” police.

In the determination of the toilers of Ukraine to roll back Moscow’s attempt to wipe them off the map.

In the steadfastness of Cuban working people in defending their socialist revolution in face of the mounting human and material hardships inflicted by Washington’s brutal, decades-long economic, trade, financial, and diplomatic drive to crush the revolution.

Drop charges against African People’s Socialist Party!

Continued from front page

FSB, Vladimir Putin’s political police. A third, Aleksandr Ionov, is alleged to have worked with the APSP to advance Moscow’s interference in an election in St. Petersburg, Florida, in 2019. The APSP ran Eritha Akile Cainion for City Council there.

Founded in 1972, the Black nationalist party runs a range of small businesses and has engaged in constitutionally protected political activity for decades.

The indictment says Ionov gave money to APSP members to build support for Moscow’s agenda in the U.S., especially Putin’s seizure of parts of Ukraine. APSP leaders have never made any secret of their support for the Kremlin’s attempt to crush Ukraine’s independence. And that opinion is shared by others, including a number of Stalinist-trained groups here. All of them collaborate with forces abroad who share their views, as is their right.

Prosecutors lost no time making clear their real target is the Constitution’s protections of free political expression. Russian spies “weaponized our First Amendment rights,” complained Assistant Attorney General Matthew G. Olsen of the Justice Department’s National Security Division. Whenever the government says someone is “weaponizing the First Amendment,” it means they’re voicing opinions it wants to shut up.

Assault on protected political activity

Throughout the indictment prosecutors target APSP members political activities. These include campaigning for reparations for descendants of slaves, and publishing articles by Ionov. It also cites a visit by Yeshitela to Moscow in 2015. Prosecutors charge the group’s members because they didn’t sign up as Moscow’s “agents” with the U.S. attorney general. If convicted, they face up to 15 years in prison.

Heavily armed FBI agents raided the APSP and Uhuru Movement’s offices in St. Petersburg last July, battering down the doors, throwing flashbang grenades inside and handcuffing those there at gunpoint, as they seized computers, financial records and files. They also raided the homes of APSP and Uhuru members.

“This case is not about ... whether or not I have a position around the war in Ukraine that was the same as what the Russians had,” Yeshitela, chairman of the APSP, wrote late last year. “This attack was perpetrated against us because we have always fought for the liberation of Africa.” The group also supports the Cuban Revolution and one of its members is currently on a delegation from the U.S. to Havana to take part in activities around May Day.

“Foreign agent” laws are a key part of the government’s “national security” arsenal — a direct attack on First Amendment protections. If any of your politi-

cal positions are similar to some other country’s government, you’re fair game to be spied on, disrupted and prosecuted.

The Foreign Agents Registration Act was adopted in 1938 by the Democratic Party administration of Franklin Roosevelt. It was part of a package of laws attacking political rights in preparation for crushing opposition to Washington’s entry into the second imperialist world war.

The FBI launched an assault on the Socialist Workers Party for building opposition in the labor movement to the U.S. rulers’ imperialist war drive in the late 1930s. The attack began under the Foreign Agents Act. It led to the frame-up and conviction of 18 SWP leaders and Teamsters union members under the thought-control Smith Act in 1941.

For decades afterward, Democratic and Republican administrations have used “foreign agent” and a raft of other witch hunt laws as weapons to spy on, harass and disrupt the SWP, Communist Party, opponents of Washington’s wars and others.

Acting as “unregistered foreign agents” was one of the charges against five Cuban revolutionaries who had come to the U.S. to gather information about counterrevolutionary groups plotting violent assaults on Cuba. The Cuban Five were targeted by the FBI, framed up and imprisoned for up to 16 years. The last of them won their freedom in 2014.

Months before Donald Trump was elected president in 2016, the FBI tried to cook up a case claiming he too was a threat to “national security,” operating in collusion with Moscow. It raided the homes and offices of Trump supporters.

The FBI broke into Trump’s Mar-a-Lago estate last summer under the ruse of protecting “national security.” The government claimed he improperly took secret documents when he left the White House. It turned out later that many presidents do the same, including Joseph Biden. This assault was a part of the Democrats’ six-year effort to drive Trump out of politics or to prison.

Whenever one ruling-class party attempts to criminalize its differences with the other, their assaults batter constitutional protections and inevitably come back on the working class. The raid at Mar-a-Lago and against the APSP were followed by another FBI operation, where agents attempted to interrogate some 60 people in Puerto Rico who had taken part in a solidarity brigade to Cuba. So far no charges have been issued.

Defending constitutional freedoms against government assault remains central to advancing the common struggles of workers and the oppressed.

Drop the charges against the APSP!

Solidarity with workers in flood-hit California town

BY BETSEY STONE

PAJARO, Calif. — There has been an outpouring of solidarity for workers whose homes were flooded here when a levee broke March 11. Some 200 volunteers turned out April 15 to help flood victims clean up mud, rip out water drenched floors and carpets and rebuild home foundations. Members of area churches have contributed food and clothing. Community organizations and small-business people have been raising funds.

A week later members of the Socialist Workers Party visited an area in Pajaro set aside for those helping out and met some of the volunteers. Members of a San Jose Buddhist church in white hazmat suits were taking a break after spending the morning digging mud out from under houses and trailers. Students from the University of California in nearby Santa Cruz were there to join in. Translators had come to aid indigenous residents who speak Mixteco and Zapotec.

The solidarity shown by workers and others is in sharp contrast to the callous disregard shown by government agencies toward flood victims in this working-class community where many farmworkers live. For weeks after the flood almost no government aid arrived. Finally, on April 3, residents became eligible for loans and other help from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, but only if you had papers the government considers legitimate, and are able to navigate the bureaucratic obstacles involved.

Volunteer Lizbeth Garnica told us that hundreds of families are still in shelters or living with relatives because their homes are not livable. With fields still muddy from flooding, many farmworkers have no work and no income. Even if you can’t live in your apartment because it was flooded, she said, landlords are demanding rent.

Garnica, whose parents are farmworkers, said she supported the protest that workers organized in Pajaro March 30, demanding aid and equal treatment for undocumented workers. “It makes me emotional, because such a march should not have to happen,” she said. We told her the Socialist Workers Party campaigns for amnesty for undocumented immigrant workers in the U.S. We can win people to this, we said, because it’s in the interests of all workers.

We also talked with Lucia Haro, who was working with other family members to clean and repair her mother’s home. The levee that broke should have been fixed years ago, she said.

Government authorities have known since the 1960s about the need to repair the levee. But nothing was done because the federal Army Corps of Engineers bases its priorities on the value of the land involved. So levees in well-off areas get fixed, while the needs of working-class communities are put on the back burner.

Going door to door in Watsonville, we met Mari-lu Martinez, a house cleaner, who ticked off a list of class injustices that anger her — not only the flooding, but lack of good schools for their children, discriminatory treatment of immigrants and rising gas prices that make it more expensive for her husband’s long drive to work.

We showed her the *Militant* with the article on how people of East Palestine, Ohio, are fighting for control of the cleanup after the derailment there. Workers need to rely on ourselves, we said, to get organized and use our unions. We need to build a labor party to take political power out of the hands of the ruling rich. She signed up for a *Militant* subscription and wants to talk more, saying she liked what she heard, “100%.”

Several of the Red Cross volunteers we met in Pajaro were from Ohio. One was Atticus Flower, who said he was impressed with the response of the people of East Palestine to the train wreck there, their solidarity and role in getting things done.

Correction

In *Militant* issue no. 17, the headline on page 6 was misspelled. It should have read “Back Ukraine independence fight!”