

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Working people across Cuba
mobilize for May Day actions
— PAGE 6

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 87/NO. 19 MAY 15, 2023

Working people in East Palestine keep up fight for cleanup, health

BY TONY LANE

EAST PALESTINE, Ohio — Three months after the Feb. 3 Norfolk Southern train derailment, fire and burn-off of toxic vinyl chloride here, workers, farmers and small-business people continue to press to gain control over needed steps to clean up the area and protect their health. Their efforts are aimed at both the rail bosses and government authorities.

The Environmental Protection Agency held one of an ongoing series of “informational sessions” in East Palestine April 27.

EPA Response Coordinator Mark Durno claimed there is little to no risk of vinyl chloride exposure, but residents took the floor to insist they’ve taken tests that prove exposure to the chemical continues. Eric “Jake” Cozza, who lives less than half a mile from the derailment site,

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Workers feel a wind at their backs in combat with the bosses

BY TERRY EVANS

Over the past couple of years growing numbers of workers have turned to our unions to resist bosses’ efforts to squeeze more from our labor. Underlying this shift is a deepening crisis of capitalist production and trade, sharpening international rivalries and rearmament, developments in world politics that are not going away.

This means workers face growing uncertainty about the future, widening class inequality and sharper assaults on our class from the bosses and their government.

Evidence that decades of retreat by the working class and our unions is a thing of the past can be seen in the rising number of strikes last year, up 50% from the year before. When workers and our unions go into struggle today, there’s a breeze beginning

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UPS workers rally, open battle over new contract

Key issues are two-tier wages, part-time jobs



Militant/Mike Shur

Teamsters rally at UPS depot in New York April 28, part of national fight for new contract to get rid of two-tier pay, boost wages for part-time workers and unify all the workers.

BY SETH GALINSKY

NEW YORK — Hundreds of Teamsters union members rallied at six UPS hubs in the New York City area at the end of April to advance their fight for a new contract. The current contract expires July 31. Workers’ key demands are to get rid of two tiers for drivers, boost pay for part-time workers, get more part-time workers moved into full-time positions and to limit forced overtime.

In 2018 UPS established a second tier — referred to as “22.4” drivers

because of an article in that year’s union contract — who earn anywhere from \$3 to \$6 an hour less than the “regular package car drivers” with the same amount of seniority. The change

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Expand reach of SWP campaigns, ‘Militant,’ books by SWP leaders



Militant/Iiona Gersh

Socialist Workers Party member Naomi Craine signs up foundry worker Gabriel Quintero for *Militant* subscription, *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us* on May Day in Milwaukee.

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

We’re entering the home stretch of the international campaign to extend the readership of the *Militant* by 1,350; sell a similar number of books by Socialist Workers Party leaders and other revolutionaries; introduce the party’s candidates and its program to meet the capitalist crisis we face; and raise \$165,000 to fund production of the paper. Party members and supporters are stepping up efforts to complete the campaign in full and on time. Join in!

SWP members Alex Huinil and Laura Anderson met Yeny Toruno in Miami April 27. She came to the U.S. from Ni-

caragua.

Toruno was attracted to the photos on the cover of *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. She was interested in the picture of Milagros Rivera, president of the Cuba Solidarity Committee in Puerto Rico, protesting FBI harassment of members of a solidarity brigade they organized to Cuba last summer to show their support for the fight to end Washington’s punishing economic war against the socialist revolution.

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Support Ukraine independence! Join fight against Moscow invasion

BY ROY LANDERSEN

With its invading forces unable to overcome staunch Ukrainian resistance, Moscow resumed long-range airstrikes aimed at doing maximum damage to civilians, their homes and work sites in Ukraine at the end of April. Working people there are at the center of the defense of the country’s sovereignty but at the same time face attacks on wages, working conditions, union and political rights from the capitalist government of President Volodymyr Zelensky.

While Russian President Vladimir Putin’s earlier salvos targeted power plants, Moscow’s cruise missiles are now striking homes far from the frontlines aiming to inflict maximum casualties. Dozens were killed or injured when high-rise buildings were struck in Dnipro and nearby cities in central Ukraine April 27-May 1.

Two were killed and at least 34

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May 1 rallies push for stronger unions, rights of immigrants

BY SETH GALINSKY

NEW YORK — International Workers Day marches and protests across the United States and in the U.S. colony of Puerto Rico May 1 — like similar actions all over the world — attracted working people and youth looking for ways to resist the impact of today’s deepening capitalist crisis. The fight for the rights of immigrant workers in the

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\$7 until May 31 (normally \$10)
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Irish workers discuss prospects for unification as support grows

BY ÖGMUNDUR JÓNSSON

DUBLIN, Ireland — Marking the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak went to Belfast to sell his government’s latest attempt to stabilize British rule in Northern Ireland. President Joseph Biden also toured Ireland, touting Washington’s role in the signing of the pact.

Adopted on April 10, 1998, the agreement registered advances in the struggle to end the second-class status of Catholics imposed by the British rulers and steps forward in the struggle for Irish unity. London was forced to dismantle much of its repressive apparatus. Northern Ireland remained part of the U.K., and an assembly and executive were established there with power over health, education and other matters. Both Biden and Sunak urged the restoration of the assembly, currently boycotted by the main pro-British unionist party.

In recent years forces favoring the unification of Ireland have gained ground in capitalist politics and are pushing for a referendum in the North and South to end the partition imposed by the British rulers more than a century ago.

Members of the Communist League in the U.K. visited Belfast and Dublin to discuss with fellow toilers the common struggles workers face as bosses try to offload the crisis of their system onto our backs. This included discussing prospects for the unification of Ireland.

“It’s best to keep things as they are,” Aaron Dowd, a housing estate caretaker in Ballymun, Dublin, said when we

asked his opinion about calls for a referendum. “There’s peace now and an open border. If you try to push things too far, some people are going to get upset.”

“The crisis of British rule in Northern Ireland today is a product of struggles by working people, especially the fight by Catholics in the North against their second-class status,” CL member Catharina Tirsén said. “And it shows the weakening of British imperialism.”

“Good!” Dowd responded. “I have no problem with that.”

“The Communist League calls for an end to British rule,” Tirsén said. “This would strengthen the fight for working-class solidarity and efforts to organize the forces that can lead the struggle for workers and farmers governments in both Britain and in Ireland.”

Dowd subscribed to the *Militant* and bought a copy of *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us*. “We can definitely do something to change things,” he said after seeing the *Militant*’s coverage on the struggle of working people in East Palestine, Ohio.

Common struggles by workers from Catholic and Protestant backgrounds in Northern Ireland, as well as by growing numbers of immigrant workers, became more possible after the Good Friday Agreement.

It “was the best thing that ever happened,” retired worker Paddy Rooney told us in Belfast. “It stopped the killings. This area was like a war zone. You used to have soldiers stop and search you on every corner.”

For decades, British rule in Northern Ireland rested on pitting Protestants



Justin Kernaghan

Thousands of teachers and other public sector workers rally at Belfast City Hall in Northern Ireland on April 26 during one-day strike for higher wages, staffing and working conditions.

and Catholics against each other. Massive struggles against anti-Catholic discrimination in employment, housing, education and voting rights erupted at the end of the 1960s. To quell the rising movement, the U.K. government sent in thousands of troops, but successive governments failed to crush the struggle for civil and national rights.

Classroom assistant Bronagh Cahill said she thought that changes over recent decades have opened space for working people. “I’m just old enough to remember soldiers on the streets when I was a child,” she said. “It helps to see how far we’ve come. Not so long ago talk of a poll on whether to unify Ireland was unthinkable.”

Like others in the area, she was picked up by recent labor struggles. Many of those we spoke to had seen nurses’ picket lines during their recent strikes.

“People aren’t willing to accept things anymore,” Cahill said.

Teachers across Northern Ireland carried out a one-day strike April 26, affecting state, church and independent schools, which are still largely segregated along Catholic-Protestant lines. Unions that have taken part in previous rounds in the long-running fight over wages, staffing and conditions — the historically pro-British Ulster Teachers Union, the all-Ireland Irish National Teachers Union and a union that organizes teachers across the U.K. — were joined by two more teachers unions.

Thousands of teachers and other public sector workers on strike that day took part in a rally at Belfast City Hall called by all nine striking unions. The strikes coincide with long-running fights by teachers and nurses in England.

Farmers fight to make ends meet in Ireland

“We lost money for nearly two years solid,” Roy Gallie, chairperson of the Irish Farmers’ Association Pigs Committee, told the *Militant* by phone April 16. Last year he helped organize protests at retailers to highlight the fact that prices paid to pig farmers were below their production costs.

“It’s reversed now,” Gallie said. “We went from losing a fortune to breaking even.” He said their campaign wasn’t aimed at workers paying more.

“Eventually, we got Irish government support, but we had to cut our number of sows by 10% to get the money.” Gallie worries what that means down the road. “Feeding the 8 billion people on this planet is a big responsibility. We’re not all about to go vegan. There will be a place for pig farming for a long time.”

— Ö.J.

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THE MILITANT

Militant ‘puts working people front and center’

“It’s the kind of paper that equips working people for the coming struggles,” Chris Pennock, National Association of Letter Carriers member in Minneapolis, said of the ‘Militant.’ He helped his local organize April 2 protest for end to forced overtime, more jobs.



Militant/Edwin Fruit
Minneapolis letter carrier Chris Pennock.

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Dairy farmers in Texas discuss crisis today, death of 18,000 cows

BY ALYSON KENNEDY AND JOSEFINA OTERO

DIMMITT, Texas — A fire quickly spread through the giant South Fork Dairy structure, a few miles outside of town here, killing some 18,000 cows and critically injuring a worker April 10. A town of 4,200, Dimmitt is the seat of Castro County in the panhandle. County Sheriff Sal Rivera told the media that a honey wagon — a piece of manure management equipment that sucks out manure and water — may have “over-heated and the methane and things like that might have ignited and spread out with an explosion and a fire.”

“I was 15 miles away and I felt the aftershock from the explosion,” James Garibaldi, who lives in town, told the *Militant*. Smoke could be seen 80 miles away. Working people and local businesses brought meals out to the crews working at the scene for several weeks. There were flyers posted on store windows all over town publicizing a benefit organized by a local barbecue to raise money for Krysta, the worker trapped in the barn and critically injured.

The Texas State Fire Marshal’s Office said the piece of equipment that caught fire was “identical to others that have burned previously,” so “there will be a more in-depth investigation.”

The dairy is owned by the Frank Brand family and has been in operation here for less than a year. It employs some 60 workers. Brand also has dairy operations in the cities of Energy and Comanche in central Texas.

“I’m out of work now because I drive a truck for a small trucking business owned by my family that delivers milk tanks from the dairy to cheese plants in Texas and New Mexico,” Javier Hernandez told us at a local cafe. He was interested in *Militant* articles we showed

him about the fight by working people in East Palestine, Ohio, to control the cleanup and protect their health after the derailment and burn-off of toxic vinyl chloride from a Norfolk Southern train in February. He subscribed.

Texas is now the fourth-largest milk producer in the country, with 625,000 dairy cows. Castro County here has more than 59,000 cows that produced more than 147 million pounds of milk in February.

The industry has become highly concentrated. In 1975, Texas had 2,890 dairies producing about 3 billion pounds of milk. In 2020, the state had just 351 dairies that produced more than 14.8 billion pounds of milk.

“Most of the milk produced goes to cheese factories. A number of workers here drive trucks taking the milk to these companies,” Quincey Kinser, who works in a local farm feed and supply store, told the *Militant*. “The explosion has put a lot of them out of work besides the ones who worked at the farm.

“A lot of farmers have lost their farms because they can’t afford to farm any more,” he said. “The dairy farms use a lot of water from the Ogallala Aquifer and well water is getting very low. Prices of alfalfa and hay have skyrocketed.

“Three thousand head of cattle is considered a medium-size farm



Militant/Josefina Otero
Alyson Kennedy, SWP candidate for mayor of Fort Worth, Texas, talks with Quincey Kinser at feed store in Dimmitt after 18,000 cows were killed, worker injured, in fire at South Fork Dairy.

now,” he said.

Kennedy said, “We need to build a workers and farmers alliance. What you describe is the result of a capitalist system that prioritizes the interests of the wealthy dairy farm owners. That is why we need a party of our own, a labor party based on our unions, to fight for the interests of workers and small farmers in cities and small towns.”

Kinser got a *Militant* subscription and a copy of the new Pathfinder book *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. He was interested in reading the section on the importance of working people defending our constitutional freedoms today.

Pointing to the recent felony indictment of former President Donald Trump in New York, Kinser said, “If they can do that to Trump, they can do it to us.”

During the one-day solidarity trip here, party members sold six *Militant* subscriptions and three copies of the new book. Other subscribers included a woman hardware store worker whose family lives in Ukraine and a worker who had recently spent a stretch behind bars.

Expand reach of SWP campaigns, ‘Militant,’ books

Continued from front page

“I think all governments are acting the same,” Toruno said, referring to the drive by the capitalist rulers against the rights and living standards of working people. “But we’re still here figuring things out.”

Toruno had worked in a large textile plant in Nicaragua that produces women’s clothing where workers are “paid \$20 a week, face speedup and harassment. Today they’re on strike,” she said. She got a *Militant* subscription and invited party members to come back and talk some more.

SWP election campaigns

SWP candidates and members joined May Day actions around the country. Seth Galinsky, the party’s candidate for New York City Council, participated in two events there.

“Part of what we presented was the need for unions to fight for an amnesty for the millions of immigrants in the U.S. without papers,” he told the *Militant*. “This is needed to unify working people to take on the bosses’ attacks. It’s tied to organizing and strengthening our unions.

“We also explained that our unions are hamstrung as long as they’re tied to the parties of the capitalist rulers, the Democrats and Republicans,” he said. “We need to use our unions to launch our own party, a labor party that can speak

in the interests of all those oppressed and exploited by capitalism. My party’s campaign is raising this class-struggle perspective far and wide.”

Interest in the party’s program was reflected in the 11 subscriptions and 24 books party members sold there.

In Minneapolis, the SWP kicked off its campaign for City Council April 29 with a rally featuring candidates Edwin Fruit and Gabrielle Prosser, who are running in the 1st and 11th wards respectively.

“Our campaign explains that all politics is class against class,” Fruit said, “not red vs. blue, nor conservative vs. liberal. We point to what is in the interest of the working class and other exploited toilers, whether they work the land, drive trucks or own small businesses.”

Before the rally, Fruit attended a meeting protesting arson attacks on

two mosques. A fire was started in a restroom at the Masjid Omar Islamic Center April 23; the next day a fire on the third floor attached to the Masjid Al Rahma Mosque forced the evacuation of 40 children from a day care center in the building.

Fruit delivered a solidarity message calling on workers, farmers and all defenders of democratic right to condemn these attacks, as well as the recent antisemitic graffiti targeting Temple Israel in Minneapolis.

To join the effort to expand the reach of the *Militant*, to get out the books, win support for the SWP campaign and to contribute to the fund, contact the nearest SWP branch listed on page 8. Donations to the fund can also be made online at themilitant.com.

Kevin Dwire in Minneapolis contributed to this article.

Campaign to expand reach of ‘Militant,’ books, fund						
March 18-May 16 (week six)						
Country	Sub quota	Subs sold	Books quota	Books sold	Fund quota	Fund received
UNITED STATES						
Atlanta	50	37	50	55	\$9,500	\$6,466
Chicago*	100	67	125	113	\$14,000	\$9,820
Cincinnati*	55	38	55	40	\$6,000	\$2,775
Dallas-FortWorth	60	43	60	49	\$5,000	\$4,556
Lincoln	15	15	15	15	\$500	\$272
Los Angeles*	90	112	110	135	\$16,000	\$7,777
Miami*	45	27	70	77	\$5,500	\$3,680
Minneapolis	70	56	70	71	\$5,500	\$2,561
N. New Jersey	85	66	85	78	\$7,000	\$4,194
New York	100	83	115	109	\$20,500	\$13,883
Oakland	90	80	90	78	\$15,000	\$12,279
Philadelphia*	50	46	60	54	\$6,000	\$5,150
Pittsburgh	45	27	45	22	\$6,000	\$5,022
Seattle	75	51	75	64	\$14,000	\$7,975
Washington	50	47	50	47	\$4,500	\$3,283
Other		87		235		\$600
Total U.S.	980	882	1075	1242	\$135,000	\$90,293
Prisoners	50	71				
UNITED KINGDOM						
London	40	39	40	45	\$2,450	\$1,300
Manchester	35	33	40	44	\$1,200	\$960
Total U.K.	75	72	80	89	\$3,650	2260
Canada	90	67	90	110	\$12,000	\$8,700
Australia	35	31	35	45	\$6,000	\$4,070
Total	1,230	1,123	1,280	1,486	\$156,650	\$105,323
SHOULD BE	1,350	1,013	1,350	1,013	\$165,000	\$123,750
* Raised goal						

2023 Socialist Workers Party and Communist League candidates

Fight in the interests of the working class

Build a labor party based on our unions

Cincinnati, Ohio
Ned Measel, City Council
Kaitlin Estill, City Council

Fort Worth, Texas
Alyson Kennedy, Mayor

Minneapolis, Minnesota
Edwin Fruit, City Council
Gabrielle Prosser, City Council

New Jersey
Joanne Kuniarsky, State Senate
Lea Sherman, State General Assembly

New York City
Sara Lobman, City Council
Seth Galinsky, City Council
Róger Calero, City Council

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Chris Hoepfner, Mayor
Osborne Hart, City Council

Seattle, Washington
Rebecca Williamson, City Council
Vincent Auger, City Council
Henry Dennison, King County Council

Australia
Bob Aiken, NSW Legislative Assembly
Linda Harris, NSW Legislative Assembly

Canada
Félix Vincent Ardea, Parliament

United Kingdom
Peter Clifford, Manchester City Council

Back Ukraine independence!

Continued from front page
wounded when buildings were struck in Pavlograd in eastern Ukraine. The city is a key industrial center, home to Ukraine's largest coal mine. Putin's bombs hit 19 apartment buildings, 25 houses, six schools and five shops.

Moscow is carrying out a "deliberate and systematic strategy of terror against civilians," wrote Hanna Perekhoda in Open Democracy April 30. Based in Lausanne, Switzerland, she is a founder of the Swiss Ukraine Committee and a member of Social Movement, a pro-working-class socialist organization in Ukraine.

Living under Moscow's occupation, the Ukrainian people are "victims of forced displacement, murder, rape and torture. Tens of thousands of children are thought to have been deported from the occupied territories to Russia, where their national identity is forcibly erased," Perekhoda said. Putin decreed April 28 that Ukrainians living in areas seized by his forces have until July 2024 to apply for Russian citizenship or face deportation.

"Ukraine can only survive if it succeeds in expelling the Russian army from its entire territory," Perekhoda wrote. That's why "Ukraine's civic and political forces are unwavering in their resistance."

"The war has pushed Ukraine's economy into a deep recession," she said. High inflation has slashed incomes. "Not only did many people lose their jobs — they also lost homes and relatives." Eight million people have left the country.

"Despite these difficult conditions, the Ukrainian people refuse to be passive victims," she said. "The capacity of ordinary Ukrainians for self-organization has been, and remains, one of the keys to the country's resistance."

"Unfortunately, Ukrainian workers are facing attacks from their own government even as they defend the country," Perekhoda pointed out.

Taking advantage of the martial law measures it has imposed, Zelensky's government has passed laws allowing bosses to throw out provisions in union contracts, enforce longer hours, impose contracts with no fixed hours and fire workers without notice. It is also enforcing restrictions on political parties it alleges have links to Russia and is embarking on a privatization program of more than 100 companies.

Since November, giant U.S. fund manager BlackRock has been advising Kyiv on its "investment framework."

Pointing toward the openings for profit, BlackRock's chief Lawrence Fink proclaimed "those who truly believe in a capitalistic system will be flooding Ukraine with capital."

As the main condition for its recent multibillion-dollar loan to Kyiv, the International Monetary Fund demanded the Ukrainian government further cut back social expenditure.

"It is the workers who are keeping Ukraine's factories, hospitals, schools, trains and offices running," Perekhoda said. "And it is the workers who are fighting on the frontline, ensuring the survival" of Ukraine as a state. "We must ensure their voices are heard."

Opposition inside Russia to the war

Inside Russia, opponents of the war are increasingly determined to speak out and are finding creative ways around the Kremlin's draconian wartime censorship.

Anastasia Chernysheva, a baker in Moscow, was fined 35,000 rubles last month (\$440) for "discrediting" the Russian army's role in Ukraine with ... cupcakes! One of her specialties is made-to-order cakes with anti-war slogans. She posted pictures of some with blue-and-yellow icing, the colors of the



Bakery XOXO
Anastasia Chernysheva was fined for "discrediting" Russian military by posting online image of a cake in blue-and-yellow icing, colors of Ukraine's flag. It says, "The sun will rise," from song in a famous Soviet-era cartoon, "the night will be over with the hard times, the sun will rise."

Ukrainian flag, in the months after the invasion began.

When she received comments that she should be imprisoned, at first she "laughed it off." Then she realized "they would come for me because of the cakes."

Last month, a regional deputy was also fined for "discrediting" the Russian military. His crime? He posted online a film of himself watching Putin's state-

of-the-nation address with spaghetti noodles hanging from his ears. It mimics a Russian idiom meaning to dupe someone in a skillful manner so they naively believe what you say.

Fueling opposition to the war inside Russia are the mounting casualties of working people there who Putin uses as cannon fodder. Washington estimates some 20,000 Russian soldiers have been killed just this year alone.

Chernobyl disaster result of Stalinist contempt for workers

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

On April 26, 1986 — 37 years ago — the people of Ukraine bore the brunt of the world's worst nuclear disaster, the explosion, fire and meltdown at the Chernobyl power plant. It was a catastrophe denied by Soviet authorities even after radiation detectors sounded the alarm two days later almost 700 miles away in Sweden.

In 2014, at the invitation of Ukraine's nuclear workers union, two reporters for the *Militant*, Frank Forrestal and John Studer, today the paper's editor, went to Chernobyl for a firsthand account of the disaster and its continued effects. "The carelessly flawed design of the nuclear reactor that led to the meltdown. The decision to skip construction of a containment vessel that would have impeded the release of radiation. The refusal to immediately evacuate the area or take any measures to prevent residents from consuming contaminated milk and vegetables," they wrote, showed "the brutality and contempt for working people by the Soviet government in Moscow."

Thirty people died in the first few weeks and the number of long-term cancers and deaths has grown into the thousands. The Stalinist rulers' disdain for workers' lives played a role in the collapse of the Soviet Union a few years later.

A larger meltdown was only averted by the self-sacrificing efforts of thousands — known as liquidators — who volunteered to contain the disaster, the first of them with no protective gear.

Cuba's internationalism

"When the explosion at Chernobyl took place, it was a social tragedy," Liliya Piltay told Studer in Kyiv. "The authorities didn't tell anyone the extent of what was taking place." Piltay was a leader of the Young Communists in that city who made an international appeal for help in late 1989, one quickly answered by Cuba's revolutionary leadership.

In contrast to Moscow, Cuba offered

free medical treatment. In just three months, 7,000 volunteers built a special medical facility at Tarara outside Havana, and for over 24 years Cuba provided care for 25,000 people affected by Chernobyl radiation poisoning, mainly from Ukraine but also Belarus and Russia. Some 21,000 were children.

Liquidators across the country organized protests against pension cuts ordered by the pro-Moscow regime of Viktor Yanukovich in Ukraine from 2011-13. This was part of the political struggle taking shape in Ukraine that exploded in the Maidan uprising in 2014. Millions of unionists, students and other working people joined in popular mass actions that toppled the Yanukovich regime, drawing the everlasting hatred of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

After the Maidan, "Ukrainians are more conscious, more self-confident," Sergey Akamovich, a leader of the Chernobyl nuclear workers' union, told Studer in Slavutych in June 2014. "By challenging our country, Putin has brought us together in defense of Ukraine. Things won't ever be the same." Slavutych was built after the disaster made workers' earlier hometown — Pripjat — uninhabitable.

Moscow's war on Ukraine

In the first hours of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Russian troops seized control of the Chernobyl plant, forcing workers to keep it functioning. A drastic increase in radiation levels was recorded as Russian military vehicles tore up the soil. The Red Forest, located directly behind the plant, remains one of the most contaminated areas on Earth. Yet Russian soldiers were ordered to dig in and live there, with officers indifferent to their health.

"They were digging trenches right close to the reactor," Halyna Markevych, 82, and one of the area's few residents, told the press. "We told them to stop. They said: 'Come on. What kind of radiation could there be?'"

Halyna Voloshyna, 74, who refused

to abandon her home near the reactor in 1986, grew angry when the Russians told her they were there to liberate her. She proved to be such a thorn in their side, Russian troops called her "the furious babushka at the end of the lane." Her youngest son is fighting for Ukraine in the eastern city of Bakhmut today.

On April 1, 2022, Russian troops were forced out of Chernobyl, after their push to seize Kiev and crush the Ukrainian people was smashed by Ukrainian defense forces.

In southern Ukraine, Moscow's forces took over control of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, Europe's largest, which had provided 20% of Ukraine's electricity. Studer and Forrestal had visited with unionists there as well. Moscow turned the grounds of the plant into a military base, and shelling since has endangered the facility and much more. Electrical generation was shut down there last September.

"We have been operating it safely for over 40 years without a single accident," the 10,000 plant workers wrote in an August appeal. "But we are powerless before human irresponsibility and madness."

Lenin's Final Fight
Speeches and Writings, 1922-23
"I declare war to the death on Great Russian chauvinism."
V.I. Lenin, 1922

\$17

SPEECHES & WRITINGS
1922-23

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**—MILITANT
LABOR
FORUMS—**

GEORGIA
Atlanta
The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward. Sat., May 13, 7:30 p.m. Donation: \$10. 777 Hilton Garden Inn, Junior Ballroom, 3437 Bobby Brown Parkway. Tel.: (678) 528-7828.

PENNSYLVANIA
Pittsburgh
Amnesty for Undocumented Workers, Unify the Working Class. Speaker: Kathie Fitzgerald, Socialist Workers Party. Mon., May 15, 6:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 5907 Penn Ave., Suite 313. Tel.: (412) 610-2402.

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

Are you involved in a union organizing drive or strike? Brought solidarity to fellow workers on the picket line? Let us know! Send articles, photos and letters to themilitant@mac.com or through our website, or mail them to 306 W. 37th St., 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Canada federal workers strike ends, unionists voting on contract

MONTREAL — A 12-day nationwide strike by 120,000 federal government workers ended May 1 with a tentative agreement between the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the government. Wage increases were the overriding issue in the strike.

Workers will vote soon on whether to accept the contract. The deal does not affect 35,000 workers at the Canada Revenue Agency, whose picket lines are still up as talks between bosses and the PSAC continue.

Tens of thousands of government workers, many participating in their first strike, have joined picket lines and demonstrations.

“What we really gained with this strike is fighting experience,” Martin Trudel-Racine, a coast guard sailor in Rimouski, Quebec, told the *Militant* by phone. He is president of Local 10109 of the Union of Canadian Transportation Employees.

The contract provides a 12.6% wage increase over four years retroactive to June 2021, and a lump sum payment of 2,500 Canadian dollars (\$1,835). The unionists rejected the government’s initial 9% offer over three years before striking.

“It’s not just us. Everybody deserves fair wages in order to survive,” striker Nielene Chan told *Global News* on the picket line at the Cascadia grain terminal in Vancouver.

— John Steele

Alcatraz ferryboat workers rally for a contract

SAN FRANCISCO — Alcatraz Island ferryboat crews have organized a union and are fighting for a contract, 16 years after Hornblower Cruises took over the service and drove the union out. They held a spirited rally at Pier 33 here April 16 to counter the ferry company’s attempt to divide and weaken the union.

The company is trying to remove ship captains and maintenance supervisors from the bargaining unit, claiming their jobs are “management.” The Inlandboatmen’s Union, part of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, is fighting for the entire crew to be in the union, from snack bar clerks to the deckhands and captain, as well as maintenance workers and ticket sellers.

The real managers, those with the ability to hire, fire and set schedules, are sitting on their behinds in offices at the ferry terminal.

“It’s not about money for me, it’s about fairness. We want equal benefits for all the workers and a big wage increase for the lower-paid workers,” Brian Dobruck, a ship captain and a leader of the organizing drive, told the *Militant*.

“And schedule is an issue. They give us our schedule at the beginning of each week and assume everyone can work any days and hours. It makes it hard for workers with families to plan. And we want regular pay increases.” Dobruck was carrying a sign saying, “Captains are workers.”

“It’s really important about the captains,” Tyler Brown, a union member who works as a deckhand on the Blue and Gold line, said. “I have my captain’s license and would like to be able to bid

on that job without leaving the union.”

The Inlandboatmen’s Union won a certification election last October.

“Organizing is important for the working class,” Mike Villeggiante, an executive board member of ILWU Local 10, told the *Militant* at the rally. “We have always supported the Alcatraz workers’ organizing efforts. Without a union, you don’t have anything.”

— Eric Simpson

Oregon nurses picket hospital over staffing crisis

BEND, Oregon — More than 600 nurses and supporters joined a spirited informational picket line outside St. Charles Bend Hospital here April 24. The 900 nurses have been working without a contract since Dec. 31.

The Oregon Nurses Association says the key issues are an ongoing staffing crisis, the need to improve safety and to ensure patients access to health care. Since 2018, nearly 60% of nurses at St. Charles have resigned, leaving more than 200 jobs vacant.

Hundreds of handmade signs were created at two picket painting parties, including “Unsafe staffing hurts patients,” “Nurses deserve breaks,” and “Patients before profits.”

“This has been going on for many years. We have been crying out for help, and administrators have been putting profits over patients,” Oregon Nurses Association President Tamie Cline told the rally. “We will be silent no more.”

Neysa Larson, a recovery-room nurse, unit steward and member of the union negotiating committee, told the *Militant* nurses are pressed to work 12-hour shifts, sometimes with no breaks, and that the hospital’s answer to the staffing shortage has been to close beds.

She said the bosses brought an economist to one of the negotiating sessions. To offset rising housing costs, he said, nurses should get married, get a roommate or move to farther-out ar-



Militant/John Steele

Picket line in Montreal April 19, first day of strike by 155,000 public workers across Canada. Key issue was pay increase to cover inflation. Most workers will vote on contract soon.

eas with lower rents. His “suggestions” were particularly insulting to the majority female workforce, Larson said.

— Louise Goodman

Farmchella festival celebrates farmworkers in California

COACHELLA, Calif. — “We organized Farmchella to honor and celebrate hardworking farmworkers in Coachella Valley who are overlooked,” Flor Martinez Zaragoza told the *Militant* April 20.

Martinez Zaragoza is the founder of the Celebration Nation Foundation, which organized this first-time event taking place the same time as the well-known yearly Coachella music festival.

Farmchella organizers contributed music and food, and also provided farmworkers with needed essentials. Local farmers donated pallets of vegetables and fruits for free for farmworkers who attended.

“A lot of people think that the Coachella is just the festival, right? But it’s actually a city, a valley, a home to thousands of farmworkers that endure climate change, the pesticide dusts, and just the living conditions that are below the poverty lines,” she told Channel 3 News.

Carmen Obeso, who has been a farmworker since 2007, first in Ventura and now in Coachella, was helping dis-

tribute donated food. “Conditions for farmworkers are not very good,” she said. Farm owners “don’t comply with the laws and really abuse us.”

“There is nonpayment of wages. They don’t pay fairly. There are jobs that pay by the hour, but others by contract,” she said. “We go for months without work but many don’t have the right to unemployment benefits. Many workers are undocumented.

“We have problems with pesticides. When we say we feel bad, they don’t believe us. They say, ‘What you work with isn’t bad, it won’t hurt you,’” Obeso said. “If you take off work, when you return there is retaliation. There are repetitive motion injuries. In Ventura there were a lot of farms with a union, but they shut down or changed their name to avoid the union.”

Nanette Plascencia, who has worked at the Amazon ONT8 warehouse in Moreno Valley for eight years and is part of an organizing effort for a union, told the *Militant* she came to Farmchella after a friend told her about it.

“I said I want to help out. I have rough conditions at Amazon but not as much as farmworkers for as little as they get paid,” she said. “Workers need to be able to be here for each other. They need to count on each other.”

— Deborah Liatos

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



May 18, 1998

Labor resistance and other political struggles in the working class are accelerating. This resistance is occurring throughout the United States, and parallels the labor struggles that are breaking out in other industrialized countries, from Canada to Australia to Denmark.

This sea change in working-class politics creates new responsibilities and opportunities for socialist workers and other vanguard fighters. This means responding fast by joining with workers in struggle.

The heightened resistance underscores the political leverage of the revolutionary literature produced by Pathfinder Press. It gives greater importance to socialist election campaigns and Militant Labor Forums as ways to reach fellow working-class fighters. Above all, this is how some of the best fighters will be introduced to the communist movement and will decide to join it.



May 18, 1973

SYDNEY — Evelyn Reed, the prominent U.S. feminist and Marxist anthropologist, completed a two-week speaking tour of Australia April 23. The tour was an enormous success, with capacity and overflow crowds at many meetings. Almost 4,000 women and men attended her public meetings and university talks.

The news coverage became more intense as Reed’s tour progressed. Television, radio, and newspapers all wanted to interview the person one news editor had dubbed “The Granny of Women’s Liberation.” For years she had lectured on what was known as “The Woman Question.” In the last five or six years the topic has changed to “Women’s Liberation.” It is no longer a “question” but a struggle with a clear objective.

Before returning to the U.S., Reed will tour New Zealand and Japan, where the women’s liberation movement is beginning to have a big impact.



May 17, 1948

The Truman administration has rushed to the aid of Big Business to smash the impending strike of railroad workers. Seizing the railroads under a “state of war,” the government then got an injunction forbidding the strike.

The 1916 law, used as a pretext, permits seizure “in time of war” to move troops, but the Army is not taking over the railroads. Railroad officials have been commissioned into the army as colonels and brigadier generals. The same anti-labor officials will run the “seized” railroads, the same companies will make the profits and the workers will be chained to the same working conditions.

The fight for a wage increase and improved working conditions stems from the enormous pressure from an aroused rank and file. For years the Railway Labor Act enmeshed the unions in a stranglehold of endless negotiation, mediation, runaround and red tape.

Roundup of May Day rallies

Continued from front page
U.S. who don't have government-recog- nized papers was at the center of many of the actions.

"I came today because we need bet- ter wages and pensions for everybody," Antonio Paulino, a member of Labor- ers' International Union Local 79 here, told the *Militant* at a May Day march of about 350. "We need a standard of living to be able to maintain a family."

"It doesn't matter whether we are 'le- gal' or 'illegal,'" said domestic worker Vincent Samuel, originally from St. Lu- cia. "We all should have the same rights.

"The salary for domestic workers is just not enough," she said. They often get just a few dollars more than mini- mum wage, especially newer workers.

"When you're sick, they still want you to come to work," added Maggie Mathieu. "And if you don't come in you don't get paid."

'We need union control over our conditions and jobs'

RIVERSIDE, Calif. — About half of the 200 people who joined a spirited march and rally here, organized by the Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice, were members of the Teamsters, United Steelworkers, Service Employees In- ternational Union, United Auto Workers and other unions. High school students also joined the action.

"I believe in unions. When I was a kid, I made a decision I would never work anywhere that there wasn't some control over the conditions," Carlos

García told the *Militant*. "My father was pressured by a boss to cut corners on a job and fell 16 feet. From 40 on he was never able to work again. Safety is a number one issue for workers.

"The only way we have strength is in numbers. There are other issues like pay, most people are working a second job," he said.

— Norton Sandler

'We have to organize or we'll be driven to our graves'

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Over 50 people, mostly truckers from 17 states, protested outside the U.S. Department of Transportation here May 1, organized by the Truckers Movement for Justice. The group seeks to unite all drivers, whether paid by the hour, lease drivers or owner-operators. They carried signs demanding, "All hours paid for all hours worked" and "Paid overtime."

"All workers, whether you're a truck- er, an agricultural worker or a factory worker should get overtime pay after 40 hours," Caleb Fernandez, from Hunter, Utah, told the *Militant*. "Time spent waiting for a load can't be exempted."

Another key demand is the right to see the freight bill before they take a job. Owner-operator Mark McMiller from Blaine, Minnesota, said rates from brokers, middlemen between the trucker and shipper, are so substan- dard that truckers and their families can't make ends meet.

"It's take-it or leave-it. We don't see how much the broker booked the job for,



Farmworkers lead march for immigrant and workers' rights in Yakima, Washington, May 1.

from the shipper," he said. That makes it hard to negotiate a better price.

With warehouses filled with unsold goods, truckers are being squeezed by what many call a "freight recession." Ray Randall, a retired owner-ope- rator, said, "There's an 'I've got to get this load' mentality. We have to keep organizing or we're slowly driving to- ward our own grave."

— Arlene Rubinstein and Sarah Ullman

Milwaukee march demands rights for immigrant workers

MILWAUKEE — Hundreds marched here in a cold rain May 1 demanding the state government issue driver's licenses to all, regardless of a person's immigra- tion status. The action was sponsored by Voces de la Frontera.

Since 2007 drivers who can't prove they are here legally can't get a driver's license in Wisconsin — making it hard for undocumented immigrants to get to work, take kids to school, or much else without risking arrest.

"Everyone should have rights, regard- less of their legal status," foundry worker Gabriel Quintero said, "including the right to live, to work, to affordable hous- ing. I hope the Congress and President Biden will address these questions."

"Workers need to organize indepen- dently of the Democrats and Republi- cans," I said. "We need our own party, a labor party based on our unions. I'm a freight rail conductor. Last year we voted to go on strike over intolerable working conditions and job cuts. The one thing the Democrats and Republi- cans could agree on was to pass a law to prohibit our strike and impose the contract we had rejected."

"We have to fight," Quintero replied.

— Naomi Craine

Mushroom workers fight to defend their union

YAKIMA, Wash. — Mushroom pickers led the lively May Day celebra- tion and march here of 150. They came from nearby Sunnyside where they're fighting for recognition of the United Farm Workers.

Canadian-owned Windmill Farm Mushrooms bought the farm from Os- trom — where workers voted to join the union last June — and then told all the workers they had to reapply to continue working there, without a union.

"They accuse people of not picking enough" as a pretext to fire them, said Isela Cabrera, who has worked there for two-and-a-half years. "We are demand- ing the company sit down with the com- mittee and negotiate a contract. We also

want them to rehire workers they fired."

— Rebecca Williamson

Puerto Ricans march for wages, pensions, against colonial rule

More than 1,000 people marched in San Juan for May Day. The lead ban- ner said, "Out with the junta," referring to the U.S-imposed Financial Over- sight and Management Board, which has veto power over every financial decision of the government of Puerto Rico, a U.S. colony. The junta and the colonial government have been impos- ing deep cuts in pensions and pushing through the privatization of the island's energy system to maximize payments to wealthy bondholders.

The march was sponsored by trade unions, community and environmental organizations, and groups and parties that oppose U.S. colonial rule, including the Cuba Solidarity Committee.

"We deserve a dignified retirement," Liza Fournier, president of the Únete teachers union, told the crowd.

"The federal minimum wage is im- poverishing our working class," said José Adrián López, president of the Central General de Trabajadores union federation. "We call on working people to organize through the unions to defeat poverty in this country."

— Seth Galinsky

Working people in East Palestine keep up fight for cleanup, health

Continued from front page
spoke at the meeting, the *Salem News* said, pointing to results of his urinalysis that shows the chemical's presence.

"I know that blood and urine samples with these compounds are an increasing concern," Durno admitted. "We know the site is contaminated. We have the river. Sulphur Run is contaminated and part of Leslie Run is contaminated. And with the work that is going on [by Nor- folk Southern contractors] there is the potential for vapors to be released.

"I was just down at a house watching the operation from the backyard," Dur- no said. "And as the excavation was go- ing on and the wind flow was actually in my direction, I got a small whiff of bu- tyl acrylate." That's another dangerous chemical released in the burn-off, that causes throat and skin irritation and can have long-term respiratory problems — symptoms people there complain about.

Rev. Barry Walker, who lives a mile from the site, said the EPA needed to change its decision to not test farther out into the community. "There are some of us a mile or two out from this thing. You don't cover us. You are not checking" the air, he said.

Erin Stauffer, a social services ad- ministrator, told the *Militant* she had raised her concerns about the lack of information being given to residents at a recent meeting of the East Palestine Council. "The council isn't saying any- thing about things like reparations," she told the council meeting. "People don't know what's going on."

There are still a number of people who lived near the derailment site who are living in limbo. Jeff Drummond, a retired truck driver, is still barred from returning to his home because of ongo- ing work there. He's stuck in a tiny room at the Davis Motel in North Lima. "I have nothing here," he told *Salem News*.

The rail bosses say it will take another two months to finish removing the con- taminated soil from the derailment site and they haven't even begun cleaning up contaminated sediment at Leslie Run.

Militant worker-correspondents



Eric "Jake" Cozza, center, who lives half a mile from Norfolk Southern derailment site, testi- fies at April 27 EPA hearing, saying results of urine test show presence of toxic vinyl chloride.

Samir Hazboun and Kathie Fitzgerald stopped in at Reidy's Hog and Beef Farm near East Palestine April 30. Farmer and full-time worker Dave Reidy signed the family up for soil and water testing they believed would be paid for by Norfolk Southern a month and a half ago, con- cerned about planting the corn and hay they feed their animals. "We still haven't heard from anyone," he told us.

He said they've decided to go ahead and plow the fields. "If we wait for an- swers, we'll never know anything."

Fight for information, action

Socialist Workers Party members Dave Ferguson and Kaitlin Estill talked with Michelle and Dave Shafer in East Palestine. A front yard sign said, "We stand together against Norfolk South- ern." She works in building restoration and Dave works at an auto body shop.

Michelle Shafer described their expe- riences coming home after being evacu- ated during the burn-off of vinyl chlo-

ride in February. "After taking my first shower I broke out in a severe rash," she said. "I went to the Norfolk Southern- sponsored clinic. It was a joke."

"We need to know what chemicals are on the trains coming through our town," Dave Shafer said. He had served as a volunteer firefighter, and "local vol- unteer firefighters need to know so they know how to fight the fires."

"We need a real clinic that will take us seriously," said Michelle Shafer. Estill responded, "Yes, what you de- scribe reminds me of what happens when you get hurt at work and have to go to the company doctor."

"What if we get cancer five or 10 years down the road? We need to make sure we are covered," Dave Shafer said. "We can't trust the government or the politicians and we can't trust the com- panies like Norfolk Southern."

"That's why working people here should keep fighting for what we need," Ferguson said, "information we can

Working people across Cuba mobilize for May Day actions



April 14 assembly in Santiago de Cuba drew unionists and community organizations prepar- ing their participation in upcoming International Workers Day celebrations across the island.

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL AND JOANNE KUNIAINSKY

HAVANA, May 1 — The capital- ist media, from the *New York Times* to the *Miami Herald* to BBC, ran articles today proclaiming "Cuba cancels May Day parade" or something similar.

These assertions are false, as *Mili- tant* reporters and others actually here in Cuba can attest.

Despite an acute fuel shortage — primarily a result of Washington's relentless economic war against the Cuban Revolution — working people here and their revolutionary govern- ment are determined to celebrate In- ternational Workers Day.

Given a torrential downpour with

heavy winds April 30 that caused flood- ing and damage in coastal areas, major events here and elsewhere today were postponed. The flooding included the Malecón, Havana's oceanfront bou- levard, where this year's main rally is scheduled, instead of the traditional Pla- za de the Revolution. The trade unions are preparing rallies for May 5 in cities, towns and rural areas across the island.

The big-business media in the U.S. and beyond normally chooses to ignore the May Day marches across Cuba — and for good reason. The annual actions are always a festive outpouring by mil- lions, proudly marching in support of their socialist revolution. They highlight

Continued on page 9

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UPS workers rally, prepare for contract battle

Continued from front page
was imposed to boost the UPS boss- es' profits.

"We do the exact same work. We need to get the same rate of pay," Jeffrey Johnson, a 22.4 driver, told the *Militant* during the rally at the Maspeth and Metro Queens hub April 27. "We can't live on what they give us."

Pay is also a big issue for part-time workers, largely those who sort packag- es or load the trucks. In New York they start out just a dollar or less above the \$15-an-hour legal minimum wage.

"They need to make more of the part- timers full time," Roland Linton, a driver at the Maspeth hub, said. "These are my brothers. We got to fight together!"

Depending on the time of year, many of the part-time workers only get 25 hours a week. Even if they have "pro- gressed" to a higher pay bracket after four or five years, that's not enough to raise a family, workers say.

"I began as an inside-outside guy," Thomas Giammarino said. That means he loaded the trucks early in the morn- ing and then went out with the driver to help make deliveries. From October to January he was promoted to being a 22.4 driver, but when business slowed he was sent back to loading and his

hours were cut. "I had to get a second job at Home Depot," he said.

Many workers noted the dangerous working conditions they face because UPS refuses to install air conditioning on the trucks. Drivers and helpers get- ting heat stroke is not unusual. "The truck can get to 120, even 130 degrees, on top of the dust," said driver George Dyson. "We should get hazard pay."

At the Maspeth rally, and one at the UPS hub in midtown Manhattan the next day, Teamsters Local 804 President Vincent Perrone told workers the union has insisted the company resolve local issues first before the union will discuss the national contract.

He reported that bosses in the New York region had agreed to stronger se- niority rights and additional paid sick days. But he said workers need to be ready to strike when the contract ex- pires, if UPS balks at their key national demands. The last time UPS workers went on strike was in August 1997, a walkout that lasted 15 days.

Two tier, schedules

The proposed 2018 contract establish- ing the new lower-paid tier — suppos- edly not to exceed covering 25% of the number of drivers — was voted down

rely on about what the real dangers are, as well as control over the cleanup and health care for as long as necessary."

Pressure on the government

Another indication of the pressure government authorities face is the re- lease of a third Federal Railroad Ad- ministration safety advisory since the derailment, titled "Accident Mitigation and Train Length."

The advisory highlights a series of safety challenges caused by hauling lon- ger and longer trains, challenges that rail workers and their unions have repeated- ly pointed to. Longer and heavier trains create problems with control of braking and train handling for the engineer and the greater possibility of loss of radio communication between crew mem- bers and with train systems. And the Federal Railroad Administration says, "The operation of longer trains may, in certain instances, exacerbate the impact of blocked crossings on communities."

In announcing its first quarter finan- cial report Norfolk Southern bosses said that even with the \$387 million in estimated costs from the derailment, including costs for cleanup of the site, "community support" and cash payouts, and a preliminary estimate of claims and settlements, the company still made \$466 million in profits.

One of the reasons profits rose was because they raised rates on shippers for most of the cargo they haul.

The company also revealed that, for now, the railroad had made some op- erational changes limiting train length and capacity and adjusting the way it assembles its trains. This too reflects the outcry from East Palestine and rail workers' persistent fight for safety.

Alongside working people in East Palestine, rail workers continue to look for ways to fight for control over the conditions they work under and their torturous schedules.

Unions ‘must aim at the emancipation of the downtrodden millions’

Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay by Leon Trotsky is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for May. Below is "Trade Unions: Their Past, Present, and Future," a resolution written by Karl Marx and adopted in September 1866 by the first congress of the International Working Men's Association, the First International. Marx quotes from a Sheffield union conference of 138 delegates representing 200,000 workers in Britain. During the U.S. Civil War, Manchester mill workers resisted their rulers' efforts to support the slavocracy. They refused to handle raw cotton picked by slaves. The unions spearheaded a broad campaign for voting rights. The second excerpt is from the title piece, an unfinished article by Trotsky found in his desk after his assassination by Stalin's agent in August 1940. Copyright © 1990 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Topeka Frito-Lay Union Members Appreciation Page
Bakery workers union members won broad solidarity in their three-week strike against forced overtime, for better wages at Frito-Lay in Topeka, Kansas, in 2021. Karl Marx said that unions need to become organizing centers for the emancipation of the whole working class.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY KARL MARX

THEIR PAST

Capital is concentrated social force, while the workman has only to dispose of his working force [labor power]. The contract between capital and labor can therefore never be struck on equitable terms, equitable even in the sense of a society which places the ownership of the material means of life and labor on

one side and the vital productive energies on the opposite side. The only social power of the workmen is their number. The force of numbers, however, is broken by disunion. The disunion of the workmen is created and perpetuated by their *unavoidable competition among themselves*.

Trades' unions originally sprang up from the *spontaneous* attempts of workmen at removing or at least checking that competition, in order to conquer such terms of contract as might raise them at least above the condition of mere slaves. The immediate object of trades' unions was therefore confined to everyday necessities, to expediences for the obstruction of the incessant encroachments of capital, in one word, to questions of wages and time of labor. This activity of the trades' unions is not only legitimate, it is necessary. It cannot be dispensed with so long as the present system of production lasts. On the contrary, it must be generalized by the formation and the combination of trades' unions throughout all countries. On the other hand, unconsciously to themselves, the trades' unions were forming *centers of organization* of the working class, as the medieval municipalities and communes did for the middle class. If the trades' unions are required for the guerrilla fights between capital and labor, they are still more important as

organized agencies for superseding the very system of wages labor and capital rule.

THEIR PRESENT

Too exclusively bent upon the local and immediate struggles with capital, the trades' unions have not yet fully understood their power of acting against the system of wages slavery itself. They therefore kept too much aloof from general social and political movements. Of late, however, they seem to awaken to some sense of their great historical mission, as appears, for instance, from their participation, in England, in the recent political movement, from the enlarged views taken of their function in the United States, and from the following resolution passed at the recent great conference of trades' delegates at Sheffield:

"That this conference, fully appreciating the efforts made by the International [Working Men's] Association to unite in one common bond of brotherhood the working men of all countries, most earnestly recommend to the various societies here represented, the advisability of becoming affiliated to that body, believing that it is essential to the progress and prosperity of the entire working community."

THEIR FUTURE

Apart from their original purposes, they must now learn to act deliberate-

ly as organizing centers of the working class in the broad interest of its *complete emancipation*. They must aid every social and political movement tending in that direction. Considering themselves and acting as the champions and representatives of the whole working class, they cannot fail to enlist the nonsociety [unorganized] men into their ranks. They must look carefully after the interests of the worst-paid trades, such as the agricultural laborers, rendered powerless by exceptional circumstances. They must convince the world at large that their efforts, far from being narrow and selfish, aim at the emancipation of the downtrodden millions.



BY LEON TROTSKY

It is necessary to adapt ourselves to the concrete conditions existing in the trade unions of every given country in order to mobilize the masses. ... The primary slogan for this struggle is: *complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions in relation to the capitalist state*. This means a struggle to turn the trade unions into the organs of the broad exploited masses and not the organs of a labor aristocracy.

The second slogan is: *trade union democracy*. This second slogan flows directly from the first and presupposes for its realization the complete freedom of the trade unions from the imperialist or colonial state.

In other words, the trade unions in the present epoch cannot simply be the organs of democracy as they were in the epoch of free capitalism and they cannot any longer remain politically neutral, that is, limit themselves to serving the daily needs of the working class. They cannot any longer be anarchistic, that is, ignore the decisive influence of the state on the life of people and classes. They can no longer be reformist, because the objective conditions leave no room for any serious and lasting reforms. Either the trade unions of our time will serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capital to subordinate and discipline the workers and to obstruct the revolution or, on the contrary, the unions will become instruments of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat.

May

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Join fight for a working-class road forward!

Statement by Seth Galinsky, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New York City Council, May 3.

There are more openings to strengthen our unions today, to join labor and working-class struggles and to build solidarity. Working people need to be prepared for deepening crises, more wars and social disasters, and to fight to defend constitutional freedoms that are under attack, primarily by the Democrats and the middle-class left.

At the center of the Socialist Workers Party election campaigns is the fact there is no way to reconcile the class interests of workers and our allies with those of the bosses and the political parties that serve them.

SWP candidates present a course to advance workers' unity, self-confidence and reliance on our own forces, to be able to stand up to the employing class, which profits from our exploitation and oppression. We present a program for our unions to fight:

- For a government-funded public works program to put millions back to work at union-scale pay building hospitals, day care centers and other essentials working people need.
- For cost-of-living adjustments in every contract so our wages, benefits and programs like Social Security rise automatically every time prices go up. And for 30 hours work for 40 hours pay to spread the available work

around and prevent layoffs.

- To ensure a basic income for all families that guarantees we can work, cover living necessities and have time for family, union and political life.
- To extend workers control over production and working conditions as bosses push speedup, gut safety and endanger the health and lives of workers and those who live near rail lines, refineries and other factories.
- For a labor party based on our unions to speak and organize to advance the interests of workers and all those exploited and oppressed by capital against the Democrats, Republicans and other capitalist parties. Every political question today is a class question.

Working people need our own foreign policy, to counter the imperialist rulers' assault on workers and farmers worldwide and relentless drive toward war.

The SWP campaign projects a line of march to take political power out of the hands of the ruling capitalist families and build a workers and farmers government. That's what working people in Cuba proved in practice is both necessary and possible when they made the first socialist revolution in the Americas.

A step on this road is to join in building solidarity with the UPS workers' battle for a new contract!

A wind at our backs in fights with the bosses

Continued from front page
to blow behind our backs.

What's changing in the outlook of working people is also evident in the response Socialist Workers Party members find to the *Militant*, the thirst for its coverage of today's class battles and for discussing the working-class road forward the party advances.

This shift is noticeable worldwide, from strikes by public sector workers in Canada and nurses in the U.K., to the battle being waged by Ukrainian workers and farmers to drive Moscow's invading forces from their soil, to struggles by workers and the oppressed in Iran against the diktats of its capitalist regime, and much more.

The anxiety eating at the capitalist rulers over the instability of their world system was illustrated by International Monetary Fund chief Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas April 11, when he said, "Economic growth remains low by historical standards and financial risks have risen, yet inflation has not yet decisively turned the corner."

Manufacturing output, retail sales and house sales all fell in the U.S. in March. In the pages of the big-business press, economists are debating how big a recession is coming.

Larry Summers, treasury secretary under former President Bill Clinton, says he fears a "harder landing" is in store. He adds that it's not a good idea to attack corporations for prioritizing profits — even price "gouging" — and it's a bad mistake for the government to "impose various requirements that wages be high."

What faces working people today?

Real wages today are \$10 a week lower than they were when President Joseph Biden took office two years ago. For men it's \$18 a week lower. But today's labor struggles are not driven primarily by plunging real wages but by the social and moral costs of the bosses' onslaught.

The AFL-CIO released its annual report on job conditions April 26, saying "employers' opposition to workers' rights and protections has grown, and attacks on unions have intensified." The report says that in 2021 "about 343 workers die[d] each day due to job injuries and illnesses."

The debilitating consequences of today's capitalist crisis is shown in the yearslong fall in the birth rate. From 2010 to 2020, birth rates dropped by 15%, with women now having an average of 1.6 children, the lowest number since 1800. This

means that without immigration, the U.S. working class will shrink.

Working people from the cities to the farmstead face growing drug addiction, depression and suicide rates. These are all some of the conditions behind today's class struggles.

Since early last year New York's landlords have issued 146,000 eviction notices. Rents are skyrocketing and many workers are unable to pay off back debts incurred during the pandemic. Elsewhere, the center of San Francisco is getting hollowed out, with a soaring number of vacant offices as bosses cut jobs and several businesses shut down altogether.

Working farmers also feel the lash of the capitalist crisis. With interest rates for farm machinery rising to 5.86% last year and costs for fertilizer and other inputs soaring, many working farmers are foregoing purchases on machinery. The cost of paying off farm debt rose by more than 30% last year.

Looking for a way to fight back

"I don't want roommates, I want a fair contract," read a sign carried by a nurse at a union rally in Bend, Oregon, April 24. Years of declining real wages and today's soaring prices make it hard for young workers to get a place of their own. Like workers elsewhere the Bend nurses are demanding bosses hire more workers to relieve intolerable workloads, "suicide schedules" and more.

The fighting spirit shown by workers, farmers and small-business people in East Palestine, Ohio, battling for health care and control over the cleanup after a Norfolk Southern train carrying toxic vinyl chloride derailed and burned there has won solidarity far and wide. It's another sign of what's changing. This inspires more fights by rail workers over crew size and how trains are run and struggles in other communities facing disasters bred by the capitalist "profit is everything" system.

Now more than ever, the road forward lies in the hands of the working class, our unions and its vanguard fighters. That is the perspective of the Socialist Workers Party and its sister Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom. Discussing this perspective will be at the heart of the SWP's upcoming International Educational Conference in Oberlin, Ohio, June 8-11.

The best guide can be found in *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward*, available from *Militant* distributors listed on page 8 and from pathfinderpress.com.

Cuba May Day actions

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what Cuba's workers and farmers accomplished in taking state power out of the hands of the capitalist class, transforming society in the interests of the toiling majority, and defending workers power for more than six decades against unceasing attacks by the U.S. imperialist rulers. This manifestation of the strength and achievements of Cuba's working people sets a "dangerous" example for workers around the world, including in the U.S.

A week earlier, the Central Organization of Cuban Workers (CTC), the national trade union federation, announced that in face of the severe fuel crisis, the traditional large May Day marches in Havana and other cities would be reorganized, and, instead, local actions would be held in every municipality across the country. That would allow many residents to walk to a rally in their area, instead of relying on hundreds of buses to take people to a central gathering. The decision was widely welcomed by working people as a way to prioritize fuel for public transportation, already painfully reduced, and other social needs.

Over the past several weeks, the fuel shortage has led to mile-long lines at gas stations, with people spending two or more days waiting in their cars for the next delivery of gas.

In mid-April Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel addressed the immediate cause of the fuel shortage. The Cuban daily *Granma* reported his explanation that "countries with whom we have agreements for delivering gasoline have themselves faced a difficult energy situation and have been unable to fulfill their commitments." Cuba's biggest supplier of oil and gas has been Venezuela. Díaz-Canel noted that Cuba usually consumes 500 to 600 tons of fuel a day, but recently has only been able to import 400 tons or less.

Speaking to a conference sponsored by the CTC and the Cuban History Institute, CTC General Secretary Ulises Guilarte commented further on what he called "the very challenging situation" Cubans face today. "The intensification of the U.S. government's 64-year-long hostile policies against Cuba is the main reason," he explained. The impact on Cuba of U.S. sanctions is compounded by effects of the world capitalist economic crisis.

Guilarte pointed to the shortages of basic necessities hitting Cuban workers, not only fuel but flour, medicine, and other goods. While Cuba produces some of its own oil, it relies on fuel imports to meet its needs. The steep rise in world fuel prices has escalated the enormous drain on the country's hard currency reserves.

The rescheduled May 5 events will include a variety of local activities, from rallies and marches to the giving of "National Vanguard" awards to outstanding workers.

Actions across Cuba

Political and cultural events "to salute May Day" have already been taking place. In the eastern province of Santiago de Cuba, for example, "rallies and parades have been held in rural communities and villages across the province, including El Cobre, El Caney, Boniato and El Cristo," according to *Trabajadores*, the CTC newspaper.

In addition, events have been organized for international guests who are in Havana for the May Day activities. On April 29 the CTC and other mass organizations took international delegations to visit workplaces and meet residents of working-class neighborhoods across Havana. On May 1 nearly 300 visitors from the U.S. attended a meeting with President Díaz-Canel.

On May 2 some 1,000 unionists and members of political organizations from dozens of countries attended an international solidarity conference sponsored by the CTC and the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP). It was addressed by Díaz-Canel, Guilarte, ICAP President Fernando González and other Cuban leaders.

The event highlighted actions projected in countries around the world to demand the U.S. government take Cuba off Washington's spurious "State Sponsors of Terrorism" list and lift all economic sanctions and travel restrictions against Cuba.

Róger Calero and Bernie Senter contributed to this article.