

THE MILITANT

INSIDE
‘A genuine revolution means leading the millions’
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 87/NO. 23 JUNE 12, 2023

Death of Jordan Neely reveals the depth of crisis of capitalism today

BY PETER THIERJUNG

NEW YORK — The May 1 death of Jordan Neely on the subway here followed by the district attorney charging Daniel Penny with second-degree manslaughter generated a wide-ranging debate and discussion on what happened and why.

Neely, a 30-year-old African American, had been homeless for more than a decade. Reports from family and police records indicate Neely’s spiral into mental illness, aggravated by drug abuse, accelerated and deepened over that time, especially after his mother was murdered by his stepfather in 2007. By 2023, Neely had been accused of physically assaulting several people and had a record of 42 arrests, including for punching a 67-year-old woman in the head.

Little is known about Penny, a

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Democrats, FBI push assaults on political rights workers need

BY TERRY EVANS

In their factional drive to hound former President Donald Trump out of politics, the Democrats for over six years have done serious damage to crucial constitutional freedoms. Free speech, assembly, protection against unreasonable searches and seizures, the right to a speedy and public trial, to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation — all of these rights have been tossed aside. And the assault has deepened as the 2024 elections approach.

The real target of this campaign is working people, who the Democrats blame for Trump’s election, the people Hillary Clinton called “deplorables.”

Last summer President Joseph Biden branded so-called MAGA-Republicans as “semi-fascists” who “threaten the very foundations of our Republic.” Liberals use that label to describe all Trump

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‘Workers need a labor party based on the unions’

SWP launches California campaign for US Senate



Militant/Deborah Liatos

Laura Garza, left, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate from California in 2024, at May 26 union rally in Los Angeles. Garza says workers need to break from the Democrats, Republicans.

BY DEBORAH LIATOS

LOS ANGELES — At a May 26 labor rally here, Laura Garza, a rail worker and member of the SMART-Transportation Division union, and her campaign supporters distributed hundreds of flyers announcing she was running as the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate in California in 2024.

“The power of the labor movement can be felt in a mobilization of our numbers. That strength needs to be extended to politics by having an independent working-class voice. My campaign calls for the formation of a labor party based on the unions,” Garza’s campaign flyer

said. Unions are the key organizations workers have, millions strong.

Many unionists she talked to there responded positively to the need for a la-

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Why you should join the SWP campaign
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bor party, as opposed to supporting the parties of the ruling rich — the Democrats and Republicans.

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Help build labor involvement in the East Palestine fight over derailment



Jordan Miller News

Fire blazes among damaged rail cars filled with toxic chemicals in East Palestine, Ohio, Feb. 4, day after derailment. Disaster was caused by rail bosses’ drive for profits over everything else.

BY DAVE FERGUSON

COLUMBIANA, Ohio — What is the way forward in the fight to gain control over the cleanup and access to long-term health care in East Palestine? That was the topic when Ashley McCollum set up a meeting with five area residents and Socialist Workers Party members and unionists May 26. The five are all involved with the newly formed Unity Council for the East Palestine Train Derailment.

The massive release of toxic chemicals, including vinyl chloride, and fires caused by the Feb. 3 derailment of 20 rail cars has upended lives in the area.

“The Socialist Workers Party explains that in order for the fight in the East Palestine area to be sustained for the long haul, to take control over telling Norfolk Southern and the government what to do here, it’s necessary for the unions to get involved front and center,” Candace Wagner said. “My union, SMART-Transportation Division, the rail conductors’ union, put the struggle here on the front page of its national union magazine.”

The article quotes Jeremy Ferguson, the union president, who says, “This derailment didn’t have to happen.” He

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Defend Ukraine independence! Frictions grow in Moscow over losses

BY ROY LANDERSEN

Moscow’s forces are exhausted and hemmed in as they try to maintain their tenuous occupation of the destroyed eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut. They incurred heavy losses during the 10-month-long effort to take the city. This is sharpening conflicts in the Kremlin’s military command and fueling opposition at home to Russian President Vladimir Putin’s war.

Ukrainian forces on hills around Bakhmut threaten counterattacks on the Russian units that are taking over from the decimated Wagner mercenary troops that led Moscow’s assault there.

In a May 24 interview with pro-war commentator Konstantin Dolgov, Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin vented his rage at the Russian high command for its failure to provide enough ammuni-

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Workers in Iran: ‘No way to win our desires except with our unions’

BY SETH GALINSKY

In the wake of the “Women, Life, Freedom” protests in Iran over the death of Zhina Amini, there is a marked increase in labor and other social protests. Amini, a Kurdish woman, died after her arrest by the hated “morality” police, charged with violating the reactionary

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Delta airline workers rally for the right to unionize

Medical supplies workers strike in Sydney, win pay raise

Neely death shows depth of crisis

Continued from front page
24-year-old veteran of the U.S. Marines, other than a May 20 interview he gave to the *New York Post*.

On May 1, Neely got on the F train. Witnesses report he was aggressive, screaming at other passengers, saying he was fed up and demanding food and water. They said he shouted that he didn't care about going to jail or dying. Juan Alberto Vasquez, another passenger, told the media at one point Neely threw his jacket to the ground in a way that he thought was a prelude to violence.

Within seconds, Vasquez said, Penny had grabbed Neely from behind and the two fell to the ground. Another man joined Penny in restraining Neely and a third sought to help. Penny reportedly told other passengers to call police.

While passengers kept the train stopped at the next station, it took seven minutes before authorities arrived. By then, Neely had died.

The subway has become one point where this city's homeless, mental health and drug abuse crises converge and the consequences for working people are sometimes devastating. Millions of workers head to and from work on the subway every day, 24 hours a day, with its 472 stations and hundreds of miles of track.

By some estimates, there are more than 70,000 homeless people here. Some 13,000 of them suffer from severe mental illness, including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and depression. In a city that is the capitalist world's financial capital, the absence of safe shelter and medical attention is a fact of life for thousands, and a symptom of the deep crisis working

people face. Many who are homeless find their way to the subway looking to escape inclement weather, a place to sleep or a handout to survive.

In 2021, 2,668 people died here of drug overdoses, an increase of 78% since 2019. Fentanyl and opioids, among other all-too-often fatal drugs, flow freely on the streets. Now, stores are popping up in droves in a heated drive for profits from the sales of marijuana, recently legalized by the state. This comes just as medical studies show cannabis use has been tied to 30% of schizophrenia cases in adolescents.

The rate of felonies in the subway system was twice as high in 2022 as in 2019. Ten people were murdered that year, including Michelle Go, a 40-year-old who was pushed in front of an oncoming subway train in Times Square. Ten people were wounded when Frank R. James unleashed gunfire on an N train in Brooklyn.

On May 28, 2022, a man attacked a woman in a Manhattan subway station, shoving her head into a moving train causing severe injuries. This year alone, subway riders have reported 450 incidents of harassment and assault. Many more have gone unreported.

Democratic Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, City Comptroller Brad Lander, Rev. Al Sharpton and others were quick to call Penny a murderer and vigilante, without a shred of evidence. Some called Neely's death an example of "white supremacy" on the rise and a "lynching." These claims echo the speech President Joseph Biden delivered May 13 at Howard University, where he asserted the "poison of white supremacy" is the "most dangerous terrorist

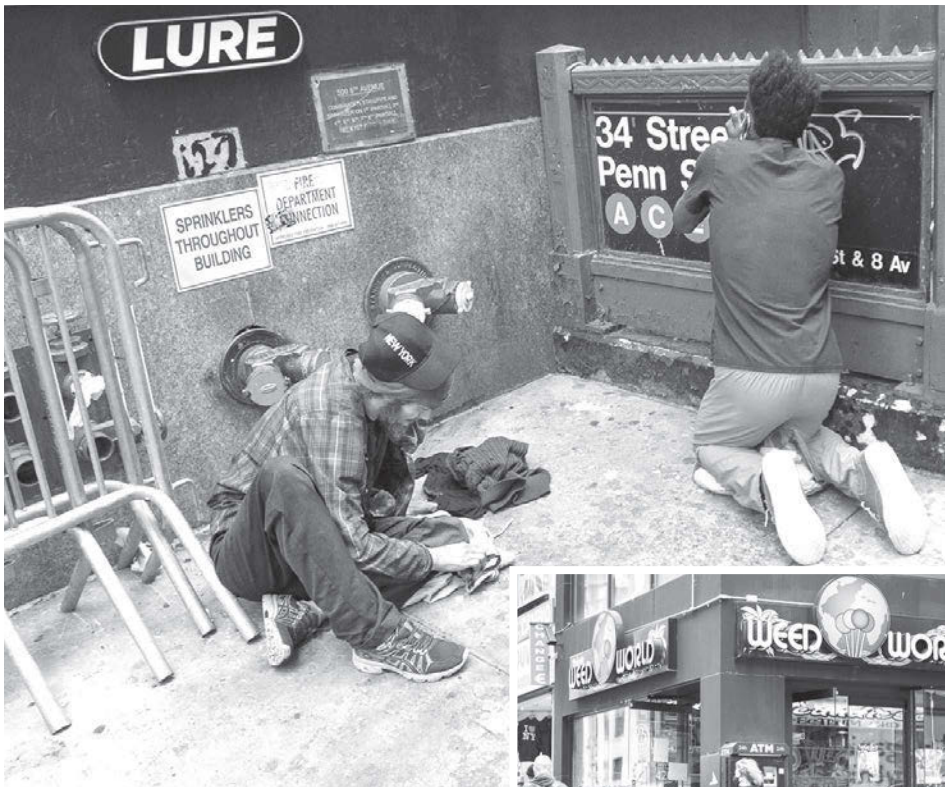


Photo above, J.C. Rice
Increase in drug abuse, homelessness, crime are result of dog-eat-dog capitalism. Inset, New York marijuana store. Cannabis use is actively promoted by state government, making conditions worse.

threat to our homeland."

In the *Post* interview, Penny said, "This has nothing to do with race. I judge a person based on their character. I'm not a white supremacist." He said it had everything to do with a broken system "that so desperately failed us."

"The smear against Penny by Democrats, the middle-class left and liberal capitalist media is especially pernicious," Róger Calero, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New York City Council in District 48, told the *Militant*. "Underneath it is their disdain for the facts, contempt for working people, including our daily acts of solidarity and humanity that keep us going and help us avoid harm.

"The brutality and rawness of life — the mental health, drug and homeless crises," Calero said, "pose whether we just become numb, callous or cynical about what's happening around us and to us. Or we face it, act on our self-worth, guard against the demoralization and ruin of our class, and chart a working-class road forward that defends life and the future.

"The capitalist parties — both Democrats and Republicans — that run this

city and country are responsible."

"It's a lie that racism and white supremacy are on the rise," Calero said. "After decades of struggle, including the mighty battle that tore down Jim Crow segregation, there is more potential today to unite working people, regardless of skin color, in a struggle to protect our interests as a class, the working class."

Calero said it is especially important to insist that Penny's constitutional rights be protected. "He must be presumed innocent, and the onus is on District Attorney Alvin Bragg to prove beyond a reasonable doubt he is guilty of a crime.

"There is no such thing as a fair trial under the capitalist justice system. Bragg's tossing constitutional rights aside in a drive to bring down former President Donald Trump is proof of that."

'Militant' publishing schedule

This is a three-week issue. The next issue will be mailed June 22

THE MILITANT

Working people in El Salvador face social disaster

The 'Militant' explains the real target of President Nayib Bukele's 'war on crime' in El Salvador is working people as political rights are suspended. Everywhere, the capitalist rulers' solution to the crisis of their system is to foist the burden onto the backs of workers and farmers.



Press Office of Presidency of Republic of El Salvador
Prisoners held in "Terrorist Confinement Center" just built in Tecoluca, El Salvador.

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SWP on ballot in Washington, candidates file in New Jersey

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Socialist Workers Party campaigners are introducing the party's candidates and the working-class road forward — on workers' doorsteps, at strike picket lines, and at protests in defense of workers' interests, like actions called to oppose Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Through these efforts the party is gaining ballot status for its candidates.

In Trenton, New Jersey, May 26, SWP candidates in District 33, Joanne Kuniansky for State Senate and Lea Sherman for General Assembly, filed over 150 signatures each, three times the requirement. Kuniansky recently joined protests by nurses at Clara Maass Hospital in Belleville, New Jersey, who are fighting for their first union contract. She also attended a rally by members of the Writers Guild of America on strike for a livable wage and against attacks by the bosses. (See article on page 4).

"We discuss with all the workers we meet the need for unions to chart an independent political course, to form their own party, a labor party based on the unions," Kuniansky told the *Militant*, "and we're getting a good response."

In Washington state, Rebecca Williamson, SWP candidate for City Council District 5 in Seattle, was certified for the ballot May 18.

The May 26 *Seattle Times* reported on the views of the 10 District 5 candidates. Williamson is the only worker among them. "The crisis we face comes from what the bosses' class does to solve the crisis of their system on the backs of workers and farmers," the paper quotes her.

"At the heart of US politics is the defense of Constitutional freedoms won in struggle," Williamson stated. "Regardless of the target of unconstitutional searches and seizures, frame-ups and FBI spying and violations of due process, these are rights that we need, and must be defended unconditionally."

In Philadelphia, SWP candidate for mayor Chris Hooppner met Maurice Fleming May 28. Fleming is a home-care worker. "We don't get days off for holidays, our clients need round-the-clock care," he said.

"I haven't voted since Obama and probably shouldn't have voted for him either," he said. "Neither party has done anything for us."

"Workers need to break from the Democrats and Republicans," Hooppner responded. "We need to build a labor

party based on the unions."

Fleming described the difficulties he and others have experienced since the COVID-19 pandemic. "I know a lot of people who have had to move back in with their parents because they can't afford to live on their own."

"Or start a family!" Hooppner added. "We need a massive public-works program to create jobs at union-scale pay to build the roads, bridges, hospitals, schools and housing that we need." Fleming expressed interest in attending an upcoming campaign rally.

Abby Tilsner in Philadelphia contributed to this article.

'We need a labor party,' SWP California candidate says

Continued from front page

Garza's campaign supporters set up a table, with a sign in front reading, "For a labor party based on the unions. Laura Garza, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate." It featured the *Militant* and books by SWP leaders and other revolutionaries.

Unions participating in the rally represent more than 200,000 workers with collective bargaining agreements expiring in 2023.

The protest included members of SAG-AFTRA, the actors' union; IA-TSE, the stagehands; Teamsters; hotel workers in UNITE HERE; United Teachers Los Angeles; Service Employees International Union; United Food and Commercial Workers; and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. Writers Guild strikers postponed regular picketing to join the rally.

The rally was held across the street from the California Democratic Convention meeting. The Democratic Party holds the governorship, both U.S. senators and both houses of the state legislature, and has done so since 2011.

Garza met Mikey Gilmore, who works in the entertainment industry. "We need to have decent wages, health care and a life, not just make money for the bosses," she said.

"We are all here for a common cause," Gilmore responded. "There's a camaraderie on the set."

"Everything is done for profits," Garza said. "All of this is about going from where we are today to workers taking power out of the hands of the ruling rich. That requires a big social move-

ment. We have more in common with workers in China than with bosses here. Democrats are leading the charge against political rights. Wages are set by how much workers fight."

"Unions need to come back," said Writers Guild striker Monty Russo. "I grew up with unions in Lake Charles, Louisiana. The bosses wanted 'the right to work' for dirt cheap. Louisiana was a very union state and that has got pushed back."

"There has to be a fight, a social movement. We need a labor



Lea Sherman, center, SWP candidate for New Jersey General Assembly, and Joanne Kuniansky, party's candidate for State Senate, filed for ballot status in Trenton May 26. From left, campaign supporter Rich Ariza and Osborne Hart, Philadelphia SWP City Council candidate.

party," Garza said.

"Those who are in power are out for themselves," said Russo.

"I'm a rail worker," Garza told him. "Despite the fact that the majority of the members of our union voted it down, both Democrats and Republicans rammed a contract down our throats that doesn't address the right for rail workers to have time off. The crew size is down to two and the bosses still want to try to cut it down to one engineer on an up to 3-mile-long train."

"Yes, you really got screwed," said Russo. "I didn't like Trump, but don't like Biden either. I'd like to see the unions pushing back against the employers."

"Trump won because of the devastation workers face, including in the rural areas," said Garza. "In over 200 counties that were carried by Obama twice, voters went for Trump. Workers need an independent road forward."

Things are changing

Garza said a growing number of workers are saying "enough is enough" and using their unions to fight for better conditions. This includes the recent strike by school workers in Los Angeles, the unfolding nationwide fight by Teamsters at UPS, the contract struggle by International Longshore and Warehouse Union members, the ongoing Writers Guild strike and many others. But when it comes to election day, we are confronted year after year with calls to vote for a "lesser evil."

"I am running for Senate so there will be a working-class voice in the elections. I propose that we break with the capitalist rulers' two-party shell game and organize our own party, a labor party based on the unions. No one will do it for us," she said. "We can begin by discussing this with fellow workers and in the unions. Decades of experience tell us that the Democrats and Republicans will defend the interests of the ruling class, which is responsible for today's economic, social and moral crisis."

"A labor party can speak and act in the interests of the working-class, working farmers and all those oppressed and exploited by capital, in the cities and rural areas," Garza told those she met. "One that will tell the truth — that all political questions, from how the bosses run the factories and economy to their predatory foreign policy and wars are class questions. Class vs. class."

She said the unions need to cham-

pion the rights of immigrant workers, an essential stance to unite the working class to better fight for the rights of all.

Russo agreed. "It's slave labor. This nationalist bulls--t needs to come to an end. There are exemptions for 10-year-olds to work in the fields. If the ones on the bottom are not united they totally get taken advantage of."

He said he's been a writer since 1995, but didn't qualify to get in the Writers Guild until 2014. "I was over at the Warner Brothers picket line. It seemed like every car that passed by honked in support."

"Something is changing in the working class," Garza said. "Rail workers, workers at Nabisco and Frito-Lay, teachers and others are fighting back a little more, pushing back against the bosses' attacks and gaining confidence in the process."

"When we were suffering in the pandemic, all the billionaires got richer. At the top of the caste system in this country is wealth," Russo said. "You don't become a billionaire if you care about others."

"A labor party can fight to put in power a workers and farmers government to rebuild society in the interests of all working people," Garza said. "With power in our own hands, we can end the system of wage slavery once and for all and join in the worldwide fight for socialism."



Chris Hooppner, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Philadelphia, introduces the party's working-class program to Maurice Fleming, a home care worker, May 28.

Teamster Series

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

by Farrell Dobbs

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

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‘It’s tough for small farmers,’ Black farmers in Georgia say

BY SUSAN LAMONT

QUITMAN, Ga. — “It was good to discuss some of our problems,” Edward Collier told the *Militant*, after a May 20 gathering of Black farmers in the community of Dixie. Held at the Friendship AME Church, the forum drew 20 people, about 12 of whom were farmers, as well as a representative from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

“But what is going to come from it? That’s what we’ll have to see.”

Collier, who has a small herd of cattle now, spent 15 years working for the University of Georgia Extension office in Lowndes County and the next 15 years as a material handler at a nearby textile mill, before it closed its doors in 2015, all while farming row crops near Valdosta.

Like the others present, he has been to many meetings of Black farmers determined to find a way to stay in farming and overcome the challenges they and other small farmers face.

As the capitalist crisis deepens, giant food processing monopolies and grocery chains chip away at the prices they give farmers while prices for fuel, fertilizer and other farm inputs soar.

Representing the statewide AME

church, Stan Smith was the featured speaker at the meeting. He explained that Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock had approached the church about holding meetings with Black farmers around the state to learn more about what kind of help farmers need. One aim was to get farmers’ input on what should be included in the 2023 Farm Bill and their support for it.

The farmers described problems they have had and are still having with various USDA agencies and programs and the mountain of red tape they face getting any assistance in a timely way. Two young farmers attended, including a 20-year-old hoping for some guidance about how he could get a start in farming. When the USDA representative had little to say, farmer Charles Brooks said, “Come out to my place and let’s talk.”

“It’s tough for any small farmer,” Brooks told the *Militant*. “The white farmers aren’t getting the help they need either. We all need to work together, Black, white, Latino, everyone. Black farmers can’t do it alone,” adding that he and several nearby Caucasian farmers often help each other out and share information.



Militant/Susan LaMont

Melvin DeShazoir, right, other Black farmers met at Friendship AME Church in Quitman, Georgia, May 20, along with, second from right, speaker Stan Smith and Rev. Ingram.

Brooks grows vegetables on 35 acres and sells his crops in grocery stores all over the area.

In answer to farmers who described the continuing problems they face getting assistance from the USDA, government representative D’Vonte Lamons blamed farmers themselves. “Apply, but don’t do anything until you hear from us,” he said. “An application doesn’t mean you’ve been approved.”

Toward the end of the meeting, I explained that Janice Lynn and myself

had come to the event from the Socialist Workers Party in Atlanta to learn more about what small farmers face.

Participants were glad to hear about the recent union-organizing victory at Blue Bird bus company, where workers voted to join the United Steelworkers May 12. The plant is in nearby Fort Valley, north of Quitman.

“It is important for farmers of all backgrounds to work together and to reach out to workers, who also face crisis conditions,” I said. “We need to build an alliance between workers and farmers, a movement of working people independent of the capitalist parties. We need a working-class party, a labor party based on the unions. Such a movement could fight for nationalization of the land, so no farmer has to face the threat of foreclosure.” I invited farmers to speak with us further after the meeting.

When the meeting wrapped up, almost everyone who was still there stayed around to talk. Eight farmers got copies of the SWP statement “Building an alliance of workers and farmers.” Four bought subscriptions to the *Militant* and several others said they wanted to stay in touch. “I’m interested in what you said about a labor party,” said Collier. “There isn’t a dime’s bit of difference between the Democrats and Republicans.”

A follow-up meeting is planned for Aug. 19 at the same location.

Janice Lynn contributed to this article.

Blue Bird workers vote in United Steelworkers union

BY JANICE LYNN

FORT VALLEY, Ga. — Socialist Workers Party members from Atlanta traveled 90 miles south to talk with workers here about the union-organizing drive victory at the Blue Bird Corp. school bus assembly plant. Workers voted 697-435 to be represented by the United Steelworkers union May 12. Blue Bird is the largest manufacturer of school buses in the country and has 1,400 workers.

“The union is going to be a good thing,” James Huton told Marklyn Wilson. He worked at Blue Bird for 14 years, but left due to back problems. “With the union, it won’t be as easy to get fired. The money we got was not enough and we got no vacation time to speak of.” He bought a copy of the *Militant* newspaper.

Most people we met door to door had heard about the union victory. “I’m happy for them,” Jaketa Lucas, an insurance worker, told Lisa Potash. “When I was little, you would hear about people dying in there in the summer.”

“They needed a union to get more pay. They do all that hard work and need to be treated fairly,” Belinda Ellison, a former medical technician, told me. She bought a copy of the *Militant*.

Across the street, I met Elton Britt, 67, who had worked at Blue Bird for

23 years and retired two years ago. He said there had been several earlier union-organizing efforts that “didn’t go anywhere.” He said he got frustrated with management when they would blame the workers for not finishing work, when it was management’s fault that they didn’t have enough parts.

He noted the long hours. “It used to be 10 hours and you could go home. Then it became you would often have to stay 12 hours to finish the work.” Nevertheless, he said he liked working there, and wasn’t sure a union would make a difference.

Next door we met a Blue Bird logistics lead who asked his name not be used. A 10-year veteran in the plant, he said he did not vote in the election because he didn’t see how a union would benefit him. “It will just help the new workers, who want more pay and more

vacation time. After five years you get two vacation days,” he said. The starting wage is just \$16 an hour.

After discussing how workers have been using their unions in fights around the country for better working conditions, he got a copy of the *Militant* and gave a donation.

Jimille Rumph, a retired utilities worker, said his brother had worked at Blue Bird and told him about the long hours and grueling pace of work. “He called it a ‘hot box,’” Rumph said. “The union is a long time coming. They need a better work environment. Those who didn’t vote for the union because they didn’t think it would help them need to understand how it will benefit others.” He got a *Militant* subscription to follow other labor struggles and to learn more about the road forward for the working class.

Writers Guild strikers rally at Rockefeller Center

BY JOANNE KUNIANSKY

NEW YORK — Over 500 members and supporters of the striking Writers Guild of America union rallied outside Rockefeller Center here May 23. Mike Karnell, who has been a writer for seven years, told the *Militant* that he believes striking now is the right thing because “the labor movement has more momentum today. People are more connected.”

Solidarity from other unions was evident with delegations carrying signs and wearing union T-shirts. All of the entertainment industry unions participated — actors, stagehands, makeup artists, scenic designers, musicians and others. Organized contingents were there from the United Food and Commercial Workers; Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union; Teamsters; Laborers’ Local 79; Communications Workers of America; Service Employees International Union Local 32BJ; and more.

“With the industry’s shift from broadcast television to streaming, we have lost pay and benefits that were hard won over years,” Ian Bieberman, a writer for over 20 years, told the *Militant*. “It’s difficult to make a living working as a writer today. We had to strike to get what we deserve. Unite and stand up or they will roll over you.”

The handwritten signs captured the spirit of the strike: “Do the write thing! Miss your show — let them know! No wages, no pages!”

Joe Opio, a young New York comedian and Writers Guild member, spoke at the rally. He explained that he was one of the four writers who shut down production on the Paramount+ series “Evil” by picketing outside the Brooklyn studio for eight hours.

“The only reason we succeeded is because the Teamsters and the IATSE crew members refused to cross our picket line the whole night,” he said to

cheers. “So I learned a very valuable lesson that night — the other unions are willing and ready to stand in solidarity with us. All we have to do is turn up and form a picket line.”

The solidarity came through strongly from the unions on the speakers platform. RWDSU President Stuart Appelbaum said, “Whether we’re fighting for the rights of writers, teachers, nurses, retail workers, warehouse workers or construction workers — we are all in this together.” New York State AFL-CIO President Mario Cilento and New York City Central Labor Council leader Vinnie Alvarez also spoke.

The Guild is picketing outside studios and other production facilities in New York, New Jersey, Hollywood, California, everywhere shows are being done. Locations and times are posted on the Writers Guild website. Show your support!

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—ON THE PICKET LINE—

Delta airline workers rally for the right to unionize

ATLANTA — Delta airline workers here fighting for union representation held a spirited rally at the Hartsfield-Jackson airport May 25. In-flight crew members are seeking representation from the Association of Flight Attendants; ramp and cargo workers from the International Association of Machinists; and mechanics from the Teamsters. Workers from all three unions, as well as supporters from other area unions, came together, presenting a united effort for the campaign to win union recognition.

Over 100 unionists participated, spread out at several arrival gates. They chanted, “Who’s got the power, we got the power, union power.”

“I’m helping to win union support,” Kara Dupuis, who has worked as a Delta flight attendant for eight years, told the *Militant*. “We need a voice and to win respect. Delta management has no idea what our working conditions are like.”

A flyer distributed by the three unions noted some of the issues they are fighting for: “A fair sick pay policy; Respect for our days off; Scheduling protections; Safe equipment; Affordable, comprehensive healthcare.”

“For decades management has used union-busting tactics to create division and cool organizing,” the flyer pointed out.

“I’m for a union because it’s important that we be treated with equity. It’s our legal right to organize, and we won’t be intimidated,” Gameli Appiah, who has worked as a ramp agent since 2018, said.

Among those who came to support the union effort were Teamster members who work for UPS, who are in the midst of a fight to win a decent contract. Jimmi Hadley, a UPS package car driver, told the *Militant*, “It’s important that organized labor is coming together to fight for what’s fair for workers.”

Wheelchair attendants, members of the Service Employees International Union, came out to show their support. Union pilots also joined the rally.

Jennifer Bennett, a member of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, said, “I’m out here to support my fellow workers. It’s important we have each other’s backs, to know we are not alone.”

— Janice Lynn

Medical supplies workers strike in Sydney, win pay raise

SYDNEY — “We are striking for more wages,” said Joe Matthews on the picket line outside the Onelink distribution center here May 23. “All we want is a fair go.” United Workers Union members at the warehouse first walked out May 15 and have held a series of 24-hour strikes.

“Look at expenses with inflation. Expenses are getting so high and people are struggling,” he added. “We’re low income. We need to keep up in these testing times.”

After five days of strike action the unionists returned to work May 24. They won a 7% wage increase for the first year, 3% for two subsequent years and improvements in severance pay.

Onelink is one of a number of companies owned by EBOS Group. Some 80 workers are employed at its large warehouse here. A UWU media release points out at other EBOS sites “workers were paid \$4 to \$7 an hour more than the Onelink workers. In the meantime, EBOS recorded a profit of almost \$150 million in 2022.”

Onelink’s main contract is to supply gloves, masks and other medical goods to public hospitals. “The government pays EBOS to distribute to hospitals,” said Matthews. It made 150 million Australian dollars (\$98 million) profit “at the taxpayers’ expense. They get all the profits and we get no appreciation.”

Adrian Mares, another striking worker, pointed to how the company had chained up the front gate beside the picket. “As though we’d go in and sabotage it!” he exclaimed. “They’re disrespectful. They treat us like second-class citizens.”

The workers were also striking for more severance pay. Matthews said the



Militant/Baskaran Appu

Medical supplies workers in Sydney, members of United Workers Union, picket Onelink distribution center May 23 during strike for wage raise and improved severance pay.

government contract “will run out in two years and we don’t know if we will have a job after that.”

“Workers join the union because of the unity and support they can get,” he said.

— Janet Roth

Over 300 Montreal Steelworkers strike Owens Illinois over wages

MONTREAL — “There’s nothing moving in the plant,” striker Serge Latendresse told the *Militant* on the picket line in front of Owens Illinois, Quebec’s only glass factory, May 27. Over 300 United Steelworkers Local 206G members walked out May 10 after rejecting an insulting company offer of merely 1% each year of a three-year contract, well below inflation.

Strikers warmly greeted three Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Local 55 members as we brought donuts and solidarity. It was noisy, as passing drivers — everyone from firemen in their truck to cyclists with bike bells — sounded their support. “A lot of locals have come to see what we’re doing out here, and when we explain, they say, ‘keep it up!’” Christopher Dupuis told us.

“In the last two years, we’ve fallen 6% behind on wages,” Latendresse said. “During the pandemic, we got pizza

once — and half of us got sick from it. We got no raise, no extra pay during COVID. Now they’ve offered us what they think we’re worth — 1%.”

He explained the tradition among Steelworkers locals of mutual support, including regular financial backing. “With all the unions who are contributing, we can thumb our noses at the company.” USW locals at ArcelorMittal and other companies in the region have already sent thousands of dollars in support.

Owens Illinois is the world’s biggest glass manufacturer, operating in over 20 countries. This is the first strike at the Montreal plant in 40 years.

“The company says it’s ‘green.’ That’s their battle horse, but it’s more of a Trojan horse,” said striker Anthony Bocquet. “This is a fight employees are going to have to wage inside the plant.” Glass is infinitely recyclable, strikers said, but the Quebec government has not implemented this program at the plant.

“Instead, it’s brought in from Ontario. That’s more pollution with truck and train transport,” Latendresse added. “And the bottles in your green bin here end up in the landfill.”

“We don’t even get gloves that prevent burns,” Bocquet said. “And we work with glass at a melting point of 1,400 degrees C.”

The picket line is up 24/7. Drop by 2376 Wellington St. in Montreal, or the warehouse in LaSalle. Help get out the word!

— Katy LeRougetel

Union leader in Cambodia jailed over casino strike

A court in Cambodia jailed union leader Chhim Sithar for two years May 25 for leading a strike at NagaWorld, the country’s only casino. She and eight other current and former union members of Labour Rights Supported Union of Khmer Employees of NagaWorld were convicted of “incitement to commit a felony or disturb social security.”

In April 2021 bosses at NagaWorld announced they were firing over 1,300 workers, about half of them union members. Sithar was arrested during a protest there in January 2022. She was charged with “incitement” and incarcerated for two months. She was then rearrested in November.

“This is a clear case of the Cambodian government waging an anti-union campaign against Chhim Sithar and her union,” Michele O’Neil, president of the Australian Confederation of Trade Unions, said in a statement, demanding she be released immediately.

— Brian Williams

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



June 15, 1998

Working people everywhere should support the fight by 5,300 transit workers in Philadelphia to push back the city government’s attempt to deal blows to the Transport Workers Union.

This fight is another example of the increasing numbers of working people who are willing to fight. They join the ranks of other workers engaged in battles, such as the striking unionists at Titan Tire in Des Moines, and coal miners on strike in western Pennsylvania.

Broader layers of workers want to stand up to the bosses’ demands for “management rights” and other attempts to run roughshod over our wages, working conditions, and rights. Many working people can identify with the opposition to the two-tier wage system and part-time work. In fighting for greater class solidarity, the transit workers show how all working people can defend our interests.



June 15, 1973

LOS ANGELES — King-sized border patrol vans are cruising the main streets of Chicano barrios here. They pull up at bus stops and simply arrest people unable to produce proof of citizenship or legal residency. Immigration patrol squadrons comb the sweatshops of the garment district, taking out workers without papers. In a 10-day period nearly 3,000 people have been dumped across the border.

The central force in the efforts to stop the roundups is CASA Hermanidad General de Trabajadores. Leader Bert Corona urged massive marches, demonstrations, and other protests against the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

He expressed the hope that all working people would see the need to come to the defense of the Spanish-speaking and other foreign-born being victimized. “We can’t let them divide us by going first after one group, then another.”



June 14, 1948

While Hitler’s barbarous uprooting of whole peoples in Europe is generally known to the public, not much attention has been paid to a similar page in recent American history. This was the shameful forced evacuation of 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry from the Pacific coast and Alaska in 1941.

Americans of Japanese descent were torn from their homes, shipped to concentration camps and separated from their families. They could take with them only those possessions they could carry on their persons.

Real estate and business interests put the pressure on the Army to deport the Americans of Japanese descent. While they were incarcerated in the “relocation” camps their farms were sold for unpaid taxes, furniture seized for unpaid rents, their once-flourishing businesses in wholesale fruits, vegetables and fishing were seized by competitors.

Help build fight in East Palestine

Continued from front page

explains the direct tie between the fight of rail workers against the consequences on us of the bosses' profit drive and this disaster. We have a common fight."

Wagner described how rail unionists have been fighting against dangerous conditions on the job — cuts in crucial maintenance, layoffs and more work pushed on the backs of the remaining workers, crew cuts, longer hours, working on call 24/7 and more. These endanger not just the workers, but all those who live or work by the tracks.

Rail locals in Nebraska have adopted statements in solidarity with the fight in East Palestine and plan to send them to their international unions and others. Officers of a Teamsters local in California sent a message endorsing the rail unions' support of East Palestine residents.

This perspective made sense. "I know a rail union member I can talk to," Shelby Walker, who lives a block from the derailment site, said. McCollum said, "My boyfriend works at a pipe mill and is a member of the United Steelworkers union. I'll talk to him about the idea of them inviting me to speak to their union meeting about supporting us."

Daren Gambla said he's retired after 30 years as a union bricklayer, but still has contacts.

"What's possible and can bring the most needed help is for union locals here to organize their members to bring their weight to bear. And they can call on their national organizations to publicize the fight and explain how the health and safety of workers is directly linked to the health and safety of these communities," Wagner said.

"Another connection is oil and chemical plants, which are organized by the United Steelworkers union. Three major fires have broken out in refineries and chemical plants in Texas in the last three weeks. One is in the town of Deer Park, where the vinyl chloride that was spilled and burned here came from," she said.

Mary Martin, visiting from Minneapolis, pointed to the upcoming June 21-23 meetings of the National Transportation Safety Board in East Palestine as an opportunity to mobilize support, particularly union members, for the fight.

The NTSB announcement says they are holding a special June 21 community meeting at the East Palestine High School for area residents from both Ohio and Pennsylvania to ask questions about its "safety investigation to determine the probable cause of the Norfolk Southern Railway train derailment, hazardous materials release and fires."

"Both rail workers and people here would have a lot to say about that!" Martin said.

Media, government disdain

"The *National Review* recently published an editorial complaining that the East Palestine derailment was an 'isolated and sensationalized' event," Wagner said. "What they mean by 'sensationalized' is that you guys won't go away and shut up. That's important. And of course, we've all seen the continuing stream of derailments since, including in Ohio."

The meeting took place at a hotel here where a number of people displaced by the derailment are staying. "My family saw the fire from our porch and left town that night," McCollum said. She and her son have been living in a hotel since. "I feel like a prisoner."

"The Environmental Protection Agen-

cy says that testing results of the soil take six to eight weeks," Gambla said. "How was it that they deemed it safe for us to return to our homes in 48 hours after they burned off the vinyl chloride? When my wife spends a half hour in town, she gets sick. My foster kids get sick."

Zsuzsa Gyenes and her 9-year-old son have tested positive for vinyl chloride. "But my doctor doesn't know what to do about it," she said. One of the demands raised by their group is for the railroad to pay for independent medical attention by doctors, chosen by the residents, who are experienced in treating chemical exposure.

Several expressed frustration in trying to get aid the rail bosses say they'll provide for relocating or reimbursement for expenses. "There's no consistency," Gyenes explained. "One person goes in the Norfolk Southern Help Center and gets aid. The next one they deny it."

Geordan Reynolds explained she lives near Sulfur Run Creek where the runoff from the chemical spill and water used to fight the fires flowed into. The rainwater that gets into her basement has rainbows of chemical sheen. "They intimidate you, especially if you're a woman going in alone," she said. "They tell you to put out the money for a hotel and later you'll get reimbursed. But my husband and I don't have the money to do that."

Workers in East Palestine discuss politics, derailment

BY MARY MARTIN

EAST PALESTINE, Ohio — At the street fair going on here, Nancy Felger, a retired health care worker and former shop steward of her Service Employees International Union local, told Socialist Workers Party member Candace Wagner that she heard that Norfolk Southern paid for the kids' rides at the fair.

"Here's an idea," Felger said, "How about the CEO of Norfolk Southern gets in the dunk tank — where you hit the target with a softball and he goes down in the tank — but fill the tank with water from Leslie Run!" Leslie Run is a creek in East Palestine now thoroughly contaminated by vinyl chloride and other chemicals that got into area waterways after the Norfolk Southern derailment, fires and chemical leaks in February.

Felger was one of many working people Wagner and two other SWP members met on their doorsteps May 25. Felger's comments reflect the widespread disgust with the rail bosses and government agencies that refuse to listen to the workers and farmers and make light of concerns about their homes, medical care, and the situation facing people who were forced to leave home, some suffering ongoing effects from toxic contamination. We heard many stories of the contempt and bureaucratic red tape workers face when they try to apply for housing, medical testing and other programs they were promised.

Many were interested in discussing how their situation is similar to what rail workers, chemical refinery workers and others face.

Candace Wagner, a railroad conductor in Pennsylvania and member of the SMART-TD union, told Felger that what they face from the rail bosses and the government — which barred them from striking last fall — reflects their laser-focused concern for profits and disdain for our rights and our lives.

She pointed to attacks on constitutional rights by the Joseph Biden ad-



Militant/Mary Martin

Rail worker and SWP member Candace Wagner, left, speaks with Nancy Felger, a retired health care worker and former SEIU shop steward, at her home in East Palestine, Ohio, May 25.

"And all the extra expenses we have laid out that the railroad reimburses are set as taxable income!" Gambla added.

Jami Wallace, who took the initiative to organize the Unity Council, called Wagner later. She is a former executive board member of Service Employees International Union 1199 at Ohio State University in Cleveland. "There were five different unions there, but we all faced the same issues," Wallace said. "I organized a Unity Council so we could act together. That's where I got the idea for the

East Palestine Unity Council."

She said she's organizing to get letters to Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine signed by union officers supporting the demand that he declare a state of emergency in East Palestine. This would free up more funding for area residents. "I've started contacting SEIU officers I know about getting that union on board," Wallace explained.

"East Palestine is a union issue completely connected to the fights for health and safety on the job," Wagner said. "The fight here needs union power."

ministration and its use of the FBI as a partisan assault force against its political opponents. This includes the armed FBI raid on former President Donald Trump's Florida home and the growing mountain of charges filed against him. "My party doesn't support Trump, or any capitalist politician, but we know these assaults will always come back on the working class," Wagner said.

Felger agreed, saying, "You know I voted for Trump but I won't vote for him again. But yes, the raid on his home and now these charges against him are all being overdone." Felger took a copy of the *Militant* to read more and said she would consider getting a subscription.

Scott Mason, a 53-year-old machinist at a nonunion plant in the area, lives two blocks from the site of the derailment and fires. He's an army veteran from Washington's Desert Storm war against Iraq in 1991. Mason said his brothers were among the soldiers deployed during the 'turkey shoot' on the road to Basra there. He said they described horrific scenes they can't forget and that he didn't want to learn about.

Mason said he has little faith in the policies put forward by Democrats and Republicans, at home or internationally. He was raised to think the Democrats

were somehow better for the working man, he said, "but it seems the two parties have changed places and done a 180 degree turn as far as what they push for."

Party member Dave Ferguson told him we think working people need to break with the Democrats and Republicans and form a labor party based on the unions. "Yes, that really sounds like the right idea," Mason said.

Ferguson showed him the *Militant's* coverage of the struggle by working people in East Palestine since the derailment. Ferguson said the paper is helping get the word out and their fight is part of increased labor resistance we are seeing. He told him about numerous strikes by his union, the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers, and Grain Millers.

Mason decided to subscribe, and looked over the book *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward*. Pointing to the photo on the book's cover of crowds at a cemetery in Iran gathered to protest the death of Zhina Amini at the hands of the hated morality police, he said, "The killing of that woman in Iran over her headscarf was terrible. We have come way too far in history to keep things the same as they were in another century. It is just not right."

Toxic chemical fires poison East Texas

BY JOHN STUDER

Since the beginning of May there have been three fires at refineries and chemical plants near Houston, with one worker dead and over a dozen injured. Like the disaster in East Palestine, Ohio, these dangers are a product of the drive for profit by the bosses and the help they get from the government.

For years a string of fires, explosions and toxic releases have affected the highly industrial area near suburban Houston residential neighborhoods where many workers live.

On May 5 a massive heavy oil fire and black plume of particulates broke out at the Pemex-Shell complex in Deer Park, sending nine workers to the hospital. It took three days for area firefighters to finally extinguish the flames.

Black plumes over a chemical fire, there as well as in East Palestine, mean that chemical particles settle down in nearby working-class neighborhoods. The Deer Park fire burned olefins, which include the carcinogen 1,3-butadiene.

A week later a Marathon Petroleum

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‘A genuine revolution means leading the millions’

Class struggle in the US today, the Cuban Revolution and building a proletarian party

The following are the remarks by Mary-Alice Waters at an April 25 presentation in Havana of the book *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward* by Jack Barnes, Steve Clark and Waters. Waters is a member of the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party and president of Pathfinder Press.

Held amid preparations in Havana and across Cuba to celebrate May 1, International Workers Day, the event was sponsored by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and held at the national headquarters of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP). Participants were welcomed by Leima Martínez, ICAP’s director for North America. Noemí Rabaza, first vice president of ICAP, spoke along with Waters and chaired the meeting (see news article in the May 22 issue of the Militant).

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SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY LEADER SPEAKS AT HAVANA MEETING

BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

Thank you Noemí and Leima for your warm welcome and introductory remarks.

And a heartfelt thanks to all our compañeros and compañeras here at ICAP for hosting this special event today. On behalf of both Pathfinder Press and the Socialist Workers Party leadership, I also want to convey our appreciation to the comrades here representing the Central Committee of the party for their initiatives and efforts that made this meeting possible.

It’s a privilege to have an opportunity to discuss the class struggle unfolding in the United States and the revolutionary course open to us with an audience like this of young people, workers and communist leaders. We look forward to your observations, questions and opinions.

The book Pathfinder Press is presenting here this afternoon — *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward*, whose authors are Jack Barnes,

Steve Clark and myself — is about the political manifestations of the sharpening class struggle in the U.S. today. The centerpiece of the book is a document drafted six months ago by the SWP leadership. After three months of discussion and votes by party members in branches across the country, it was adopted in December 2022 by delegates to the party’s 49th constitutional convention.

The book is now being used from the Atlantic to the Pacific, as well as internationally, to educate and win workers and youth to a revolutionary working-class course of action.

The imperialist epoch

The class struggle in the United States, as in every country, doesn’t begin with its own historical, cultural and political idiosyncrasies. It begins as an integral part of the world.

We begin with the consequences of the fact that we live in the imperialist epoch, at a time when the seeming stability of the world order imposed by the victors of World War II continues to unravel. That process has been accelerated by the first major land war in Europe in almost eight decades. Trade, capital, and currency wars — often harbingers of armed conflicts to come — have sharpened. A renewed arms race, including nuclear weapons, is unfolding. Jew-hatred is once again on the rise worldwide, in word and deed. And the dominant imperialist power is in relative decline, with no replacement in the wings.

Amid the breakdowns, conflicts and wars that are coming, only one thing is certain. Unless the working class and its allies develop the confidence and consciousness that we must take the power to wage war out of the hands of the capitalist rulers in the U.S. and around the globe, there *will be* another world war. A war of unimaginable consequences.

For the Socialist Workers Party this historical truth is not cause for despair. Such an apocalypse is *not* inevitable. It depends on the actions of the international working class and its political vanguard. It depends on *us* — all of us.

What’s more, we have one important



Militant photos by Martin Koppel

April 25 book presentation in Havana at headquarters of Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples. Inset, from left, Mary-Alice Waters; ICAP leader Noemí Rabaza, who chaired and spoke. In Cuba, Rabaza said, the government represents workers’ class interests not those of the capitalists. “What Noemí says is important,” Waters noted in discussion period. Cuba’s socialist revolution is a beacon worldwide and set the example for working people in the U.S., too. “Alone we’ll be defeated. Fighting together, we can win,” Waters ended.



advantage today over previous generations. The victorious socialist revolution in Cuba, made possible by workers and farmers under the leadership of Fidel, gives us a living example we can learn from. Fidel’s recognition *in action* from January 1959 onward that a genuine revolution — and the forging of a communist leadership — required reaching far beyond the thousands of men and women in uniforms of the Rebel Army and July 26 Movement. It meant leading the millions being won to the revolution. It meant organizing and mobilizing those whose uniforms, in Fidel’s words, “were the work shirts of workers and farmers and other men and women of the people.”

No leadership since Lenin and the Bolsheviks has understood and acted on that fact so confidently and so unswervingly as the leadership of Cuba’s socialist revolution. Fidel first and foremost.

These are historical facts that guide the political course of the Socialist Workers Party.

Response to intensified exploitation

Briefly, I want to point to four of the political assessments at the center of this book.

First. As the title affirms, in the past two years we’ve seen a small but important increase in the number and geographical distribution of industrial strikes, job actions and acts of proletarian solidarity. More significant than their size and number, however, is what’s driving them.

In many cases the issue for the workers on strike is not only, or even primarily, wages. They are demanding changes in the intolerable and dangerous conditions of work that take a heavier and heavier toll on health and family relations.

- issues of job safety, for example, when the bosses disable or refuse to install protective features on machinery, and demand workers perform jobs for which they have not received adequate training.
- 12-hour workdays of intense labor with few breaks, sometimes six or even seven days a week.
- contracts that penalize workers

if they are absent even one day due to sickness.

- forced overtime and irregular shifts leaving no time for family, for rest, recreation, union or social activity. Workers call them “divorce shifts,” and “suicide shifts.”

To give this reality its proper name — it’s the result of the owners’ intensification of the *exploitation of labor*. Some of the social consequences of this profit-driven assault are shown by charts you’ll find in this book.

Inflation-adjusted wages have been almost flat for half a century and have begun sliding again the past three years. Life expectancy in the U.S. has fallen to the lowest level in a quarter century. The birthrate stands at less than half of what it was in 1950. Suicide rates have soared among adolescents, working farmers, and veterans of Washington’s wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere. Drug use is now the leading cause of death for men in their prime working years, while alcoholism is again increasing, and gambling addiction is at all-time highs.

Starting and maintaining a family is increasingly beyond the reach of young men and women in the working class and among other exploited and worse-off middle layers. Apartment rents and mortgage payments are on the rise, as are prices for food, gas, health care, schooling, child care and other basics.

The freight train derailment last February in East Palestine, Ohio, which was widely reported here in Cuba and elsewhere around the world, captures many elements of today’s social catastrophe: tens of thousands of gallons of toxic chemicals were spilled over a huge area, endangering the lives and livelihoods of many thousands of working-class and farm families. It was not an “accident.” It was due to nothing but the rail owners’ drive to increase their profit rate. One of the safety features, a heat sensor, which would have warned crew members of a problem in time to stop the train, had been calibrated to render it useless.

More and more workers are saying “Enough!” to the unbridled power of the capitalist owners. They’re finding each other increasingly ready to fight back,

Continued on next page



AP Photo/Jose Luis Magana

Dec. 13, 2022, rail workers rally in Washington for national contract. Small but important increase in job actions has taken place as workers fight intolerable and dangerous job conditions and inhumane shifts, not just for wage gains in face of rising inflation.

‘A genuine revolution means leading the millions’

Continued from previous page
and eager to discuss how to win. The idea that safety and job conditions — questions of life and death — should be under the control of the workers themselves gets a broader hearing.

To say the low point of labor resistance is behind us is not a prediction about the pace or scope of new battles on the horizon. It tells us what has already happened, the political opportunities that are opening up, and what to prepare for.

I’ll give one other concrete example that registers what has changed. Last weekend members of the Socialist Workers Party participated in the annual Los Angeles book fair, which draws tens of thousands of working people and youth. In the course of two days, they sold almost 90 subscriptions to our weekly newspaper, the *Militant*, and some 235 books. The best seller was the title we’re discussing here today in Havana. In short, they sold as many books and subscriptions in two days as they had sold in two months a year earlier. And the numbers would have been higher had they not run out of both books and papers.

Sharpening class divisions

Second. There is a deepening social and political polarization in the U.S. on numerous questions. These divisions register above all sharpening *class* divisions. The well-remunerated professional and middle-class meritocracy is pressing to impose its class values and meeting strong resistance from broad layers of working people. To mention a few examples:

- The burdens spawned by capitalist-fueled social ills often fall heaviest on women, especially in the exploited classes. There can be no road to ending women’s oppression without dealing with the social crises bearing down on families of the working class and addressing the challenges and responsibilities women shoulder for care of family members and as the bearers of new life. The bourgeois and leftist middle-class misleaders of organizations claiming to defend women’s rights, however, obfuscate the roots of women’s oppression in *class society*. They ignore the family and social issues that must be addressed and largely reduce the fight for women’s

equality to abortion access. They then further reduce it to an electoral issue in hopes of winning votes for the Democratic Party. Women’s emancipation — which is impossible without a woman’s access to medically safe and legal control over reproduction — is inseparable from the working-class fight to create the material and social conditions that will enable women and men to realize our full humanity. That is the political battle we must win.

- Fueled by horrendous mass shootings in schools, churches, synagogues and shopping centers in recent years, many who call themselves “progressives” blame “backward” workers and farmers for clinging to their guns. They campaign against individual gun ownership as the *cause* of mass shootings and demand new restrictions or outright bans on the purchase and possession of guns. But guns are not the *cause* of these events. They are a product of the social crises produced by *capitalism* and the stresses that tear apart tens of millions of families.

- There are heated confrontations between parents and school administrators over the imposition of classroom programs that separate children by skin color and teach those whose skins are white that they are racists by birth. On the panel at the front here displaying photos from the book we’re discussing, you’ll find a picture of two young girls holding up signs saying, “I’m not an oppressor!” It captures the political content and intensity of these clashes.

- Another flashpoint is the expansion of “gender-fluid” schooling for children — even as young as kindergarten — teaching them that the sex they were supposedly “assigned” at birth is irrelevant. They are neither male nor female, they’re told, and can choose what they want from a long list of “genders.” Teenagers in the throes of the sexual misery of adolescence are urged to undergo “gender reassignment” surgery and hormone therapy. Confrontations over male transgender athletes competing in women’s sports have become another battlefield. Anyone defending the biological fact that there are two sexes risks becoming the target of social media mobs libeling them as “trans-phobes.”

- These conflicts, and many oth-



AP Photo/Harold Valentine
Colón, Cuba, Jan. 7, 1959. Crowd greets Freedom Caravan and Rebel Army combatants who stopped in town after town across island in wake of overturn of U.S.-backed dictatorship. Like Lenin and Bolsheviks, Fidel Castro acted on fact that a genuine revolution, and forging of a communist party, requires mobilizing, organizing and leading the millions of workers and farmers being won to that course.

ers, are not primarily an expression of divisions within bourgeois politics, although they are often exploited by bourgeois politicians hoping to divert attention from the fundamental issues and rustle votes. As the SWP resolution underscores, “Whatever the camouflage,” these conflicts “ultimately reflect *class divisions*.”

Defend constitutional freedoms

Third. Defending protections and freedoms enumerated in the U.S. Constitution, as the SWP resolution explains, “is at the center of the class struggle today.” These protections — under assault by the federal government, its political police such as the FBI, and both ruling political parties — are freedoms won by working people in class battles over two and a half centuries, including one of the bloodiest civil wars in history.

The U.S. Constitution originated as the constitution of a mercantile *bourgeois* republic. The working-class vanguard doesn’t politically defend or support it. Inscribed in that constitution, however, are hard-won written protections against abuses and the abridgment of a number of freedoms *by the capitalist state*.

The First Amendment incorporated in the Constitution states, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

“A well regulated militia, being necessary” the Second Amendment says, “the right of the people to keep and bear Arms shall not be infringed.”

Other amendments guarantee the “right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures.” In criminal proceedings, the Sixth Amendment guarantees the right to trial by a jury of one’s peers, the right to a defense attorney, and the right to confront your accusers and see the evidence being presented against you.

Whenever these freedoms are

abused — whether the target is a former U.S. president, or a small family shop owner victimized for affirming their religious beliefs — class-conscious workers must speak out. No matter who is the target to begin with, we know from history that the precedent set by any breach of such protections will be used sooner or later to go after trade unions, workers on strike, working-class parties and organizations of the oppressed.

In the 1930s, when genuine fascist forces with world connections were growing in the U.S. and demanding the right to assemble, the Socialist Workers Party defended their right to do so. And when 20,000 Nazi supporters filled Madison Square Garden in New York City in February 1939, some 50,000 workers responded to the call issued by the SWP to answer that threat — not by reinforcing illusions in capitalist courts and legislative bodies, but *in action* and *on the streets*.

Contrary to what some on the left light-mindedly claim, there is no growing fascist movement in the U.S. right now. Constitutionally protected freedoms are under assault above all today by the capitalist state, as well as privileged but relatively insecure professional and middle-class layers who consider themselves “progressives.”

University campuses have become breeding grounds for activities aimed at silencing fellow students and professors who disagree with your views. Wheth-



Service Employees International Union Local 99
Child care workers protest in Sacramento, California, February 2020 as part of fight for union recognition. There can be no road to ending women’s oppression, Waters said, without dealing with social crises bearing down on families of working class, and responsibilities women shoulder.

er under the flag of “cancel culture,” “critical race theory,” the anti-Jewish “Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions” movement or something else, these are reactionary forces alien to the working class and its allies.

Another registration of class polarization and unraveling of the bourgeois rule of law is the criminalization of political differences within the ruling class and its political parties. The Democratic Party majority of the House of Representatives voted twice to impeach Donald Trump during his presidency. Now the first of what will likely be multiple indictments of Trump for other alleged crimes or civil suits has been handed down. The House of Representatives, today Republican controlled, is preparing payback for President Joseph Biden and members of his family. And it won’t stop there. We’ve seen the consequences of this criminalization of opponents in bourgeois politics elsewhere in recent years. The example of Brazil is one that most of us are familiar with.

Building a working-class vanguard

Fourth. Forging a proletarian party.

In a discussion with a young visitor to the Pathfinder stand at the Havana book fair two months ago, I was asked: “Why do you put so much emphasis on the working class? Isn’t that exclusionary? Doesn’t it diminish the importance of the struggle against racism, patriarchy, transphobia, destruction of the environment?”

The answer I gave her was not complicated.

The working class itself is the most inclusive social formation in the U.S. or any other capitalist state. Tens of millions of working people are targets of racism, sexism and/or every other prejudice and form of oppression fomented by capitalist society and used to divide us, to set us against each other. Workers are actively engaged in defending themselves and each other, on and off the job, every day.

But that’s just the beginning of an answer. Only the working class, created by capitalism itself, has the social weight, economic power — and absence of any class stake of its own in capitalist exploitation and rule — to lead the political battle necessary to take state power and establish a government that defends the interests of working people, the vast majority of humanity.

Only the working class, leading its allies — “los humildes,” to borrow Fidel’s words — can build a new economic foundation for all social relations. A foundation that for the first time in millennia is not built on private ownership of the land and productive property, exploitation, and oppression by a small minority of wealthy ruling families. That’s the course presented in *Labor, Nature, and the Evolution of Humanity: The Long View of History*, a recently published companion to the book we are discussing today.

And — as the socialist revolution made by the workers and farmers of Cuba confirmed — it is only through what will be titanic class battles to take power out of the hands of today’s rulers and begin the transformation of society that a vanguard of millions can be forged. Only along that road will millions of human beings, shaped by capitalist society, transform themselves as they fight to transform their world.

The greatest obstacle working people face is overcoming the view of ourselves drummed into us by capitalist society from the day we are born. As Malcolm X expressed it, we don’t need to be awakened to our oppression. We need to be awakened to our *worth*. To what we are capable of achieving.

A socialist revolution in the U.S. is inconceivable without organizing workers to build, extend, and strengthen the basic defense organizations of our class, the trade unions. It is impossible without learning how to use that union power to advance the interests of working people. It is impossible without the



Militant/Deborah Liatos
Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate from California, Laura Garza, campaigns at May 26 labor rally in Los Angeles. SWP explains that working people need a labor party built on the unions, their basic class organization with millions of members. A party that breaks from those of the capitalist bosses, the Democrats and Republicans, and acts politically on behalf of working people at home and abroad.

fight to transform the unions into instruments of class struggle, wielded by class-conscious, battle-tested workers.

As part of that growing consciousness, the working class needs not only union democracy and solidarity. *Above all*, we need to break from subordination to the parties of capital — in the U.S., the Democratic and Republican parties first and foremost — and find our own political voice. We need a labor party built on the unions. A party that advances a working-class foreign policy too, one starting not from class-collaborationist loyalty to one or another of the conflicting capitalist states, but from the needs of our class at home *and* abroad.

These are not tasks for the future. They are tasks for today that can only be accomplished by a party that is proletarian in composition and social milieu as well as program and leadership.

Communist continuity

The course of the Socialist Workers Party has not been invented by us. It goes back to the founding of the modern working-class movement. Our continuity is rooted in the materialist dialectics and historical outlook of Marx and Engels and their leadership of the working class from 1847 on. It’s a continuity that runs through Lenin’s leadership of the October Revolution and the opening years of the Third International. A continuity defended by Trotsky in his work to stay on Lenin’s course, forging a world communist

movement based on truth not lies, in face of Stalin’s reversal of independent working-class politics and proletarian internationalism.

It’s a continuity that runs through Cuba’s socialist revolution led by Fidel. Through leaders of the working masses like Che, Maurice Bishop and Thomas Sankara, who acted on that example. And through lessons learned across our own century of class-struggle experience in the United States, from the founding of the first Communist Party there in 1919, to today.

For us, the defense of Cuba and Cuba’s socialist revolution is not only an act of international working-class solidarity, as important as that is. It is inseparable from our revolutionary course in the U.S. We must win substantial sectors of the working class in the imperialist bastion to see that the bosses’ hatred, fear and lies about the Cuban Revolution are in fact an *extension* of their hatred, fear and lies about toilers inside the U.S.

The revolutionary capacities of workers and farmers in the United States today are as utterly discounted by the ruling families who control Washington as were those of the Cuban toilers who defeated them at the Bay of Pigs on the shores of Playa Girón. A lesson they will never forgive or forget.

The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward is a contribution to organizing and mobilizing those revolutionary capacities in action.



AFP/Andrew Cabellero-Reynolds
Leesburg, Virginia, June 2021, parents clashed with school officials over programs separating children by skin color and teaching students who are white, like those in photo, they are racist by birth.

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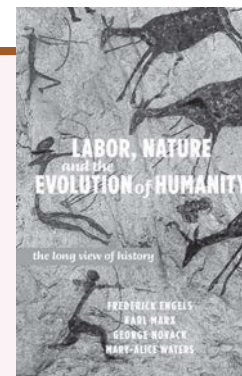
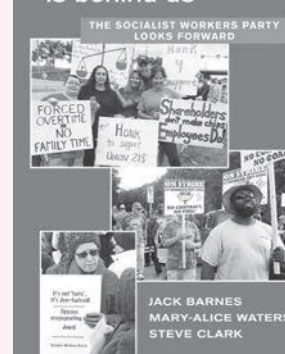
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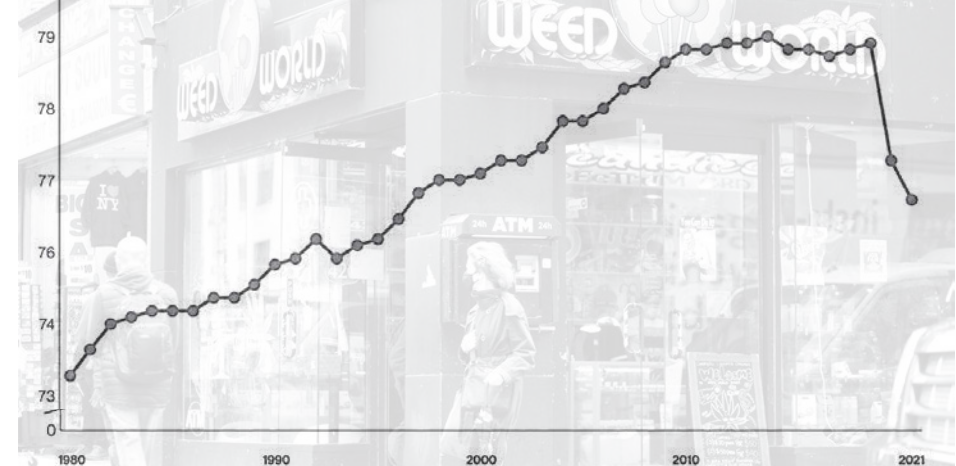
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The low point of labor resistance is behind us



Life Expectancy in the United States 1980-2021

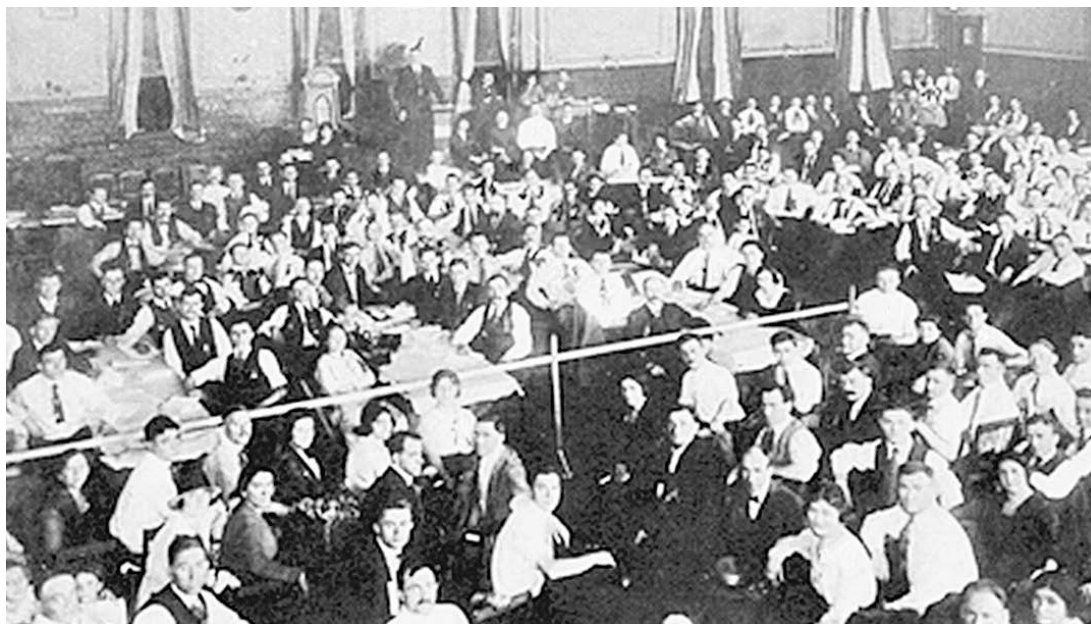


Source: National Center for Health Statistics

Growing epidemic of drug abuse is a major reason life expectancy has declined. Background photo, marijuana store in New York, where government promotes its use.

‘We built a party to lead a socialist revolution in the United States’

The First Ten Years of American Communism: Report of a Participant by James P. Cannon is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for June. Cannon describes his experiences as a founding leader of the Communist Party in the United States in 1919, charting a course to emulate the example of the Russian Revolution. But, as revolutions from Europe to China went down to defeat, the isolated Soviet government and the parties of the Communist International were transformed as Joseph Stalin led a bureaucratic counterrevolution. Expelled from the CP in 1928 for supporting Leon Trotsky's fight to continue Lenin's proletarian internationalism, Cannon led the communist current that became the Socialist Workers Party. The excerpt is from "Part I: Letters to a Historian. My Thesis," written March 2, 1954. Copyright © 1973 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Delegates at founding convention of Communist Party of America in Chicago, September 1919. James P. Cannon, one of the party's founding leaders, said that their perspective was to build a Bolshevik-style party in United States like V.I. Lenin had constructed that led workers and peasants to power in Russia.

American revolutionists with a perspective of revolution in this country. Otherwise, they wouldn't have been in the movement in the first place and wouldn't have split with the reformist socialists to organize the Communist Party.

Even if it is maintained that some of these leaders were careerists — a contention their later evolution tends to support — it still remains to be explained why they sought careers in the communist movement and not in the business or professional worlds, or in bourgeois politics, or in the trade-union officialdom. Opportunities in these fields were open to at least some of them, and were deliberately cast aside at the time.

In my opinion, the course of the leaders of American communism in its pioneer days, a course which entailed deprivations, hazards and penalties, can be explained only by the assumption that they were revolutionists to begin with; and that even the careerists among them believed in the future of the workers' revolution in America and wished to ally themselves with this future.

It is needless to add that the rank and file of the party, who had no personal interests to serve, were animated by revolutionary convictions. By that I mean, they were believers in the perspective of revolution in this country, for I do not know any other kind of revolutionists.

The American Communist Party did not begin with Stalinism. The Stalinization of the party was rather the end result of a process of degeneration which be-

gan during the long boom of the Twenties. The protracted prosperity of that period, which came to be taken for permanence by the great mass of American people of all classes, did not fail to affect the Communist Party itself. It softened up the leading cadres of that party, and undermined their original confidence in the perspectives of a revolution in this country. This prepared them, eventually, for an easy acceptance of the Stalinist theory of "socialism in one country."

For those who accepted this theory, Russia, as the "one country" of the victorious revolution, became a substitute for the American revolution. Thereafter, the Communist Party in this country adopted as its primary task the "defense of the Soviet Union" by pressure methods of one kind or another on American foreign policy, without any perspective of a revolution of their own. All the subsequent twists and turns of Communist policy in the United States, which appears so irrational to others, had this central motivation — the subordination of the struggle for a revolution in the United States to the "defense" of a revolution in another country.

That explains the frenzied radicalism of the party in the first years of the economic crisis of the Thirties, when American foreign policy was hostile to the Soviet diplomacy; the reconciliation with Roosevelt after he recognized the Soviet Union and oriented toward a diplomatic rapprochement with the Kremlin; the split with Roosevelt

during the Stalin-Hitler pact; and the later fervent reconciliation and the unrestrained jingoism of the American Stalinists when Washington allied itself with the Kremlin in the war.

The present policy of the Communist Party, its subordination of the class struggle to a pacifistic "peace" campaign, and its decision to ally itself at all costs with the Democratic Party, has the same consistent motivation as all the previous turns of policy.

The degeneration of the Communist Party began when it abandoned the perspective of revolution in this country, and converted itself into a pressure group and cheering squad for the Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia — which it mistakenly took to be the custodian of a revolution "in another country."

I shouldn't neglect to add the final point of my thesis: The degeneration of the Communist Party is not to be explained by the summary conclusion that the leaders were a pack of scoundrels to begin with; although a considerable percentage of them — those who became Stalinists as well as those who became renegades — turned out eventually to be scoundrels of championship caliber; but by the circumstance that they fell victim to a false theory and a false perspective.

What happened to the Communist Party would happen without fail to any other party, including our own, if it should abandon its struggle for a social revolution in this country, as the realistic perspective of our epoch, and degrade itself to the role of sympathizer of revolutions in other countries.

I firmly believe that American revolutionists should indeed sympathize with revolutions in other lands, and try to help them in every way they can. But the best way to do that is to build a party with a confident perspective of a revolution in this country.

Without that perspective, a Communist or Socialist party belies its name. It ceases to be a help and becomes a hindrance to the revolutionary workers' cause in its own country. And its sympathy for other revolutions isn't worth much either.

That, in my opinion, is the true and correct explanation of the Rise and Fall of the American Communist Party.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

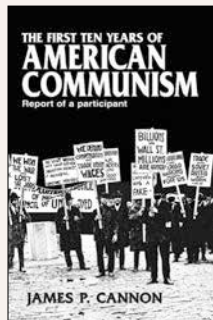
BY JAMES P. CANNON

The Communist Party originally was a revolutionary organization. All the original leaders of the early Communist Party, who later split into three permanent factions within the party, began as

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‘Win our desires with our unions’

Continued from front page
government’s dress code.

The Shiite-based bourgeois-clerical regime has offered concessions in some cases and arrests and repression in others to try to tamp down workers, youth and oppressed nationalities. On the eve of a May 22 nationwide strike by truck owner-operators, the government announced a 30% increase in freight rates. Truckers in Arak, Bandar Abbas, Isfahan and Bandar Khomeini went on strike for several days.

“Although we did not reach all our demands, we were able to make our words and demands heard by everyone,” the Union of Truckers and Drivers Organizations said May 27, announcing the end of the strike. “The authorities gave in out of fear of the drivers.”

But the regime has taken a heavy-handed approach to thousands of oil project contract workers — including welders, pipefitters and scaffolders — who have held over 70 rallies or strikes over the last year. They work jobs that might last only three or four months and can face layoffs of six months at a stretch.

“The workers say they are discriminated against even in water,” reported the Iranian Labour News Agency, affiliated to the government-allied Workers’ House. “Officials and contract bosses receive mineral water, but the workers themselves are given unsanitary water from tankers,” the agency said. Workers also complain that deductions from their salary were made for food but all they got “was simple potatoes or eggs.”

Oil project workers on strike

Thousands began a strike April 15, which rapidly spread to over 100 work sites. They are demanding a 79% wage increase — with inflation now running over 50% — and a more humane work schedule of 20 days followed by 10 days off instead of the more debilitating 24 days in a row with six days off.

“If we can fulfill these two urgent demands with the power of unity, we will have more power to continue our struggle to dismantle the contractor system,” the Organizing Council of Oil Contract Workers said. The union wants to get rid of the exploitative middlemen and be employed directly by the oil companies, taking a step to overcome one of many divisions employers foster.

After the governor of Bushehr province announced a crackdown May 14, the Iranian Labour News Agency ran an article headlined “Protest against the

arrest of eight South Pars workers. Hear the voice of the contract workers.”

A week later the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the regime’s main repressive force, said it had arrested “the main leader of the strikes, who has been leading the disturbances since 2019.” Since then there has been no news on whether or not the strike continues.

The faction-ridden capitalist government in Tehran is trying to roll back the belief by millions in Iran that the wearing of a hijab or not should be a woman’s personal choice.

The parliament is debating a bill requiring police to send text messages to women violating the dress code. Repeat “offenders” would face ever increasing fines and eventually the possibility of jail time. Some in the government claim the proposed bill is too “lenient.”

Daily protests, across Iran

None of this has stopped workers from taking to the streets. Almost every day there are new rallies or strikes by rail workers, nurses, steelworkers, municipal workers, miners and others over unpaid wages and poor working conditions or for higher wages. For



National Union of Iranian Retirees

Miners protest at Chadormalu iron ore mine in Yazd province, Iran, May 19. Like oil project workers, miners are fighting for union rights, end to hiring system controlled by contractors.

months retirees have held weekly and at times daily protests demanding an increase in pensions.

Mozhgan Baheri, a teachers union activist in Fars province, was recently released from prison. He wrote that “the sentence ‘we turn prisons into universi-

ties’ should be written in gold,” referring to what union and political prisoners have been learning behind bars.

“We do not believe in any other way to achieve our desires except trade union activity,” he said. “We have chosen our way, the government must also choose.”

Capitalist crisis drives birth rate, life expectancy down

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

As prices continue to rise, especially on necessities like food, housing and health care, and as the worldwide decline in capitalist production and trade threatens layoffs, insistence by Joseph Biden administration officials that the economy is doing well ring hollow.

Over a third of households were worse off financially in 2022 than a year earlier, reports a May 22 Federal Reserve survey. Some 18% of workers said that higher prices force them to work more hours or add on another job. And 37% said they wouldn’t be able to cover a \$400 unexpected expense like a car breakdown or medical emergency.

At the same time, the Fed has been jacking up interest rates monthly, adding rising rates on credit cards and other debts workers are saddled with.

The economic crisis facing working people in Europe is just as bad, and in some countries even worse. In the U.K. food prices in April were 19.3% higher than a year ago. In France households have cut their food purchases by more than 10% since Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine.

The German economy, the largest in Europe, is now officially in a recession, with declining industrial production and falling retail sales. In Spain working people face an unemployment rate of 13.3%.

Today’s double whammy hitting working people points to a strong likelihood of an extended period of stagflation, where rising prices are combined with stagnating capitalist production and hiring, both in the U.S. and worldwide.

This comes as the bosses’ response to rough conditions and increased competition is to take it out on their workers, pushing to cut workers and jack up the line speed, reduce wages, increase hours, impose divisive two-tier wage schemes and other attacks.

With the administration’s pronouncement that the COVID-19 pandemic is over, hundreds of thousands of lower-income workers have been cut off from Medicaid.

Earlier this year, 93 million people — over 25% of the U.S. population — were enrolled in Medicaid or the Children’s Health Insurance Program, up from 71 million before the pandemic. Budget

cuts projected by the federal government would eliminate another 15 million people from coverage.

Debra Miller, of Bullhead City, Arizona, lost Medicaid coverage in April because officials said her \$25,000 annual wage at Burger King made her ineligible. A single mother with diabetes and hypothyroidism, she was told she had to buy her own insurance now through Obamacare at a \$70 monthly premium.

“You have a car, mortgage, kids, food,” she told the *New York Times*. “You really don’t have that much left to pay that much for health insurance.”

At the same time, government officials have made it increasingly difficult for workers injured on the job to get Social Security disability benefits. Over the past couple of years federal judges hearing appeals ruled against denying benefits in 60% of the cases they heard. These cases were sent back to be reviewed. But the burden of a drawn-out fight to get the benefits lies on the back of the workers.

“They’ve done everything to prolong this to get me to quit,” Michael Sheldon told the *Washington Post*. He was hurled off a road-paving machine in 2006 and has been fighting for benefits since.

High rents and mortgage rates have made it difficult for young workers in particular to be able to afford getting their own place to live and raise a family. Many are forced to move in with their parents, other relatives or friends.

The birth rate has plummeted from 24 per 1,000 people in 1950 to about 11 today. Looked at another way, if fertility rates had stayed even at their 2007 level, there would be 9.6 million more children alive in the U.S. today.

“Young Americans Are Dying at Alarming Rates,” headlined a May 17 *Wall Street Journal* article. It’s now at its highest level in nearly 15 years, from drug overdoses, suicides, homicides and car crashes.

Despite significant gains in medical care, life expectancy in the U.S. has fallen to 76 years today, its lowest level in over a quarter century.

Toxic chemical fires poison working people in East Texas

Continued from page 6

plant fire erupted in Texas City, 40 miles away. One worker was killed, the second worker to die there this year. Government and Marathon officials claimed the fires “were not cause for concern”!

A fire broke out May 17 at Valero West Refinery in Corpus Christi, shooting another chemical plume into the air.

“I have grown up here and watched neighborhoods near the refineries become too toxic to live in and people forced to leave their homes,” Kristina Land from Corpus Christi told the *Washington Post*. “Our local government doesn’t ever want us to know how bad things really are,” she said. “They just sweep everything under the rug and never talk about it again.”

The fire at Shell in Deer Park hap-

pened a day after a public Texas Commission on Environmental Quality hearing at the high school gym there. Dozens of angry residents came to demand state action regarding the massive 2019 leak and fire at an Intercontinental Terminals Company tank farm that blanketed the area with toxic chemicals.

ITC is seeking a renewal of its operating permit, the subject of the hearing, but organizers barred questions about the 2019 fire as “not within the scope” of the meeting.

That smoke plume hung over the area for three days. Residents were ordered to shelter in place, the Houston Ship Channel was shut down and millions of gallons of hazardous material, including the carcinogen benzene, spilled on the ground and leaked into

area waterways. No government action was ever taken on this disaster.

While Texas has some regulations concerning underground storage facilities, aboveground tanks are exempt.

ITC is owned by the Mitsui Group. The only penalty the bosses ever paid was \$900,000 in 2021 to settle a lawsuit from Harris County, which includes Houston and Deer Park. That figure was .01% of the \$7.39 billion profit Mitsui made that year, the *Texas Tribune* pointed out.

These — and worse — disasters are inevitable as long as the capitalist rulers’ thirst for profits drives the economy. More ITCs, more East Palestines. Workers must use the unions to impose workers control over production and planning.

Why you should join the SWP campaign

Statement by Seth Galinsky, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New York City Council, May 31.

The Socialist Workers Party’s 2024 campaigns are beginning, with Laura Garza announcing her campaign for U.S. Senate in California at a sizable labor rally in Los Angeles. More will follow. The 2024 campaigns of the Democratic and Republican parties — the bosses’ two main parties — began early because of the bitter partisan conflicts between them.

The two capitalist parties are leading the assaults that today’s deepening crisis of capitalism impels them to take out on working people. While more than 5 million are unemployed, rising prices and interest rates are forcing millions of others to work longer and longer hours or take on another job. More young workers face difficulties getting a place of their own and starting a family.

It’s only by building the unions that we can advance a working-class course to combat these conditions and defend the interests of all those exploited and oppressed by capital.

“The right to employment is the only serious right left to the worker in a society based upon exploitation,” the 1938 founding program of the SWP says. A union-led fight for 30 hours work for 40 hours pay can prevent layoffs by sharing the available work around, with no cut in pay. A government-funded public works program is needed to put millions to work at union-scale pay to build houses, child care centers, schools and other things working people need.

The labor movement can champion demands for escalator clauses in all contracts and benefits, so when prices rise, our wages automatically match them. That takes the burden off workers’ backs and places it onto the capitalists, whose profit system is the root cause of the problems we face.

Millions of families need income supplements to ensure they can meet their expenses and maintain steady employment, as the labor movement fights for universal child care and medical coverage.

Nothing in the deal between President Joseph Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy to boost the government debt ceiling addresses workers’ needs. Democrats and Republicans joined together to bar rail workers from striking for livable schedules and conditions last year. With a new arms race underway after Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine, both parties place expanding the U.S. rulers’ massive arsenal for future wars above all else.

The capitalist class has two parties, but the unions — the largest and most powerful class organizations workers have — have none. Whatever gains workers make in hard-fought class battles will erode away unless labor charts an independent political course. That’s at the heart of what the SWP’s 2023 and 2024 candidates present — the need to break from the Democrats and Republicans and build a labor party based on the unions that can be an instrument for working people marching toward the elimination of the wages system and replace capitalist rule with a government of our own.

Democrats, FBI assault political rights workers need

Continued from front page
supporters, who they claim are white supremacists and reactionaries.

The trials of defendants from the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the Capitol will run through the 2024 campaign, as will the investigations and prosecutions targeting Trump. All of these are being used to try to add weight to Biden’s insistence that he *must* be re-elected, winning support from the middle-class left.

The Democrats claim that what took place at the Capitol Jan. 6 was nothing short of an insurrection. Convicted under unconstitutional seditious conspiracy laws, Stewart Rhodes, a founder of the Oath Keepers, had his sentence jacked up to 18 years with a “terrorism enhancement.” This is one of the many special-case laws, like “three strikes” laws, that judges use to get around sentencing limitations set by law.

The Justice Department didn’t prove Rhodes was involved in any actual plan to overthrow the government, nor show he tried to execute one. Instead, it used statements he made — speech protected by the First Amendment — and pointed to the fact that the group maintained a weapons cache, to conjure up a “plot.”

Sedition and conspiracy laws, like those Biden’s prosecutors are using, turn advocacy of ideas into a crime. These same laws have been used in the past to bring frame-up charges against leaders of the Socialist Workers Party, the Teamsters union and fighters for Puerto Rican independence.

Scope of the witch hunt

Ten Jan. 6 defendants have been convicted of seditious conspiracy and four more pled guilty to the same charge. That is more than in *any* other event since these laws were adopted during the Civil War.

More than 1,000 people have so far been charged in one of the most wide-ranging investigations by the Justice Department. Every single U.S. Attorney’s office and FBI field office has been involved. The FBI says it has already opened 4 million files, while prosecutors say they expect to lay charges against 1,000 more people.

Those brought before the judges in these cases

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Ukraine independence

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tion for his troops in Bakhmut. He admitted his private army of 85,000 had lost tens of thousands of fighters.

Prigozhin also complained the invasion had turned “Ukraine’s army into one of the most powerful in the world.”

To win the war, he demanded the Russian government enact martial law, which would give unlimited authority to military commanders; launch another wave of conscription; and institute forced labor to raise armaments production. The course he advances would be even more disastrous for working people than that carried out by Putin.

Moscow fired interviewer Dolgov and then blocked Prigozhin’s access to state media.

A Russian soldier named Ruslan, who arrived in Bakhmut May 8, was put under the command of a Wagner fighter who told him and others, “If you refuse to fight, I will annihilate you.”

The next day Ruslan decided to surrender. He saw a small Ukrainian drone hovering above him. He signaled to the camera of the drone operator, and the device led him across no man’s land to Ukrainian lines.

The video of his desertion was widely reported. The Ukrainian “I Want to Live” hotline, for Russian soldiers wishing to surrender, was contacted 3,174 times in April, 10% more than the previous month.

Some Russian soldiers are beginning to desert in groups. The Ukrainian army says that about 20 conscripts from Moscow’s army deserted from Svatove in a truck May 25.

Prigozhin threatens ‘revolution’

Putin justifies his bloody invasion with false claims that before the Soviet Union was formed “there was never any Ukraine.” He blames Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin for its creation. In reality, the fight of the Ukrainian toilers for independence against the Russian czars began centuries before.

Prigozhin said the impact of the war would deepen class polarization inside Russia that “could end as in 1917 with a revolution.”

His comparison misses some decisive facts. In 1917 working people forged a communist leadership, steeled in battle and capable of leading millions to take power in the course of an immense revolt that swept the Russian Empire during the carnage of the First World War.

The workers and peasants government that came to power in October 1917 was led by the Bolshevik Party. It defended the right to self-determination of oppressed nations, like Ukraine. The Soviet Union under Lenin’s lead was founded as a voluntary federation of autonomous republics.

Nothing like that exists today. The only organized opposition to Putin is from the right, standing for even greater violence against Ukraine, including nuclear attack.

Last year alone, the Putin regime arrested over 20,000 people. Some 176 organizations and individuals were listed as “foreign agents,” opening them up to criminal investigation. Still there are many examples of anti-war actions while Putin’s response is devastating Russian culture.

At the end of May, Olga Tsukanova and the Council of Soldiers’ Mothers and Wives that she leads were added to Putin’s list of “foreign agents.” The group held protests last fall demanding proper training and medical care for their conscripted relatives, and for peace talks to begin.

On both sides of the war, mothers of prisoners of war are helping each other locate and help captured soldiers. “We work under the understanding that all soldiers are someone’s children, so there is never any animosity between us,” Alla Makruch, who leads the initiative from the Ukrainian side, told conflictfieldnotes.com. Following her group’s proposal, the Ukrainian government now permits Russian mothers to visit their loved ones in Ukrainian prisons. So far, none have made the trip.

Makruch’s counterpart, Valentina Melnikova, is the director of the Union of Soldiers Mothers in Russia. She is pressing Moscow to allow the International Red Cross to inspect conditions in Russian prisons where Ukrainians are held.

The Putin regime fears that fraternization like this could lead to weakening support for a war that has never been widely popular.