

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Socialist Workers Party  
leadership sets course ahead  
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 87/NO. 25 JULY 10, 2023

## SWP: Defend political rights workers need!

BY TERRY EVANS

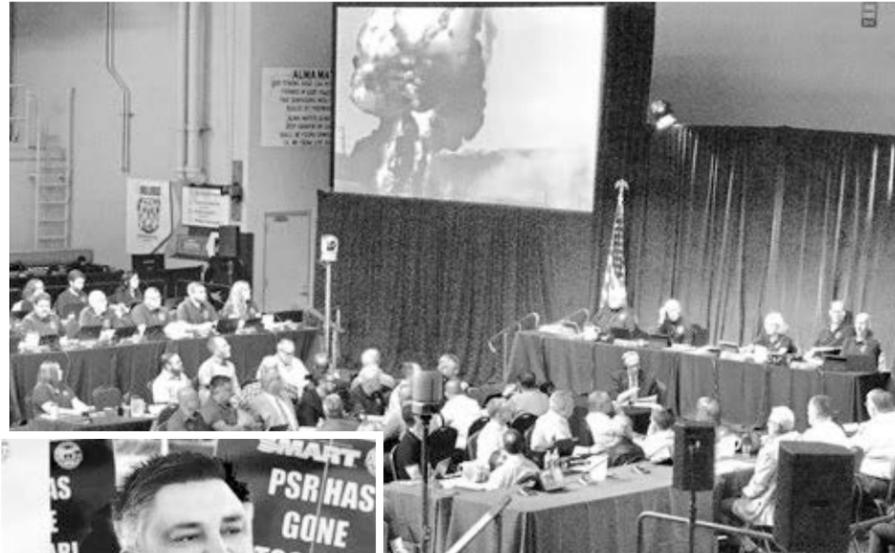
One of the central questions Socialist Workers Party candidates and campaigners are addressing with working people — on strike picket lines, farmsteads and workers' doorsteps — are the high stakes in defending constitutional freedoms under attack today by President Joseph Biden's White House and the FBI. Whenever workers build unions, protest government and employer abuses or speak out against their preparations for more wars, we need and use these protections. "We stand for freedom of speech and assembly in principle — not just for us, but for everybody," SWP leader Farrell Dobbs explained in 1961.

Party campaigners find widespread interest among workers and farmers in finding out about, and supporting, resistance by unions to the bosses' relentless drive to cut jobs and wages and toss aside concern about safety and working conditions — assaults that underlie the broader social and moral crisis of capitalism.

SWP members are spreading the  
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## Unions put stamp on East Palestine disaster hearing

Fight for workers control over safety is road forward



Above, AP/Gene J. Puskar; inset, SMART-TD  
Video of burning rail cars after Feb. 3 Norfolk Southern derailment, release of toxic pollution shown at National Transportation Safety Board hearing in East Palestine, Ohio, June 22. Among union leaders speaking was Jared Cassity, SMART-TD, inset, at Dec. 13 rally after Congress barred strike, imposed contract.

BY TONY LANE

EAST PALESTINE, Ohio — Community residents and rail unions came prepared to have their say at the investigative hearing organized here by the

National Transportation Safety Board looking for the causes of the Feb. 3 Norfolk Southern train derailment, which led to a social disaster in the area.

Rail bosses and government officials decided to drain and burn off over 1 million pounds of vinyl chloride, spreading toxic chemicals into the air, streams and soil.

The June 22-23 hearing itself was something of a first, as the NTSB brought it to East Palestine, instead of their offices in Washington, D.C. And the board felt obliged to hold a community meeting the evening before to give residents from the area an opportunity to ask questions. NTSB Chair Jennifer Homendy opened the meeting.

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## DC protests: 'US, take Cuba off your terrorist list, end the embargo'

BY SARA LOBMAN AND ARLENE RUBINSTEIN

WASHINGTON — An evening forum and a rally at the White House were featured activities June 24 and 25 to demand an end to the six-decade-long economic war against Cuba. They were part of several days of coordinated activities here and in several U.S. and Canadian cities focusing on a call to remove Cuba from Washington's outrageous and punitive "State Sponsors of Terrorism" list.

Some 100 people participated in the June 24 program sponsored by the DC Metro Coalition in Solidarity with the Cuban Revolution demanding an end to the U.S. blockade against Cuba.

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## Ukraine battle for sovereignty advances amid Moscow clash

BY ROY LANDERSEN

The aborted June 23-24 heavily armed convoy headed toward the Kremlin by Yevgeny Prigozhin, head of the Wagner mercenary army, has exposed the weaknesses of Russian President Vladimir Putin's rule. Cracks inside his regime have been brought into the open as a result of gains made by the Ukrainian resistance to Moscow's invasion.

Russian workers and farmers in uniform have been sacrificed as cannon fodder in pursuit of Putin's attempt to rebuild the Russian empire. An estimated 225,000 have been killed or wounded. Some 10% of all Russian forces occupying parts of Ukraine were Wagner mercenaries who have been used as shock troops with staggering casualty rates. At least 20,000 Wagner soldiers were killed in the monthslong battle to take parts of Bakhmut.

Moscow has confronted "mounting battlefield defeats; demoralization and disaffection among its troops; opposi-

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## Independence for Puerto Rico debated at June 22 UN hearing



Latino Rebels/Carlos Edil Berrios Polanco

Nov. 27, 2022, protest in San Juan against U.S. colonial rule in Puerto Rico. Speakers at U.N. hearing described how U.S. exploitation has worsened economic, social crisis on the island.

BY SETH GALINSKY

UNITED NATIONS — "The political, economic and social model of colonialism in Puerto Rico has not only failed dismally, but every day it is rejected by more Puerto Ricans," Adrián González, organization secretary of the Puerto Rican Independence Party, told the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization June 22.

González was one of some 50 people who addressed the committee during its annual hearing on the status of Puerto Rico — a U.S. colony for 125 years.

Like the overwhelming majority of speakers, mostly from Puerto Rico or from Puerto Rican organizations in the United States, González called for an end to U.S. colonial rule.

In 1953, the capitalist rulers in the U.S. succeeded in getting Puerto Rico taken off the U.N. list of colonies, falsely claiming the island was now a self-governing "commonwealth." But few people in Puerto Rico believe that today.

Manuel Natal Albelo, a leader of the Citizen Victory Movement party, said

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## 1,400 workers on strike at Wabtec, fight wins broad union solidarity

BY CANDACE WAGNER

ERIE, Pa. — Hundreds of strikers picketed at the gates of the Wabtec locomotive manufacturing plant here after 1,400 workers voted down the bosses' takeback contract demands June 22. The workers are members of United Electrical Workers Local 506, which organizes the production workers, and Local 618, which organizes a handful of office workers.

"We're doing what we have to do," Ryan Mudger told *Militant* worker-

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Owens-Illinois strikers in Quebec hit insulting pay offer

Northstar workers strike over wages, insurance, disrespect

# UK abortion jailing poses fight to meet social needs of families

BY CATHARINA TIRSÉN

LONDON — The jailing of Carla Foster for having an abortion during the eighth month of pregnancy has stirred discussion here about the broader impact of the deepening capitalist crisis on working people and the fight for women's rights.

Foster, a mother of three children from Barlaston, Stoke-on-Trent, was sentenced to two years and four months in prison after pleading guilty to the breach of an 1861 law for administering drugs to get an abortion. She had recently gotten a job as an animal shelter worker and carried out the abortion shortly after moving back in with her estranged partner in 2020 during the pandemic lockdown.

"No one has the right to judge you because no one knows what you've been through," Foster wrote just before sentencing.

Despite acknowledging that Foster had been "in emotional turmoil," as she sought to hide the pregnancy, Judge Edward Pepperall rejected appeals for a lighter sentence.

Thousands protested the sentencing in London June 17 at a demonstration called by the British Pregnancy Advisory Service.

"This is not just about this woman," Claudia Care, a ceramic artist, told Dag Tirsén, a member of the Communist League at the protest. "The law is an attack against all women."

"What is it that leads many working-class women to need an abortion?" Tirsén said. "It's the breakdown of the family, long shifts, low

wages, young people not being able to afford to start a family. All these issues are union questions."

Inflation remains at 11.3%, while the cost of hard-to-find child care is as much as 1,400 pounds (\$1,780) a month, out of reach for many workers. These conditions highlight the need for the labor movement to lead a fight for a social program — for an adequate income, government-funded child care and more — that can eradicate the conditions that leave women confronting the kind of difficulties Foster faced.

What happened to Foster "is an outrage," Peter Jaques, a junior doctor, told Tirsén. Jaques had recently joined the picket lines of health care workers striking for better pay.

Tirsén pointed to the pressures on workers and their families. "It's not good that birthrates go down, and the number of abortions increases," he said. In 2021, 214,869 women had abortions in the U.K., an all-time high since the procedure became legal in 1967. Abortion should be decriminalized, Tirsén said.

During pandemic lockdowns, abortion pills were made available by post for women seeking an abortion up to the tenth week of pregnancy. Foster got the pills by leading a medical consultant to believe she was seven weeks pregnant. The 1861 law used to prosecute her was amended in 1967 to allow women to have an abortion up to 28 weeks, later cut to 24 weeks, with the permission of two doctors.

## Writers Guild strike over pay, jobs enters ninth week



Militant/Sara Lobman

NEW YORK — More than 100 members and supporters of the Writers Guild of America rallied outside City Hall here June 22. Some 11,500 WGA members nationwide have been on strike against the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers for over eight weeks. They are fighting for better pay; higher residuals — a small percentage of the profits made from reruns — for streamed programs, not just broadcast and cable; and a return to the use of traditional "writers' rooms" where staff writers work together on scripts and receive regular pay.

"They're trying to turn us into gig or freelance workers," Writers Guild member Molly Ramírez told the *Militant*. "Without writers' rooms, it's nearly impossible for newer writers to learn the industry. It used to be that staff writers were part of the whole process, from preparing the script to post-production. Today, it's not uncommon for writers to be promoted without having any experience on a set. This is creating huge issues in our industry's pipeline."

"Writing isn't just words on a page, it's thinking quickly on your feet and adjusting — addressing issues that can arise on set or in the editing process," she said. "And it's collaborating with actors, the director and design departments to make the story the clearest, most entertaining it can be."

— SARA LOBMAN

## THE MILITANT

### Toxic smog from Canada wildfires affects millions

Workers and farmers across North America are facing devastating conditions from wildfires in Canada this summer caused by capitalists' drive for profits and the indifference of the government. The *'Militant'* points to need for workers control over production.



Jashim Salam / NurPhoto via Zuma Press  
Dangerous air quality in New York City June 8 as over 2,600 wildfires spread in Canada.

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# SWP: Defend political rights!

Continued from front page

word and building support for these union struggles, and present a program to advance the unity of all workers. They point out the road for the union movement to break with the Democrats and Republicans — the two main parties of the capitalist rulers — and form a labor party to fight to take political power.

In doing so, they point to the example of Cuba's socialist revolution, where workers and farmers transformed themselves in struggle and took control of their own destiny.

Such discussions are of particular interest to workers involved in strikes and union-organizing efforts, which have spread since the end of the pandemic.

Vincent Auger, SWP candidate for Seattle City Council District 1, and party members Jacob Perasso and Michele Smith sat down June 26 with mushroom workers fighting to win union recognition for the United Farm Workers and for better job conditions at Windmill Farms in Sunnyside, Washington.

Bosses have tried to use the fact many workers there don't have all the papers the government requires, to intimidate them and set back efforts to win a union. Last year they brought in "guest workers," who have less rights because they're on the government's H-2A visa program. Mushroom picker Isela Cabrera told the SWP campaigners that the workers' efforts to win a union are tied to the fight for immigrant rights.

"Our campaign explains that a fight for amnesty for all immigrant workers in the U.S. is a life-or-death question for the labor movement," Auger said.

Onesimo Jaime, an apple-packing worker, said that a petition being circulated among workers to show support for the union-organizing effort is gaining signatures.

It's vital the labor movement also take on "the criminalization of political differences being carried out by Democrats against Donald Trump, including the latest indictment and charges," Perasso said. "All history shows that this will be carried

out against workers, the unions and against working-class parties."

As an example, he pointed to decades of assaults by the FBI on the political rights of the SWP. The party launched a far-reaching public campaign and filed a lawsuit in 1973 against the government and its main political police agency, the FBI. That victorious fight forced out thousands of government documents that revealed the scope of government spying, disruption and dirty tricks against the party and others fighting the policies of the bosses and their government.

For the first time, the court ruled that the FBI's operations were illegal and the SWP's activities are protected by the U.S. Constitution.

Ramon Gonzalez, a farmworker who has steadfastly supported the United Farm Workers organizing drive, said that divisions among workers are fostered by both the Democratic and Republican parties and make it harder to unite working people.

Cabrera, Gonzalez, Jaime and two other union stalwarts all signed up for subscriptions to the *Militant* and got copies of *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Social-*



Courtesy of Lorena Avalos

Farmworkers discuss their fight to win union recognition for the United Farm Workers and better job conditions at Windmill Farms in Sunnyside, Washington, with Vincent Auger, SWP candidate for Seattle City Council, far left, and campaign supporters June 26.

*ist Workers Party Looks Forward* by SWP leaders Jack Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark.

Jaime also purchased *Teamster Rebellion* by Farrell Dobbs. The title describes the forging of a class-struggle leadership in the course of hard-fought strike battles that made Minneapolis a union town in the 1930s, launched a wide-ranging organizing drive among

truckers across the Midwest and transformed the workers involved. Gonzalez got a copy of *The Turn to Industry: Forging a Proletarian Party* by Barnes.

To join SWP candidates campaigning, contact the party branch nearest you listed on page 10.

Jacob Perasso in Seattle contributed to this article.

## 1,400 workers on strike at Wabtec, win solidarity

Continued from front page

correspondents. "We've suffered four years of the company's 'interpretations' of the union contract. They deny every grievance and force us into a long, drawn-out arbitration. We're fighting to regain the right to strike over grievances to hold the company accountable. This was a big reason for the overwhelming vote against their 'last, best and final' offer.

"The biggest issue is health care," he said. "What they are demanding is a plan where the costs, and the benefits, are subject to change at any time during the four-year contract. Who's going to vote for that?"

"I'm most concerned about the 10-year progression of wages," striker Jenna Bemis said, referring to the lower wages new hires get. "Those workers deserve more than that. Some actually rely on government benefits, that's how little they make."

"I think it's an awesome time to fight," she said. "Local 506 can take anything they throw at us. The Erie community is 100% behind us, except of course the rich people."

The bosses responded to the strike with two letters to workers June 22. One claimed workers were paid too much, saying they "repeatedly informed the UE that the Erie facility

was burdened with high labor costs and restrictive work rules." The other gave workers instructions on how they could quit the union and cross the picket lines.

"I could retire now," striker Doug Snyder said. "But when I got the June 22 letter from the company telling us we could cross the picket line and attaching a filled-out form to resign from the union, I decided that I'm in this for the duration. I wouldn't be able to live with myself otherwise."

The bosses' offer on wages would mean workers would continue to lose income to inflation. At the same time, the union said, Wabtec CEO Rafael Santana got \$11 million in compensation in 2021.

Matt Fedak, a UE Local 506 executive board member, said the strike is already getting solidarity from other unions, including a visit from their sister UE local at the Wabtec plant in Wilmerding, Pennsylvania. The Teamsters Horsemen Motorcycle Club made a noisy ride around the plant in support.

Members of Ironworkers Union Local 851 — who fought and won a bitter

75-day strike in 2021, with help from the United Electrical Workers — organized to join picketing June 28.

In the bitter winter of 2019, the UE locals carried out a nine-day strike after Wabtec took over the company from General Electric. The new bosses had come down on workers and imposed a new takeback contract.

That strike forced the new management to agree to a 90-day negotiation period today. Utilizing the time, the locals won solidarity from other unions and the working-class community of Erie. They organized lunchtime marches inside the plant and informational pickets at the gates.

While some demands of the company were defeated in 2019, the bosses also wrenched concessions from the workers. This time strikers have put out a T-shirt saying, "We are coming for everything you said we couldn't have."

Show your solidarity! Picket lines are up 24/7. Join them! Get out the word and build support in your union. Send solidarity messages to UE Local 506, 3923 Main St., Lawrence Park, PA 16511.



Militant/Candace Wagner

United Electrical Workers members on strike against Wabtec picket plant in Erie, Pennsylvania, June 27. Demands include wage raise, right to strike over grievances, improved health care.

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# SWP: 'Independence for Puerto Rico won't be given, it'll be taken'

Statement by Rachele Fruit for the Socialist Workers Party to the U.N. Special Committee on Decolonization hearing on Puerto Rico, June 22.

Distinguished chairperson and committee members:

My name is Rachele Fruit, and I speak on behalf of the Socialist Workers Party. I was the party's candidate for governor of Florida in 2022.

Since our party's founding in 1938 we have called for the independence of Puerto Rico and all other US colonies. Over the decades we have campaigned alongside independence fighters for the withdrawal of all US troops and bases from the island, for the release of *independentistas* from US prisons, for an end to the colonial plunder of Puerto Rico's resources. We have joined in solidarity with unionists, students, and others defending their living standards and rights.

As my fellow fighters here have described so graphically, nothing exposes more clearly the colonial status of Puerto Rico — denied its right to self-determination — than the US-imposed "financial oversight" board. The *junta's* job is to enforce measures to squeeze workers and farmers in order to guarantee payments to wealthy US bondholders on a more than \$70 billion debt. This has meant slashing jobs and pensions, closing schools, raising university tuition, hiking utility rates, and much more. We demand the US government cancel the debt now!

In the US, workers and farmers confront the same drive by the employer class, backed by its twin parties and government, to put the burden of the capitalist economic crisis on our backs. Millions face wage-slashing inflation, dangerous job conditions, brutal work schedules. We face a deadly drug epidemic. Young workers find it increasingly hard to afford raising a family.

The US rulers are stepping up their assault on our constitutional rights, including on freedom of speech, presumption of innocence, freedom from arbitrary search and seizure. The US Justice Department's renewed use of the Espionage Act, including to prosecute electoral opponents of the current administration, is a threat to the rights of all. It goes along with efforts to clean up the image of the FBI, which will be used to step up attacks on the rights of unionists, Black rights fighters, and others.

In Puerto Rico the FBI has sought to interrogate members of the Juan Rius Rivera Brigade who traveled to Cuba last year. We salute the example of the Cuba Solidarity Committee in Puerto

Rico for its refusal to be intimidated and winning broad support in this fight against Washington's political police.

The sharpening class conflicts in Puerto Rico and the US are part of a growing world capitalist crisis. Today, the largest land war in Europe since World War II threatens the independence and sovereignty of Ukraine, and promises more wars.

All this underscores the fact that workers — in Puerto Rico, the US, and worldwide — have common interests and a common struggle.

In Puerto Rico, 1,000 workers marched on May Day, calling for removal of the junta and improved wages and pensions. Two weeks ago, electrical workers protested against the debt and in defense of their union. Hospital nurses held a two-day strike against understaffing. Today, greater numbers of working people are coming to oppose US colonial rule and looking for ways to fight in defense of their interests. The bosses will never stop pushing, but they cannot do without the working class and small farmers, who produce all the wealth — and that's the source of our strength.

In the US too, more and more workers



Puerto Rican Independence Party

Rachele Fruit, Socialist Workers Party, speaks at rally outside U.N. decolonization committee hearing June 22. She addressed the hearing in support of Puerto Rico independence.

are saying "Enough!" New struggles, small but important, are breaking out. Workers are turning to their unions to defend their conditions and living standards. A good example is the response by workers and farmers in the rural town of East Palestine, Ohio, to the toxic train derailment in February. They've joined together to fight both the railroad giant, Norfolk Southern, and the US government, demanding cleanup of the soil, water, and air, as well as government-financed medical care. They've won

solidarity from union workers in the rail, steel, and oil industries who themselves are engaged in struggles.

Through their own experiences, workers in the US can identify with the resistance in Puerto Rico. More will become convinced that we cannot be free as long as Washington maintains its colonial boot on that nation. A successful fight for independence from US rule will also strengthen working people here.

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## Independence for Puerto Rico debated at UN hearing

Continued from front page

that "illusion went up in smoke when the U.S. Congress in 2016 approved" the law that created the Financial Management and Control Board on Puerto Rico, known on the island as the Junta, empowered with veto power over all financial decisions of the colonial regime in San Juan.

The appointment of the unelected board by then-President Barack Obama — with the bipartisan support of Democrats and Republicans — is proof that "Puerto Rico does not govern itself," said Mariana Nogales Molinelli, a member of Puerto Rico's House of Representatives from the Citizen Victory Movement. "We don't control the budget. The Junta imposes it."

Numerous speakers described how the measures forced on Puerto Rico by the Junta are intended to ensure billions of dollars continue to be paid out to wealthy bondholders. This means less funds for social measures, worsening the already deteriorating economic and social conditions on the island, amid today's worldwide capitalist crisis.

Washington's colonial domination "is not an abstraction for the people of Puerto Rico," said Ángel Rodríguez León, co-president of the National Hostosiano Independence Movement. It's seen in the high levels of poverty, "in the pillaging of our natural resources, in the emigration of thousands of our compatriots to the United States, in the impossibility of taking the necessary measures to solve our problems" from health care to housing.

Several speakers pointed to the selling off of formerly public electric generation and distribution on the island to U.S. and Canadian-based companies. They tore up contracts with the electrical workers union and reap superprofits.

With tens of thousands of Puerto Ricans leaving every year, mainly to the U.S. mainland, and the birthrate declining to where it is now less than the death rate, the population is shrinking. There

are some 5.8 million Puerto Ricans in the U.S. — more than the 3.2 million who remain on the island.

That's why "Puerto Ricans in the diaspora will play a significant and determining role" in aiding the fight for Puerto Rican independence, Ana López, speaking for the New York-based Frente Independentista Boricua, told the committee. She pointed to the proud history of resistance by Puerto Ricans, both on the island and in the U.S., in opposing Washington's colonial rule.

Myrna Pagán, from Vieques Lives Matter on the island of Vieques, part of the Puerto Rican archipelago, noted, "We are celebrating the 20th year free of U.S. Navy bombing and military experimentation with depleted uranium, agent orange and napalm."

After decades of protests by residents, fishermen and people across Puerto Rico, the U.S. Navy was finally forced to stop using Vieques as a bombing test range in 2003. But, Pagán noted, the U.S. government has still not cleaned up the site.

Not everyone testifying at the hearing backed the struggles of workers and farmers in Puerto Rico and the fight to end U.S. imperialism's superexploitation of its colony.

### Statehood vs. independence

More than a dozen participants, including members of the colonial government of Gov. Pedro Pierluisi and his New Progressive Party, spoke. They claim that the biggest problem is that residents of Puerto Rico are U.S. citizens "but aren't allowed to vote for the commander in chief" — the president of the United States.

While admitting that Puerto Rico is a colony, they say the solution is for it to become the 51st U.S. state. José Enrique Meléndez, a PNP legislator in Puerto Rico, claimed independentistas are a tiny minority in Puerto Rico. Independence is being promoted by Cuba — the main author of the reso-

lution before the Decolonization Committee that calls for self-determination for Puerto Rico — because it "is hostile to the United States" and wants to "weaken U.S. influence in the Caribbean and Latin America" and promote terrorists, he claimed.

Yuri Gala, the Cuban representative at the hearing, interrupted Meléndez. "Cuba is not hostile to the United States," he said. "It's the United States that is hostile to Cuba."

For partisan reasons, Democrats in the U.S. back statehood for Puerto Rico, as well as for Washington, D.C., in hopes of winning a permanent majority in the Senate.

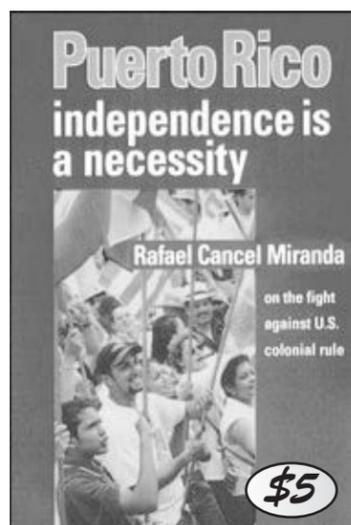
Some statehood proponents argued that the Puerto Rican people have voted in "democratic" referendums overwhelmingly in support of their stance.

Gabriela Malespín from New York Boricua Resistance answered this twisting of the truth. She noted that in 2017, most Puerto Ricans boycotted the non-binding referendum on status, with only 23% of eligible voters participating. In 2020, only 55% of eligible voters participated. The official results of 52% for statehood "is far from a majority" of the eligible voters, she noted.

"True decolonization can only occur from the people of Puerto Rico," Malespín said. "It requires that we abolish the fiscal control board and cancel the debt in its entirety."

"Workers — in Puerto Rico, the U.S., and worldwide — have common interests and a common struggle," said Rachel Fruit, speaking for the Socialist Workers Party. "Cuba's revolutionary example shows the road to genuine freedom and independence for Puerto Rico, which will never be granted — it must be taken."

At the conclusion of the hearing the Committee on Decolonization approved the resolution calling on the U.S. government "to allow the Puerto Rican people to fully exercise their inalienable right to self determination and independence."



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# —ON THE PICKET LINE—

## Owens-Illinois strikers in Quebec hit insulting pay offer

MONTREAL — “Enough of being walked over, now we shall walk to them,” Eric Dumas, president of United Steelworkers Local 206-G, told 150 strikers and supporters June 16 before they set out on a march through the neighborhood of Pointe-St-Charles here. The 330 workers at the plant make bottles out of recycled glass.

The work is challenging. In the summer temperatures in the plant hit 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Workers who’ve been there awhile have a perpetual tan from the heat of the molten glass.

Workers from a number of unions turned out to show solidarity with the strikers, who’ve been out since May 10. The United Food and Commercial Workers, Canadian Union of Postal Workers, Canadian Union of Public Employees and USW workers from Quebec City and throughout the province joined in. Many retired Owens-Illinois workers also took part.

Company bosses have offered wage increases of just 1% per year over a three-year contract, an offer many consider totally out of touch with inflation and the economic struggles workers and their families face today.

Meanwhile, the bosses poured 70 million Canadian dollars (\$53.1 million) into new equipment during the pandemic, aided by CA\$21 million contribution from the Quebec government.

“We’re asking for what’s due to us, we need to protect our purchasing capacity as workers,” Dominic Lemieux, USW Quebec director, told the crowd. The union is demanding a 7% pay increase immediately and 4% for each of the following two years.

Marching through the working-class neighborhood to Marguerite-Bourgeoys Park, right in front of the Owens-Illinois plant, strikers were greeted with support by residents and motorists. Everyone arrived in good spirits. Food and refreshments were served at the park, prepared by members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

“I’m so glad to see all the retired workers show up,” Elise Laberge, a

striker and union delegate, said. “The last contract was ratified by just 51%, so we all felt a strike was coming.

“What we want is respect. After all, the employer refused over 16 times to meet for negotiations, before and after the conflict started,” she said. “The last strike was in 1984, so almost everyone is new to this. But my sense is that everyone wants to continue the fight.”

— Alexandre Jacob

## Northstar workers strike over wages, insurance, disrespect

BEDFORD PARK, Ill. — The 123 workers at Northstar Aerospace, members of the International Union of Electrical Workers-Communications Workers of America Local 14430, walked off the job June 5. The plant makes parts for Apache and Chinook military helicopters.

“The main issues are wages, insurance and attendance,” Local President Dave Gerard told the *Militant* on the picket line June 25. Northstar stayed open through the 2020 pandemic, he said, and one worker died of COVID-19. Others became seriously ill. When the union asked for hazard pay, “they said, ‘No, you have a contract,’” Gerard said. “Well, now the contract is up and we want to see a real wage increase.”

The union also wants to end two-tier health insurance. In 2016 the company threatened to move to Arizona and a number of workers took severance packages. After the 2017 contract was signed, it rehired some of the same workers, but is charging them higher insurance premiums.

The company also wants to make an already strict attendance policy more draconian, including imposing an extra penalty on workers who are more than six minutes late if they don’t call in at least half an hour ahead of time. And they want to end overtime pay after eight hours.

“You have to treat people with respect, not abuse them,” said Wilfrido Rodriguez, a machinist with 15 years at the company.

Strikers held a solidarity rally on the picket line June 6, backed by the



Militant/Alexandre Jacob

March in Montreal June 16 by supporters, United Steelworkers members on strike against Owens-Illinois plant there. Strikers are demanding a wage raise that keeps up with inflation.

Chicago Federation of Labor. They’ve also received support from members of United Auto Workers Local 588, who in April won their own strike for a first contract at the Metal-Matic steel plant just up the street. The strikers are keeping up the picket line 24/7 at 6006 W. 73rd Street, Bedford Park.

— Naomi Craine

## Nurses in Oregon win gains in pay, break time, schedules

BEND, Ore. — Nearly 100% of the Oregon Nurses Association membership at St. Charles Medical Center here voted to approve a new three-year contract after six months of negotiations. The union declared victory after winning substantial wage increases, making its members the highest-paid nurses in Oregon. Under the terms of the contract, recent nurse graduates will see their salaries increase by 41%, and seasoned nurses will see wages increase by 31% to 36% over the life of the contract. Gains were also won on break times and scheduling.

One key union demand that remains to be conquered is lower nurse/patient ratios. Some nurses said they look forward to taking this on in the future.

The members voted overwhelmingly to authorize a strike, to begin June 12 after the hospital refused to budge on

any of their demands. When a deal was struck, the union leadership attributed the gains won to the membership’s willingness to strike, and the solidarity from other unions, like the teachers’ union.

According to the nurses’ union press release, “By showing our willingness to strike we made it possible to not have to. Our demand was to Recruit, Retain, and Respect nurses. And WE WON.” Large informational picket lines and rallies of over 600 people were held in April.

As Bend’s biggest employer and only hospital, many community members saw the importance of joining the pickets and putting union signs in their yards. “This is a big victory for nurses and everyone who relies on St. Charles for care,” Erin Harrington, a nurse and executive bargaining committee member, told the media.

— Louise Goodman

## Refuse workers in London win pay raise after strike

WELWYN GARDEN CITY, England — Refuse workers here and in Hatfield, towns north of London, returned to work June 23 after striking for better pay four days earlier. Employed by the waste-collection outfit Urbaser, more than 90 members of the Unite union had rejected a company offer of a 6.8% pay raise and were demanding 18%, overtime pay and better sick pay.

Thirty strikers had mounted a lively picket line June 19, and were greeted by passing motorists blowing their horns to show their support.

“Something is happening in the unions today,” Dean Smith, a refuse truck driver, told the *Militant*. “Many thought that the unions were finished after the [Prime Minister Margaret] Thatcher years, but look at this now. And we are not alone.”

Unite reported workers decided to end their strike after the company increased its pay offer to 13.5%.

“The union came out stronger,” striker Michael Smith told the *Militant*.

— Dag Tirsén

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



July 6, 1998

The strike by 6,400 telephone workers in Puerto Rico against the sale of the state-owned Puerto Rico Telephone Company has become a lightning rod for working-class resistance and nationalist sentiment in this Caribbean nation, the largest U.S. colony.

The sale, which workers expect will lead to layoffs, attacks on working conditions, and rate hikes, has sparked widespread opposition. The strike began with mass pickets at phone company facilities throughout the island, as workers sought to block the company from bringing in hundreds of supervisory personnel to keep operations running.

The strike has sparked an outpouring of popular support and a series of labor actions in solidarity with the telephone workers. One of the most popular slogans of the protests is “Puerto Rico no se vende.” (Puerto Rico is not for sale.)



July 6, 1973

“During the past few days, the political and social tensions that built up over many years when there were no legal, effective channels for workers to express them have given rise to a genuine popular explosion; the main form it has taken is the ‘occupation,’” wrote the Buenos Aires daily *Clarín* June 12.

“The ‘occupationist’ fever is gripping radio stations, educational institutions, hospitals, business establishments, industrial plants, public and national administrative offices, bureaus whose existence had been forgotten, pensions, hotels — the list is endless.”

The occupations swept the entire country. The attitude of the authorities was generally not to intervene forcibly. Nevertheless, there was considerable uneasiness that the occupations might get out of hand. Heavy security measures were taken June 14 to protect the Palace of Justice.



July 5, 1948

Fourth of July commemorates one of the greatest revolutions in all history. It was led and fought by men and women who were indicted as “subversive” and “treasonable” under the law of the land. The Declaration of Independence declared their right and their duty to make a revolution.

The times cry out for a new declaration of freedom — Labor’s Declaration of Independence. It is time to rid America of the tyranny of monopoly and the special privilege of wealth. It is time for the working people to declare their independence from the political machines of entrenched capital, to build their own party, to end the political rule of Wall Street and to create their own Workers and Farmers Government.

We can best honor the revolutionary heroes of 1776 by mobilizing and organizing in their spirit to win a “new birth of freedom” for the American working class.

Read about the battles that forged the US labor movement

pathfinderpress.com

# Crises of child care, education, medical care hit workers hard

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

From plummeting math and reading test scores for teenage students, to the government's plan to slash funds for child care, to rising health care costs alongside hospital closings — over 175 in rural areas over the last 15 years — these are all symptomatic of the deteriorating conditions of life facing working people and their families as the crisis of capitalism deepens today.

Test scores recently released by the National Assessment of Educational Progress indicate the performance of 13-year-olds in the U.S. dropped to the lowest level in decades. The average math score is the same as it was in 1990, while the average reading score matches 2004. The results were class-divided, with scores for students from lower-income, working-class families declining the most.

The COVID pandemic exacerbated the drop, with many school systems closed for over a year. But the decline began over a decade ago. Since the end of the pandemic, the capitalist rulers have done precious little to reverse the slide.

Amid today's social media mania, the number of students who reported "never" or "hardly ever" reading for fun jumped to 31% over the last school year, up by 9% from youth tested three years earlier.

Another big concern — especially for women workers — is the expense and availability of day care.

Melissa Guzman with New York Group Family Day Care in Upper Manhattan has been running pre-K child care centers for 16 years. Bureaucratic red tape and cutbacks by the city government have meant bankruptcy for many child care providers, she told the *Militant* June 23. "The city is paying for child care for half a day, but we take care of children the whole day. This squeeze is not sustainable."

"We don't charge high rates. We take care of children from the families of working people," she said. "There's nothing more important than caring for a young child." Guzman and her husband used to run eight centers, each with 12 children,

## Puerto Rico

Continued from page 4

Can we win? Yes. We have a powerful living example in Cuba, where working people in their millions carried out a socialist revolution. They established a workers and farmers government, broke free from imperialist rule, and began to transform society in the interests of the vast majority. For more than six decades they've stood up to Washington's brutal efforts to strangle them, while extending solidarity to others worldwide. This Sunday, many of us will be in front of the White House to demand the US government lift *all* its economic sanctions on Cuba — Now!

Cuba's revolutionary example shows the road to genuine freedom and independence for Puerto Rico, which will never be granted — it must be taken.

I thank the committee for the opportunity to add our voice to those here today who are fighting for an end to Washington's colonial domination of Puerto Rico.

now they're down to two.

Announcing his 2023 budget, Democratic Mayor Eric Adams proposed cutting funds currently earmarked for child care. And many times the city "pays two to three weeks after care is given," Guzman said, making it difficult to cover expenses.

### Federal gov't cuts child care funds

The Joseph Biden administration is shutting down its pandemic relief program for child care in September, a move that will have a disastrous effect on working people. Child care could be disrupted for 3 million children, close to a third of all those in child care, according to a report by Century Foundation. The chop in funds will mean layoffs and wage cuts for those still working, and many centers will be forced to close.

The cost of covering private child care is increasingly unsustainable for the working class. In fact, half of parents spend more than 20% of their household income on child care, and that's before the government fund cutoff in September.

Some providers say it's unconscionable to raise costs on parents. "Raise tuition? Not in West Virginia, not in this economy, not here," Lorna Adkins, who runs Growing Places from her home in Huntington, told the *New York Times*.

But she admitted that losing the \$3,200 a month from the government she got last year, combined with new "woke" regulations imposed on them, she sees no other option but to retire.

"There are a lot of people in child care that are going to close down because of this," she said.

Under capitalism the medical industry is exactly that — a profit-driven business for hospital bosses and

## Ukraine sovereignty fight advances amid Moscow clash

Continued from front page

tion from wide layers of working people and the middle classes at home; and antagonism, overt and covert, among bourgeois rivals atop Russia's largest enterprises (who are cut off from profitable trade and financial markets) and within the state apparatus itself," explain Jack Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark in the book *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward*.

In contrast to Putin's increasingly disillusioned conscript army, Ukrainian forces are reinforced by thousands of volunteers, largely from the working class, determined to defend Ukraine's independence.

Before the military incursion, Prigozhin declared that Moscow's rationale for its invasion was false, saying Ukraine was never a threat to Russia. His comments reflect what millions of Russians know to be true and will deepen the challenges Putin faces trying to bolster support for the war.

"I changed my views after what happened with Wagner; I want this war to be over as soon as possible," a Moscow pensioner told the *Washington Post*. "Prigozhin is right: Ukraine was not going to start the war against Russia."

Putin said Prigozhin's actions threatened civil war and the existence of Russia. He accused his former ally of treason and rejected his demands that Defense



Jake King/Idaho Press via AP

Child care center in Boise, Idaho, in May. In September the Biden administration is shutting down aid for child care adopted during pandemic, disrupting care for 3 million children.

the giant pharmaceutical monopolies. Many hospitals prioritize collecting medical debts by getting court orders to garnish patients' wages and any other sources of income. Some go even further — refusing care for anyone with outstanding medical bills.

Allina Health System, with more than 100 hospitals and clinics in Minnesota and Wisconsin, is among those keeping patients who owe money out of their facilities. They'll treat you in their emergency rooms — that's required by law — but if hospitalization or follow-up care is needed, you're not allowed back. Twenty percent of hospitals nationwide have debt-collection policies that allow them to refuse care, KFF Health News reported. Many of these claim they are "nonprofits."

An estimated 100 million people in the U.S. have medical debts. Their bills make up about half of all outstanding debt in the country.

On top of this, more than 600 rural hospitals — nearly 30% of all such hospitals nationwide — are at risk of hav-

ing to shut down, *U.S. News and World Report* reported in January.

"How many working Americans need food stamps? The answer may surprise you," headlined a May 30 article on MarketWatch. More than 42 million people participate in the food stamp program today, up by 7 million since 2019.

But the recent debt-ceiling deal reached by the White House and Congress adds onerous new requirements to get food stamps. Now, anyone without a job under the age of 55 who doesn't have children must either go get one or participate in a training program for at least 80 hours a month to be eligible for food stamps. Otherwise, they can receive benefits for only three months in any three-year period. Of course, the government does nothing to make available any well-paying jobs to these workers.

It falls to the union movement to champion a fight for these social rights. At the heart of the fight is a job for all who want one, at union-scale pay.

Minister Sergei Shoigu and Russia's top general, Valery Gerasimov, be removed.

Prigozhin had claimed 30 of his fighters were killed in a June 23 air attack on their base by Moscow's forces. That night, Wagner militias moved into Rostov-on-Don, Russia's 10th largest city. Without firing a shot, they occupied the city-command center for Moscow's military operations in Ukraine.

Prigozhin dispatched a column of 4,500 troops toward the capital. Some civilians greeted them with Russian flags and some Russian troops, mainly conscripts, surrendered. Putin was nowhere to be seen.

As the mercenaries came under air attack, they shot down six Russian helicopters and an airborne command plane. At least 15 airmen died.

Wagner forces got to within 125 miles of the capital. Putin called on Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko to broker a deal. Faced with threats and promises, Prigozhin agreed to pull back in return for exile in Belarus and the offer that his fighters would get amnesty.

"When Prigozhin was heading towards Moscow, of course, it was nerve-racking for people," a young woman from St. Petersburg told the *Financial Times*. "But to be honest, this horror has been continuing for one-and-a-half years already."

Prigozhin is a wealthy businessman with long links to the Putin regime.

Founded in 2014, his mercenary outfit was first used to provide military support to pro-Moscow separatists who seized parts of eastern Ukraine. Wagner has since helped Russia's capitalist rulers advance their interests in bloody conflicts in Africa and the Middle East.

Following Moscow's capture of Bakhmut, Prigozhin stepped up denunciations of top officials in the Russian Ministry of Defense over their factional withholding of ammunition and support to his forces. For weeks he has demanded the Russian government intensify its war and institute wide-scale conscription, forced labor and martial law.

### War against Ukraine continues

Despite the turmoil in Russia, Moscow's forces June 24 launched their largest series of missile strikes against Ukraine in recent months, targeting

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## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

PENNSYLVANIA

Pittsburgh

Maurice Bishop, Grenada and Leadership Lessons from the Cuban Revolution. Speaker: Malcolm Jarrett, Socialist Workers Party. Sun., July 9, 6:30 p.m. Donation \$5. 5907 Penn Ave. Suite 313. Tel.: (412) 610-2402.

# Socialist Workers Party leadership sets course ahead

**Adopts course to build union solidarity • defend constitutional freedoms • fight for wages, hours, job conditions that prevent families in working class from being torn apart • defend Cuba's socialist revolution and its example in the U.S. and world over**

BY STEVE CLARK AND TERRY EVANS

OBERLIN, Ohio — “The sweeping indictment of Donald Trump under the Espionage Act by President Joseph Biden’s Justice Department is another step along the course the Democratic Party has been pressing for seven years of criminalizing political opposition and debate,” Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, said at a June 12 expanded meeting of the party’s Political Committee. The meeting set the political line for the SWP’s work coming out of an International Educational Conference here June 8-10.

“A section of the capitalist ruling class is pushing for a showdown targeting Trump and his supporters, actions that must be opposed by all defenders of constitutional rights in this country.” No matter who the immediate victim, the SWP leader said, the rulers’ assaults on freedoms protected by the U.S. Constitution will inevitably be directed against working people, including the trade unions and political organizations of the working class and oppressed.

During the three-day SWP educational conference, 333 people from seven countries joined wide-ranging discussions on communist program, continuity and activity in plenary reports, classes and a closing event highlighting opportunities in front of the communist movement today (see article on page 8). Participants included members and supporters of the SWP, Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada and the U.K., as well as participants from elsewhere in the world.

In addition to defense of constitutional freedoms, the report by the party’s national secretary adopted by the June 12 leadership meeting focused on:

- The centrality of organizing solidarity through the unions with workers on strike, engaged in unionization drives, and conducting other struggles to defend wages, sustainable hours and schedules, and safe job conditions.
- Why advancing women’s emancipation cannot be reduced to the fight for

the decriminalization of abortion. At the center of ending women’s second-class status is the struggle by working people to be able to start and sustain families amid capitalist conditions in which steady employment at wages sufficient to do so is less and less available. Especially in face of today’s rising costs of food, housing, child care, medical care and other basic needs.

- The necessity of a proletarian internationalist course. One that presents a working-class foreign policy placing the interests of workers and farmers here and worldwide above the profit-driven conflicts and wars between the U.S. rulers and their capitalist competitors.

- Why the unions must lead in forging an alliance of workers and exploited farmers struggling to escape debt slavery imposed by banks and giant businesses dominating production of farm implements, seed, fertilizer, pesticides and other inputs. The report reaffirmed the SWP’s longstanding call for nationalization of the land to combat the ruinous results of capitalism’s rents and mortgages system.

- Why achieving any of these goals requires the working class and trade unions to break from the Democrats, Republicans and other parties of the exploiters and oppressors and forge a politically independent labor party based on the unions, the basic defense institutions of the working class.

- Advancing the revolutionary fight by the working class to remove state power, including the power to make war, from the ruling class and to establish a workers and farmers government that, as the SWP Constitution says, “will abolish capitalism in the United States and join in the worldwide struggle for socialism.”

## SWP’s defense of political rights

The SWP is well-prepared to explain the stakes for working people in opposing the federal government’s political witch hunt driven by the Biden administration, Barnes said.



Militant photos: above, Dave Wulp; inset, Arthur Hughes  
International Educational Conference in Oberlin, Ohio, June 8-10, brought together over 330 people for reports, discussion on communist program, continuity and activities. **Right**, SWP literature table during conference.



The opening paragraph of the resolution adopted by the December 2022 SWP convention states: “Defending and extending the freedoms protected by the US Constitution is at the center of the class struggle today. Workers and farmers must organize and act to prevent the federal government’s assault on these freedoms. . . . We must oppose the US rulers’ relentless drive to refurbish the reputation and expand the use of the government’s political police, first and foremost the FBI.” That resolution is in the book published by Pathfinder Press earlier this year, *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward* by Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark.

Since the party’s founding in 1919, SWP members have “distinguished ourselves as principled and uncompromising defenders of all victims of government frame-ups,” Barnes said.

The same espionage statute wielded by Biden against Trump was used in 1918 to jail Socialist Party leader Eugene Debs for his support for the Bolshevik-led Russian Revolution and opposition to U.S. imperialism’s predatory aims in World War I.

Imagine Trump running for president from federal prison, as Debs did in 1920, Barnes said. It could happen.

He urged members and supporters of the party to refresh their knowledge of that history, noting that some 23 years after Debs was locked behind bars, and, just a week after Imperial Japan’s bombing of Pearl Harbor, the banner headline in the Dec. 13, 1941, *Militant* read “War reinstates 1917 Espionage Act.” The same issue of the working-class newsweekly reported President Franklin Roosevelt’s declaration that U.S. soldiers were to be sent to fight and die in the second imperialist world slaughter, both on the Atlantic and Pacific fronts. And that issue also covered the sentencing to federal prison of 18 leaders of the SWP and the Teamsters union, targeted for organizing opposition in the labor movement to Washington’s war drive.

Barnes reminded the leadership meeting of the infamous Feb. 9, 1950, West Virginia speech by U.S. Sen. Joseph McCarthy during which he waved a piece of paper

and claimed, “I have here in my hand a list of 205” names of “members of the Communist Party and members of a spy ring” working for the State Department. McCarthy’s redbaiting witch hunt was like that from beginning to end, offering no evidence about the so-called traitors. Meanwhile, thousands were fired from jobs and had lives destroyed by means of venomous innuendo.

Barnes recalled that in 1973 the SWP filed a federal lawsuit to halt the FBI’s decadeslong spying and harassment against the party and Young Socialist Alliance. After a 15-year political fight waged by the party, winning ever-broader support, Federal District Judge Thomas Griesa ruled that the FBI’s use of undercover informers, repeated break-ins of party offices, and instigation of firings, evictions, and other persecution of party members and supporters were “violations of the constitutional rights of the SWP.” Truly a victory for all working people and the oppressed.

Barnes pointed to a recent Militant Labor Forum in Los Angeles responding to the Justice Department’s assaults on constitutional freedoms as an example to be emulated of how this party institution can be used. The event featured SWP leader Norton Sandler and members of the African People’s Socialist Party, whose members face frame-up indictments for acting as unregistered “foreign agents” of Moscow. The forum and others like it elsewhere have an important part to play in broadening oppo-

Continued on page 8



May 26 labor rally in Los Angeles. Contracts for 15,000 area hotel workers expire June 30. Organizing working-class solidarity is at the heart of activity to strengthen the unions today.

**\$10**

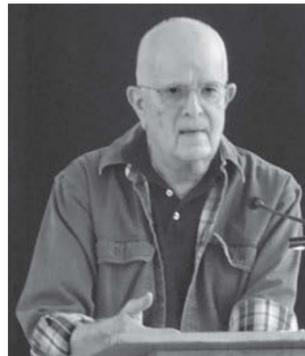
**The low point of labor resistance is behind us**

THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY LOOKS FORWARD

JACK BARNES  
MARY-Alice WATERS  
STEVE CLARK

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# Socialist Workers Party leadership sets course ahead



Militant/Carole Lesnick  
Jack Barnes, SWP national secretary.



Left, African People's Socialist Party; right, AP Photo/Wilfredo Lee

**Above**, press conference July 29, 2022, condemning armed FBI raid on African People's Socialist Party in St. Louis, Missouri, and St. Petersburg, Florida. Members of the group, including Chairman Omali Yeshitela, at left, face frame-up charges as "unregistered" agents of Moscow. **Right**, Secret Service agent during FBI raid on Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago home, Aug. 8, 2022, an example of Joseph Biden administration's criminalization of political opposition. No matter who the immediate victim, rulers' assaults on constitutional freedoms inevitably are directed at working people, including the trade unions and political organizations of the working class and oppressed.

August BRICS summit convened by the governments of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

And the expansionist aims and drive to develop a nuclear arsenal by the bourgeois clerical regime in Iran threaten ongoing conflagrations across Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and beyond. These policies are made even more menacing by Tehran's declared aim of eliminating the existence of Israel.

Barnes pointed to the global media blitz Washington has begun cranking up, alleging Chinese government spying operations in Cuba — charges Cuban leaders rebutted as "mendacious and unfounded" lies. Such false charges, the SWP leader said, are in line with the Biden administration's course — building on that of the Trump White House and every Democratic and Republican administration for some 65 years — to overturn the socialist revolution in Cuba.

The aim of this brutal policy, as the 2022 SWP resolution explains, "is to crush the spirit of Cuba's working people, their socialist revolution, and the example of working-class leadership and revolutionary intransigence they set for toilers in the United States, across the Americas, and worldwide."

**Crisis of affordable family formations**  
The starting point in the battle for women's emancipation, Barnes said, is recognizing and addressing the growing social and economic crises that prevent working people starting families and providing for them. That means fighting for jobs with wage rates, work schedules and conditions that make family time possible — time for social activity together, sports, recreation, caring for children who are

sick or need help with their homework, help for the aging. Time for family members to read, to take part in union, political and cultural activity.

This is a fight that must be led by the labor movement, above all.

The destructive consequences of the tearing apart of families in the Black

community were detailed in the 1960s by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, then a Labor Department official and later U.S. senator from New York. Today this reality is increasingly the plight of workers of all skin colors, languages and national origins in North America.

This was recently captured by a pick-



Hearst Connecticut Media/Arnold Gold

et sign carried by locked-out dockworkers in Quebec last fall, one that rings true to tens of millions of workers and their families facing the bosses' relentless drive for profits: "Longshore workers wanted. No spouses. No kids. No friends. Available 24/7, 365"

Advancing a working-class program

to combat capitalism's twin scourges of joblessness and soaring prices, for universal child care and medical care, is central to opening the road to women's equal participation in economic, social and political life. As is addressing the broader, family-destroying social and moral crises spawned by decaying



Reuters/Anton Vaganov

St. Petersburg protest against President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, Feb. 24, 2022, one of hundreds across Russia. Despite massive repression, smaller actions continue, in solidarity with Ukraine's fight for national independence.

capitalism — opioids and other deadly drugs, alcoholism and gambling, as well as growing mental illness, suicides, domestic violence and crime.

The political course pursued by Democrats, the middle-class left and leaders of today's bourgeois-minded women's organizations, however, heads in the opposite direction, Barnes said. They reduce the fight for women's rights to abortion access, campaigning for capitalist (almost always Democratic Party) politicians and "breaking the glass ceiling" to get more women into well-rewarded professional and managerial positions.

The communist movement must campaign for the labor movement to advance a political course that promotes affordable family formation for the working class and other exploited producers. That's our course as the party of life.

That's our programmatic continuity with the socialist revolutions in Russia and Cuba, both in the living example they set and by way of the writings of V.I. Lenin, Leon Trotsky, Fidel Castro, Vilma Espin, and other communist leaders. As those examples have shown in practice, the family will remain a necessary social institution for working people well past a successful socialist revolution, Barnes emphasized.

Following the conquest of power by workers and farmers in Russia and Cuba, amid the rising confidence of both women and men in the working classes, there was a sharp rise in birth rates. That contrasts with today's drop in much of the world to levels that, if not reversed, leads to declining population.

In the aftermath of both revolutions, millions of women were drawn into

participation and revolutionary leadership in all aspects of economic, social and political life. Decriminalization of abortion was established along the road of these revolutionary working-class struggles, Barnes said.

## Deepening work in the unions

Alongside fellow workers and trade unionists, SWP members are deepening their involvement in labor struggles today and maximizing opportunities to build and expand solidarity. That union-building activity is open to all party members, Barnes said, as presented in the party's 2022 resolution.

Organizing solidarity is the backbone of work to strengthen the unions. Barnes pointed to the recent example of eight rail workers, all members of SMART-TD Local 1373, joining the picket line of striking Teamsters at Liberty Coca-Cola Beverages in Philadelphia last month. They brought several hundred dollars to donate to the strike fund.

It's in the course of such fights that workers become more and more receptive to immediate, democratic and transitional demands advanced in the communist program, pointing the way forward in addressing today's conditions.

Demands for cost-of-living adjustments in all wages and benefits to combat price hikes.

For a union-led fight for 30 hours work for 40 hours pay, to combat layoffs by spreading the work around with no cut in take-home pay.

For workers control of production and access to capitalist "business secrets," to combat profit-driven speedup and dangerous conditions both on the job and victimizing working people and others far and wide — as we've seen in the derailment and toxic consequences in East Palestine, Ohio, as well as other workplace-related disasters too numerous to recount. Unions must be at the center of battles for control over conditions affecting the health, safety and futures of millions of working people.

The SWP also campaigns for the labor movement to build solidarity with farmers' struggles in face of sharply rising input prices, debt slavery and bank foreclosures on land, buildings and equipment. We do so as we explain our working-class program, including the need for land nationalization to block extortionate land grabs and "repo" forays by banks and large real estate firms.

Working farmers are organized through the bourgeois parties and candidates to look to handouts from gov-

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sition to such government attacks. (See "Los Angeles Militant Labor Forum panel discusses fight for constitutional rights" in July 3 issue of the *Militant*.)

## Crisis across world capitalist order

In his report to the SWP leadership meeting, Barnes reviewed the international situation confronting Washington, the world's last great imperialist power. Efforts by the U.S. rulers to maintain their massive military might and predominant but relatively diminishing economic supremacy intensify the exploitation of working people everywhere on earth, accelerating capitalism's global disorder and dangers of world war.

World politics today is marked by the Kremlin's determination to expand its borders by force of arms and crush the national independence and sovereignty of Ukraine. Beijing's rulers, still heavily dependent on trade, credit and investment from U.S., European, and Asian finance capital, at the same time continue to press their goal of establishing themselves as the economic and military powerbroker in the Pacific.

Instead of the expanding investment, trade and rising profits many imperialist ruling figures anticipated with the end of pandemic lockdowns, Barnes said, the bosses face stagflation and sharpening competition for markets. That, in turn, leads them to inflict more and harsher assaults on the living and working conditions of workers, farmers and other toiling producers the world over.

Rival capitalist states and ruling classes are stepping up moves to reset alliances and rearm in preparation for coming military conflicts in the wake of Moscow's war against Ukraine. Long an ally of Washington, the Saudi monarchy is seeking closer ties with the rulers in China, announcing it will attend the

## 'A road forward to raise workers' confidence in our own capacities'

OBERLIN, Ohio — The political report by Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes adopted by the June 12 expanded leadership meeting to guide party work culminated several days of plenary talks, summary presentations, classes and discussions during the international educational conference. The gathering concluded with a panel highlighting the scope of political experiences of the SWP and of Communist Leagues in Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia.

The socialist conference opened with a political report by Mary-Alice Waters. Having led three political trips to Cuba this year by teams of cadres in the SWP and broader communist movement, Waters focused, among other topics, on political and leadership lessons of Cuba's socialist revolution and Washington's intensifying efforts to crush it. (Read Waters' talks to meetings during two of the trips: "'Fidel showed that proletarian internationalism isn't only a foreign policy, it's an extension of the revolution itself,'" in the March 6, 2023, issue of the *Militant*; and "'A genuine revolution means leading the millions': Class struggle in the US today, the Cuban Revolution and building a proletarian party" in the June 12 issue.)

Conference plenary presentations were also made by SWP leaders Mary Martin, the party's trade union work director, on experiences and conclusions from a year of the party's labor solidarity and other union activity; Ellie Garcia, director of the party's farm committee, on the activity by party members collaborating with working farmers facing skyrocketing input prices and deepening debt; and Steve Clark, on the working-class road to women's emancipation.

Four classes were presented: "Our Organizational Principles Are an Inseparable Part of the Communist Program," by Dave Prince and Arrin Hawkins; "Maurice Bishop, Grenada, and Leadership Lessons from the Cuban Revolution," by Betsy Stone and James Har-



Militant/Arthur Hughes

Laura Garza, Socialist Workers Party 2024 candidate for U.S. Senate from California, speaks at closing panel.

ris; "Break with the Bourgeoisie, Take the Power" — the Place of the Workers and Farmers Government in the Communist Program," by Norton Sandler and Gerald Smith; and "A Labor Party Based on the Unions," by Joel Britton and Alyson Kennedy.

Displays with photos and text illustrating political themes of the conference lined one side of the gymnasium where plenary sessions were held. Conference participants picked up more than 900 books for their Marxist libraries from the many tables of literature at the back of the hall.

Among the best-sellers were Pathfinder's latest publication, *Colombia: Fidel Castro on the Debate Around Revolutionary Strategy and Lessons of the Cuban Revolution*, as well as *The Structure and Organizational Principles of the Socialist Workers Party* by Farrell Dobbs; *Their Trotsky and Ours* and "The Fight for a Workers and Farmers Government in the United States" in issue no. 4 of *New International* magazine, both by Barnes; *The Emancipation of Women* by V.I. Lenin; and *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution* by Leon Trotsky.

## Saturday closing panel

"Whenever a politician says they're 'speaking truth to power,' they're pointing workers in the wrong direction," said Laura Garza, the SWP's

2024 candidate for U.S. Senate from California, at the Saturday evening June 10 closing event.

"They're looking toward the bosses and their parties, who know the truth and choose to ignore it. The SWP points in the opposite direction, to a course that raises workers' confidence in our own capacities, and the necessity of taking power into our own hands."

In addition to the 16 SWP candidates for local and state offices in 2023, the party will be campaigning on its revolutionary working-class program for U.S. president and vice president in 2024, as well as fielding candidates for the Senate, House of Representatives, and state and local offices across the country.

Another of the 11 panelists at the Saturday evening meeting was Tony Lane, organizer of the SWP's Pittsburgh branch, who has led *Militant* reporting teams to East Palestine, Ohio, following the train derailment and spill of toxic chemicals there. "It's our job to help advance trade union actions across the country to fight for solidarity with other unions in the area where workers and farmers are affected by the disaster," Lane told the meeting.

Other panelists reported on building solidarity through their unions with other labor struggles; the SWP's testimony in support of ending Puerto Rico's status as a U.S. colony before the June 22 U.N. decolonization committee hearing in New York; and other party campaigning and activity in the labor movement and social and political protests in the interests of the working class.

The success of the conference and confidence in the party's course were registered in a collection of \$46,171 at Saturday's meeting, the highest in many years.

On Sunday organized supporters of the communist movement from

around the world met with SWP leaders to evaluate their accomplishments over the past year and plan their coming work. The supporters' auxiliary organizes the production, printing and shipping of Pathfinder books by SWP and other revolutionary leaders; carries out promotional and sales activity to expand distribution of the books; and systematically organizes to raise funds the SWP uses for its activity.

Among the supporters' work over the past year, they have now made available, in fully accessible form, 11 Pathfinder titles for workers and others who are blind or face dyslexia or various physical barriers to reading print books. Those titles are now available at [www.bookshare.org](http://www.bookshare.org), in MP3 audio, refreshable Braille and other formats, plus some 30 other Pathfinder books in text-only format. The supporters staffed a table at the conference to show participants how they can work with co-workers and others to make use of this new gateway to political literature.

— T.E., S.C.

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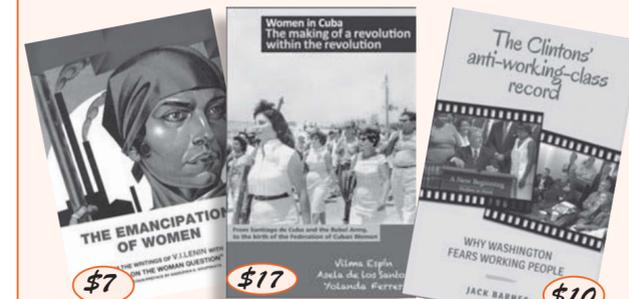


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# SWP sets course ahead



Militant/Willie Cotton

Working farmers are being pushed off the land. "The big guys have all the advantages," Vermont dairy farmer Paul Plouffe told the *Militant*. SWP campaigns for the unions to join farmers' struggles against bank foreclosures and other results of debt slavery. SWP calls for nationalization of land to end capitalist rents and mortgages system.

## Continued from page 9

ernment legislative bodies and agencies as the only way to survive, Barnes said. "Many farmers will become open to a different course, a *working-class course*, as they confront the growing prospect they'll be driven off the land and into the ranks of wage labor."

Through workers' experiences shoulder to shoulder in such struggles, growing numbers will learn the need to break from the political parties of the bosses, Barnes said. They can be won to the course of building a labor party based on the unions to fight for the interests of the working class and all the exploited and oppressed in the U.S. and the world over.

## Renewal of communist leadership

The socialist revolution in Cuba and the forging of a communist leadership there had a momentous impact on the Socialist Workers Party, Barnes said. It convinced new generations of revolutionary-minded working people and youth worldwide that proletarian leadership of the highest caliber would continue to emerge, capable of organizing workers and farmers to take power out of the hands of the capitalist rulers.

Huge crowds greeted Fidel Castro as he led the more-than-weeklong Freedom Caravan across Cuba after the revolutionary victory of January 1, 1959, when U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista fled the country. Most weren't members of the Castro-led July 26 Movement, Barnes said, but they were looking to join in making the revolution.

As Castro said a few years after the triumph, he saw "hundreds and thousands of men and women with the red and black uniforms of the July 26 Movement. But many thousands more wore uniforms that weren't black and red but were the work shirts of workers and farmers and other men and women of the people. ... They are the strength, the backbone of the revolution! Fist, arm, muscle of the revolutionary people, of the working class, of the peasants, of the workers!"

Like Lenin and the Bolsheviks decades earlier, Castro recognized that making a revolution requires organizing and leading the millions of the

exploited and oppressed to take their destinies into their own hands. Castro declared from the outset that the new revolutionary government would draw them into the struggle. And it did.

With the expulsion of the last bourgeois figures from the cabinet by fall 1959, a workers and farmers government led by Castro was well on the way to leading the working class — amid hostile confrontations initiated by both U.S. imperialism and Cuban landlords and capitalists — to the eradication of bourgeois property relations and establishment of a workers state in late summer and fall 1960. In the words of our movement's 1938 founding program drafted by exiled Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky, Cuba's revolutionary-led workers and farmers government was, and could only have been, "a short episode on the road to the actual dictatorship of the proletariat." The working class had to take power, or the revolution would be defeated.

These lessons are well recounted in *Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution* by SWP leader Joseph Hansen; books such as *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution* and *Their Trotsky and Ours*, and others by Barnes; as well as some 50 titles on the Cuban Revolution pub-



Militant/Abby Tilsner

"Neither Democrats or Republicans have done anything for us," said Maurice Fleming when SWP candidate for Philadelphia mayor Chris Hooppner, **right**, knocked on his door May 28. SWP campaigns find greater interest in the party's program today.

lished by Pathfinder Press, books by Fidel Castro, Che Guevara and other communist leaders, many of them edited by Mary-Alice Waters.

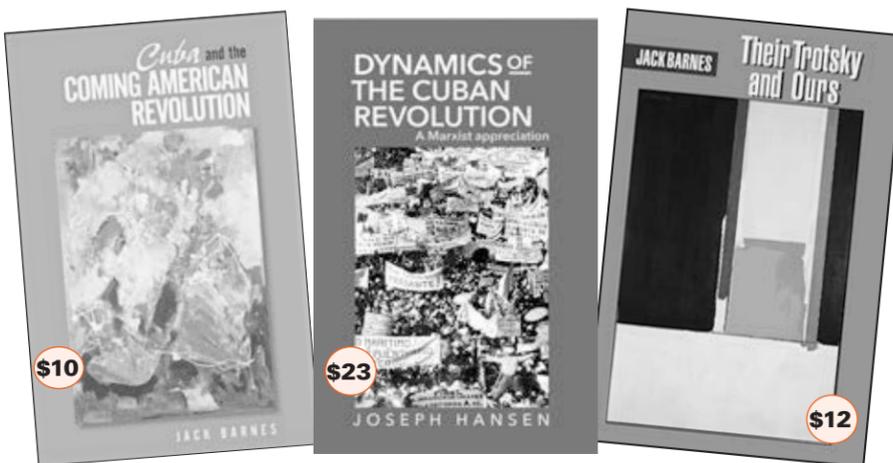
Recognizing the historic accomplishment registered by the Cuban Revolution politically armed the SWP leadership with a clearer understanding of the successes and failures of other post-World War II revolutionary struggles — from the Stalinist-led Yugoslav and Chinese overturns in the late 1940s, through the revolutionary-led uprisings in Nicaragua and Grenada in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The course of the Cuban leader-

ship forged by Fidel Castro, Barnes said, explains why the socialist revolution there lives and fights to this day. Its emergence opened the door to the renewal of communist leadership beyond Cuba's shores, setting an example to emulate for revolutionary working-class parties in the United States and worldwide.

By acting on this communist political continuity and the opportunities in the labor movement and beyond that register the small breeze lifting the class struggle today, SWP members are extending the party's reach and winning fellow fighters to its ranks.

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# Unions put stamp on hearing

Continued from front page

The first speaker, whose name was picked at random, was David Ferguson, a member of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers union and the Socialist Workers Party. “To prevent the next disaster, we need a power shift from corporations like Norfolk Southern, whose only concern is making more profit, to the workers, who are actually running and maintaining the railroads, and their unions,” Ferguson said. “The workers have an interest in safety for themselves and the communities along the way. We can have no faith in the government after they ordered rail workers to return to work last year under a contract that they had just voted down.”

“I was describing how workers need to take control over safety and conditions on the job,” Ferguson told the *Militant*. “I have personal experience with this as a former member of the United Mine Workers. For a time the union won the ability to stop production to deal with safety issues.”

Daniel Banks, a staff member for the Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers — Transportation Division (SMART-TD), the railroad conductors union, who was in the audience, told the *Militant* that when he heard what Ferguson said, “I wanted to carry him out of the room on my shoulders!”

The board tried to limit what people could ask about. Nonetheless, the NTSB chair was peppered with questions. Zsuzsa Gyenes asked, “Who empowers

the recommendations?” Another participant said, “The regulations in place didn’t help,” and asked, “Will future regulations help?” Chrissy Reid asked, “Who sets the speed limits for trains going through the town?” Jami Wallace, a member of the Unity Council for the East Palestine Train Derailment, told Homendy, “It’s taken us months to get information. Can we submit it to you?”

Misti Allison asked, “Was the vinyl chloride release warranted?” Another participant asked, “What happened to the 911 call that there was a train on fire?” Russ Murphy asked, “Are the standards for ‘critical alerts’ too high?” referring to the trackside detectors railroads use to identify fires and overheating on train wheels.

## Union members at the hearing

When the actual board hearing began the next morning, it was marked by the participation of the rail unions.

Four rail unions are parties to the investigation — the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, SMART-TD, the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen and the Transportation Communications Union/IAM, which represents carmen. This meant they could ask questions of the witnesses. Two rail unions members testified at one of the four panels at the hearing.

Lisa Mahoney, a private school teacher, told the *Militant*, “What scares me is what they *aren’t* telling us, what we don’t know. It’s so good to see the union people up there telling the truth about Norfolk Southern. I’m very grateful.”

Randy Fannon, a Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen vice president and national chairman of the union’s safety task force, told the *Militant*, “We need to enhance the safety of our members and what affects them affects the communities along the tracks — 100%. That’s why labor needs to be involved in what happens here in East Palestine.

“The impact on rail safety of today’s longer trains is something I brought up in the hearings here,” he said.

Fannon also explained what “Precision Scheduled Railroading” means for rail workers. During the hearing, witnesses for the rail bosses — from the Association of American Railroads and Norfolk Southern — claimed PSR just “means to be more efficient.”

“When they adopted PSR, the Class 1 railroads furloughed thousands of employees. They saved a lot of money,” Fannon said. “But with the employees left they had to do the same amount of work. Nothing changed in the amount of freight moved, but workers had to work more hours. That created fatigue.

“When workers ask for days off, days they are entitled to, the answer is, ‘no.’ They didn’t care that your son is graduating from high school that day. Of course, many workers take off anyway, and then get marked for attendance discipline. Many workers have quit.”

Chris Hand, director of research for the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen, spoke on the panel on “Wheel Bearings and Wayside Defect Detectors.” He described how rail company policies restrict workers’ ability to make the railroads safer for both rail labor and the surrounding communities. The safety value of wayside detectors is undermined, he said, because Norfolk Southern “is responsible for determining the testing protocols and schedules. ... To

## Derailment drops toxic chemical cars in Montana river



AP Photo/Matthew Brown

“There is no immediate threat to Yellowstone County,” the sheriff’s office there claimed, hours after a train carrying toxic chemicals derailed when a bridge over the Yellowstone River collapsed upstream near Columbus, Montana, June 24. “At this time there are no known risks to public water quality,” insisted bosses at train operator Montana Rail Link.

“I’m monitoring the train derailment, and the state is standing by,” Montana Gov. Greg Gianforte bragged the same day.

So, nothing to worry about?

The derailment occurred some 110 miles from Yellowstone National Park, dropping 10 cars into the river. They contained molten sulfur, asphalt and rock. Molten sulfur can produce hydrogen sulfide and sulfur dioxide, both of which in sufficient quantity can kill you.

Two cars with sodium hydrogen sulfate derailed but fell near, not into the river. Care had to be taken to move them, because if that chemical had mixed with water, sulfuric acid would form, which is dangerous to all living organisms.

Despite the rush by rail bosses and the government to offer assurances, the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Department warned residents to avoid contact with water from the river and shut down boat ramps and downstream fishing spots. Water treatment facilities in Laurel, Billings and Lockwood closed their head gates to avoid taking in river water.

Globs of asphalt appearing down river “may be associated with the derailment,” admitted the bosses.

“All of our water comes through the river for our wells and our irrigation,” John Counter, who lives two miles from the bridge, told ABC News. “So it’s a little concerning.”

He pointed out the bridge had been battered by high water levels after recent storms. In 2021 a section of it used for car traffic was removed after erosion made it too dangerous.

Joseph Racicot, president of Montana Rail Link, told the press the company had inspected the bridge in May, but offered no explanation for why it came apart barely two months later, creating a potential disaster.

— TERRY EVANS

prevent accidents like what occurred on Feb. 3, it is crucial to create regulations that establish standardized practices instead of relying solely on railroads to create their own standards.”

Jason Cox, national representative of the Transportation Communications Union Carmen’s Division, highlighted how the time allowed for union workers to conduct train inspections has been slashed. He said it used to be three minutes or more per car, but now they’re expected to take only 30 seconds a side to inspect a car. “Give them the time to do the work,” he argued.

## Workers control over job conditions

Other panels in the hearing covered hazard communications and the initial emergency response, the decision to vent and burn the five vinyl chloride cars, and rail tank car safety. While the hearing focused more on technology, the union participation brought to the hearing the importance of the human factor, and that technology had to be in the hands of rail workers. Union statements and questions also highlighted the impact that rail bosses’ decisions have on rail workers and the safety of the railroads, including cuts in staff and consequent speedup and the impact of on-call work schedules on train crews.

Another way the bosses have tried to boost profits at the expense of safety

is building longer and longer — and heavier and heavier — trains. The challenge this presents for operating crews working on these trains today was brought home in an interview with the engineer of the train that derailed in East Palestine. It was contained in a big dossier for the hearing.

That engineer explained how he handled the 151-car, 9,300-foot-long train, weighing 18,000 tons: “I took over [from the computer running the train] because I just didn’t trust it with the weight and the tonnage, and I was actually running it, not the computer. ... It was just my way of trying to be safe.” There was also “a train in front of me, a heavy train, I don’t know how heavy, but I know it’s big.”

Jared Cassity of SMART asked the two union witnesses at the hearing, “What could be done today to improve rail safety?” Both Cox and Hand stressed the devastating impact of the cuts on the workforce. Hand said, “They’re putting more work on individuals than is needed.” Cox explained technology is only good when workers are allowed to wield it. “The firewall of safety has been severely compromised.”

All this brings home the reality of what workers and the unions need to do under the for-profit system of capitalism — fight for workers control over all aspects of production and transportation.

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# Back fight for Ukraine independence!

The seizure of the Russian city of Rostov-on-Don by Yevgeny Prigozhin's Wagner mercenaries and their aborted armed march on Moscow highlight the dangers for working people in Russia, Ukraine and worldwide in the crisis unfolding within Vladimir Putin's secret-police-based capitalist regime.

The clash between Putin and Prigozhin's forces was provoked by Moscow's setbacks in Ukraine and conflict in Russia's ruling circles and their hangers-on over what to do. Challenges to Putin — from Prigozhin or other rightist forces — threaten imposition of an even more bellicose regime of terror against workers and farmers in both Ukraine and Russia, and a wider conflict with worldwide implications. This highlights the need for working people to demand Moscow immediately withdraw its forces from every inch of Ukraine, halt its murderous bombardment of Ukrainian cities and get its boot off the back of Russia's working people.

Moscow's invasion is aimed at wiping out a nation that Putin says has no right to exist. His claim that the war is necessary to protect Russia from U.S. aggression is a cynical pretext for increasing Moscow's power over its "near abroad" and moving to rebuild a Russian empire like the "prison house of nations" under the czarist regime.

Getting Moscow's forces out of *all* of Ukraine is deeply in the interests of working people across Russia. They are used as the cannon fodder in Putin's war, at the same time thousands have been arrested for speaking out against it. Prigozhin stood for imposing martial law and a more draconian regime of repression.

Workers in Russia have the same class interests as working people in Ukraine. While workers in Ukraine

have volunteered in their thousands to join the just struggle to defeat Moscow's invasion, they also face a capitalist government using the war to justify attacks on unions, jobs, wages and political rights. The fight that is needed against Moscow's expansionist course and the social cost at home of its wars will be taken on by working people in Russia as they advance their own class interests.

They will not be helped by the sanctions imposed by Washington and its capitalist allies that fall most heavily on working people. The U.S. rulers intervene across the world to extend their political influence against rivals and allies alike, and to quench their thirst for profits off the backs of workers and farmers. Washington is responding to the war by expanding its vast military might. Capitalist rulers worldwide look to defend and extend their political and economic interests and their place in today's crisis-ridden "world order." Even more bloody conflicts loom in the future.

"The stakes are enormous," says the Socialist Workers Party National Committee statement issued by Jack Barnes, the party's national secretary, days after the war began last year. "Working people must see the necessity of taking political power into our own hands — as toilers did in Cuba at the opening of the 1960s, following a popular, workers-and-farmers-based revolution — or we will face a future of social devastation, reaction, world war and even nuclear catastrophe."

Working people in the U.S. need our own foreign policy. Join the fight to defend Ukraine's independence, to demand the withdrawal of Moscow's forces, to get the U.S. rulers' troops and nuclear weapons out of Europe and to broaden working-class solidarity worldwide.

# Amid Moscow clash

Continued from page 6

residential areas in Kyiv, Dnipro and Kryvyi Rih in Dnipropetrovsk that night. Most were shot down by Ukrainian air defenses.

The same day, Ukrainian forces' counteroffensive advanced north and southwest of Bakhmut and in heavy fighting along the Zaporizhia front. Ukrainian forces have recaptured some of the land occupied by Moscow since 2014 in the eastern Donbas region.

In a June 24 address, Putin blamed Prigozhin for pushing Moscow toward defeat in Ukraine. "A blow like this was dealt to Russia in 1917, when the country was fighting in World War I. But the victory was stolen from it."

"Intrigues, squabbles and politicking behind the backs of the army," Putin claimed, led to "the destruction of the army and the collapse of the state, and the loss of vast territories."

But what happened in 1917 was not the product of "intrigues." Millions of workers, peasants and oppressed peoples made the world's first socialist revolution. The czarist state did not collapse — it was overthrown. The Bolsheviks led the toilers and soldiers — sick of being used as cannon fodder for the capitalist rulers in the first imperialist world war — to take power into their own hands, establish a workers and farmers government and end Russian involvement in the war.

Led by V.I. Lenin, the new government uprooted the czarist prison house of nations by granting oppressed nations, like Ukraine, the right to self-determination, establishing a voluntary federation of Soviet Socialist Republics and roused working people to turn back the efforts of the czarist forces and imperialist invaders to overthrow the revolution.

Nothing close to that is about to happen in Russia today. Forging a communist leadership is still far ahead for working people.

# DC protests: 'US, take Cuba off your terrorist list, end the embargo'

Continued from front page

The next day more than 250 people marched and protested at the White House. Several days of lobbying at congressional offices were also organized.

The Joseph Biden administration "has been in office for more than two years, and there are no indications it is following a different policy toward Cuba compared to [former President Donald] Trump," featured speaker Alejandro Pila, deputy chief of mission at the Cuban Embassy here, told the meeting.

"The state sponsors of terrorism designation has a direct effect on the Cuban economy," Pila said. Together with the embargo and other measures aimed at cutting off all trade and financial transactions between Cuba and other countries, "Cuba is going through difficult times."

The U.S. ruling class has never forgiven the people of Cuba for making and defending their socialist revolution. Washington's economic war on Cuba began in 1960, and it has been maintained by every U.S. president since, Democrat and Republican alike.

Pila quoted Cuban revolutionary leader Fidel Castro. "The world has extended solidarity to Cuba, and that's why we feel more and more solidarity with all the peoples of the world," Castro said in 1961. "The solidarity we have received has helped make it possible for us to resist imperialism's assaults," and with that support "we will continue fighting and resisting."

Rev. Brian Hamilton, pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church, welcomed the audience. The program, chaired by Netfa Freeman of the Black Alliance for Peace, opened with a showing of the video "Maestra," a short and excellent documentary about the 1961 Cuban literacy campaign directed by Catherine Murphy.

The video captures the mass, working-class character of the mobilizations that in under a year eliminated illiteracy in Cuba. Some 100,000 volunteers, mostly teenagers and the majority young women, traveled to the countryside where they got an education in the unfolding revolution from the rural workers and peasants as they taught them to read and write.

Calla Walsh, a co-chair of the NNOC, pointed to the importance of denouncing the latest assault against Cuba by the U.S. government — fake



Militant/Arlene Rubinstein

Demonstrators from across Northeast join June 25 action outside White House to demand end to U.S. economic war on Cuba.

charges of a secret agreement between Beijing and Cuba to install a Chinese espionage station on the island. "This is another example of U.S. propaganda to justify the blockade and distract from the fact the U.S. maintains a military base on Cuban soil in Guantánamo," she said.

Also speaking were Chris Smalls and Tristan Dutchin, leaders of the Amazon Labor Union, and Kamau Benjamin, a leader of the DC Metro Coalition. Cultural performances added to the evening.

## March to the White House

The Sunday march and rally drew people from across the Northeast, including a busload from New York, and carloads from Detroit; Columbia, South Carolina; and other cities. Banners and T-shirts identified participants from local Cuba solidarity coalitions, IFCO-Pastors for Peace, Young Communist League, Party for Socialism and Liberation, Socialist Workers Party, African People's Socialist Party and others.

Roberto Yis is an Uber driver and member of Puentes de Amor and the Alianza Martiana, Cuban organizations in Miami that call for lifting U.S. sanctions. A large number of Cubans have immigrated to the U.S. from Cuba in recent years due to the difficult econom-

ic conditions there, he said. As they learn "the reality of capitalism, there is more openness to discussion."

A dozen Peruvians from New York and Washington joined in the rally. They are part of Semillas de Libertad (Seeds of Freedom), a group that defends immigrant workers and has protested the current Peruvian government's violent assaults on political protests.

"Cuba is part of Latin America, which the U.S. sees as its backyard," Delia Aguilar said. "But they have a right to their revolution without interference."

A contingent from the African People's Socialist Party, which is fighting frame-up charges by the Biden administration against APSP Chairman Omali Yeshitela and Uhuru Movement leaders Penny Hess and Jesse Nevel, marched. The three were indicted in April on charges of conspiring to act as unregistered agents of the Russian government. They face up to 15 years in prison.

Spencer Cortesi and Riley Koehler, high school students from Fairfax, Virginia, decided to come to the rally after hearing a podcast on Cuba. "Cuba is the one revolution that has not been undone by U.S. imperialism and remains true to its principles," Cortesi said.

Candace Wagner contributed to this article.