

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

US rulers double down on lies about Cuba-China 'spy bases' — PAGE 8

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 87/NO. 26 JULY 17, 2023

Profit drive of the rail bosses behind disaster in East Palestine

BY TONY LANE

EAST PALESTINE, Ohio — The results of the June 22-23 National Transportation Safety Board hearings here are unmistakable. The Feb. 3 derailment of Norfolk Southern train 32N, subsequent toxic leaks and fires and current challenges facing working people throughout the region are the result of the dog-eat-dog drive for profits by the owners of the nation's railroads. The testimony and questions from rail union representatives were crucial in making this crystal clear.

While board officials hoped holding the hearing in East Palestine would divert local residents with an opportunity to blow off steam, in fact it gave them a sense of their strength. "If it wasn't for the residents who wanted to speak up and tell their story, I don't think we would have this," East Palestine resi-

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Black rights, the Constitution and line of march of the working class

At the end of its term, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a number of decisions with important ramifications for the struggles of working people today.

This week we reprint a section from *Are They Rich Because They're Smart? Class, Privilege, and Learning Under Capitalism* by Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes. It deals with issues at stake for the working class in the debate over constitutional rights and protections among the Supreme Court justices and the court's June 29 decision in *Students for Fair Admission, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College*.

The Militant will cover these rulings in coming issues.

— John Studer

By the latter half of the 1960s, the
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California hotel workers strike over pay, workload

Fight for ability to raise families, to end E-Verify



Militant

Thousands of striking hotel workers, mainly women, marched July 4 in Los Angeles, above, and in Santa Monica. Members of UNITE HERE are demanding an immediate \$5 hourly wage raise.

BY NORTON SANDLER

LOS ANGELES — A spirited rally of 2,000 hotel workers took place on July 4 in downtown Los Angeles. Another was held in Santa Monica. Two days earlier hundreds picketed in front of the Intercontinental Hotel here. They chanted "Únete. Únete. A la lucha únete" (Join. Join. Join the fight) and "Sí se puede" (Yes we can).

Members of UNITE HERE Local 11, the majority of whom are women, walked off the job at midnight June 30 at hotels across Southern California after their contract expired.

The union represents some 15,000

cooks, room attendants, dishwashers, servers, bellmen and front desk agents. They are seeking an immediate \$5 hourly wage increase, followed by \$3 an

SWP STATEMENT

A road to defend workers and our families

— see page 10

hour more in each of the next two years of a three-year contract. The union is also fighting for an end to hotel bosses

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Defend constitutional freedoms won in over two centuries of class struggle



Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Sen. Joseph McCarthy waves "list" of alleged Communist infiltrators of government agencies during 1950s witch hunt. Similar methods are used by Democrats in attack on Donald Trump.

BY TERRY EVANS

Won over two-and-a-half centuries of bloody class struggle, key constitutional protections against government interference are under attack by President Joseph Biden's administration. The push for even more prosecutions against former President Donald Trump, Biden's main rival for the presidency, is a dangerous attempt to criminalize political differences. It goes hand in hand with increasing attacks on the right to legal representation.

Alongside Trump's indictment handed down by Justice Department special counsel Jack Smith under the 1917 witch hunt Espionage Act, other prosecutors

are also trying to pin charges on him for "interference" in the 2020 presidential election in Georgia and for "inciting" the Jan. 6 riot at the Capitol.

Add to the list: ongoing felony prosecutions for falsifying business records to cover up hush-money payments, not an actual felony; charges that Trump and his family are guilty of business fraud in New York; and the possibility of new charges by Smith, this time in New Jersey.

Democrats are hounding his lawyers. Hearings are underway in California to disbar Trump attorney John Eastman. Likewise, Rudy Giuliani was suspended

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The Putin regime and the defense of Ukrainian independence

BY ROY LANDERSEN

Russian President Vladimir Putin is purging his government and the military of supporters of the Wagner mercenary forces after their June 24 "march for freedom" on Moscow. While he seeks to refortify his regime he continues to lose ground in Ukraine and more Russian soldiers are speaking out about the high casualties they face.

The conflict between Putin and Wagner boss Yevgeny Prigozhin was precipitated by heavy losses among Russian forces, especially for the Wagner mercenaries who bore the brunt of the fighting in occupied Donetsk. Moscow's forces have been pushed back by tenacious resistance from Ukrainians determined to restore the entire country's sovereignty.

Prigozhin denounced the Kremlin for leading a war effort that caused the

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Crisis of capitalism, attacks on workers deepen in Europe

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Under the impact of rising prices coupled with declining production and trade worldwide, the capitalist economic crisis is deepening in Europe. And this feeds sharpening strains among the 27 governments

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Teamsters mount 'practice' pickets in fight for UPS contract

Ascension nurses in Texas and Kansas strike over staffing

Capitalist crisis in Europe

Continued from front page

that comprise the European Union as well as competition with Washington, Beijing and other capitalist powers for markets, raw materials and political sway.

The EU has already faced two consecutive quarters of economic contraction — the capitalists' definition of a recession. And the German rulers reported June 26 deteriorating economic conditions.

The establishment of the EU, and creation of the euro as a common currency, used today by 20 EU members — strengthened the ability of the rulers of Germany and France to use their larger and stronger economic clout to squeeze rivals in eastern and southern European nations, which are marked by a lower level of industrial and economic development. The capitalist rulers try to offload the effects onto the backs of working people.

The rulers in Greece, Italy and Spain, who face mounting government debts, are among the countries where the working class has been hit the hardest, with increasing joblessness and cuts in social spending. In Spain, the unemployment rate rose to 13.2% in the first quarter of this year. In Italy, 20.4% of youth between 15 and 24 years old who wanted a job couldn't get one, Rome reported in April.

The Militant Prisoners' Fund

makes it possible to send reduced rate subscriptions to readers behind bars. To donate, send a check or money order payable to the Militant and earmarked "Prisoners' Fund" to 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

But the crisis impacts the working class in both France and Germany as well. Food prices jumped by more than 14% over the past year in France. In Germany, official inflation figures rose to 6.8% in June. Industrial production there is declining and remains some 5% below pre-pandemic levels. This affects the entire eurozone economy.

Bosses and government spokespeople everywhere claim the biggest problem with inflation is it impels workers to fight for higher wages to try and catch up, leading to what they call a "wage-price spiral." But this is false. Wage increases shift the percentage of the wealth workers produce to the advantage of the toilers, chipping away at the bosses' profits.

One poster being used by UPS workers in the contract battle today makes this point, saying: "UPS 'record profits' are just unpaid wages."

Central banks jack up interest rates

In an attempt to rein in inflation, the European Central Bank raised the interest rate to its highest level since 2001 on June 13. This was the bank's eighth consecutive raise, putting the rate today at 3.5%. Raising rates is the favorite tool used by capitalist economists to try and cool down the economy and drive prices down. Targeting the working class they aim to slow production, increasing layoffs and competition among workers for jobs. And they cut wages in hopes of boosting production.

But as they admit, this can lead to an uncontrolled consequence. Already, rising rates drive up debts workers face on credit cards, auto loans, rents and mortgages, and more.

In response to rapidly rising consumer prices, officials from the Bank for International Settlements, the so-called

Thousands protest after cops kill teen in France



Protests and rioting have gripped the Paris suburb of Nanterre, home to tens of thousands of Arabs, Africans and other Muslims, since cops killed Nahel Merzouk, a teenager from the area, June 27. Merzouk came from an Algerian and Moroccan background. At first authorities claimed Merzouk had plowed into police after a traffic stop, who had to fire in self-defense. But a bystander's video surfaced showing cops, above, shooting point-blank into the side of Merzouk's car as he tried to drive away. Before they shot, one cop is heard saying, "You are going to get a bullet in the head."

President Emmanuel Macron's office rejects the idea there are "two Frances" of different conditions and treatment. But the residents of these working-class suburbs face racial and religious discrimination, high joblessness, low pay and cop harassment. The government has sent thousands of cops into the area to try and suppress the uprising, arresting over 3,300 people.

The government claims France is a "secularist" country, and has the right to impose so-called neutrality in dress for many activities. The country's top court ruled June 29 that the French Football Federation could bar women soccer players from competing if they wear a hijab. This is simply anti-Muslim discrimination. "I feel betrayed by the country, which is supposed to be the country of the rights of man," 25-year-old Mama Diakite, who lives near where Merzouk lived told the *New York Times*. She quit playing soccer last year because of the ban.

Some rioters carried out antisocial attacks on area homes, stores and restaurants. These have been met by squads of residents who stay up at night to protect their neighborhoods. "The anger is as strong as the violence of the tragedy," restaurant manager Mohamed Saly, told the *Times*. "But I don't support the actions that have been taken."

— JOHN STUDER

central bankers' bank, said, "governments around the world should raise taxes or cut public spending." This is another way bosses and their governments seek to shift the burden onto workers' backs — imposing greater "sacrifices" on working people through job cuts and reduced social benefits.

"The Global Economy Looks Like It's Out of Sync," is how the *Wall Street Journal* described today's capitalist world picture June 16. "In just 24 hours this past week the central banks of the world's three biggest economic blocs came to starkly different conclusions," the article said, "with the eurozone raising rates, the U.S. on hold and the

Chinese cutting." But this isn't "out of sync," it's the workings of the dog-eat-dog capitalist system, where each ruling class looks out for number one.

The *Journal* complains this makes it "harder for the Federal Reserve to put a lid on inflation."

Despite these conflicts and intensifying competition for profits on the world market, "the rival national ruling classes are chained together in their decline," explained a 1988 Socialist Workers Party resolution, printed in *New Internationalist* no 10. And there is no replacement for "U.S. economic weight, or the dollar as international reserve currency."

THE MILITANT

Puerto Rico independence will be won, not given

Workers and farmers in the U.S. cannot be free as long as Washington maintains its colonial boot on Puerto Rico. The 'Militant' explains why a successful fight for independence will strengthen our common fight against the capitalist rulers' efforts to put their crisis onto our backs.



Latino Rebels/Carlos Edil Berríos Polanco
Protest in San Juan against U.S. colonial rule in Puerto Rico, Nov. 27, 2022.

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'Strike is about respect,' say Memphis BCTGM workers

BY AMY HUSK

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — “This strike is about respect,” Tonya Walker, a 21-year employee at International Flavors and Fragrances and member of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Local 390G, told the *Militant* on the picket line here. “We were essential workers during the COVID crisis. Sometimes we were working 16-hour days because co-workers were out sick. Now they want to take away our overtime pay and change our benefits. They don’t respect us. They can’t run this without us. This is day 22 and there is nothing coming out of the dryers!”

Some 200 union members walked out June 4 after working under the terms of an expired contract for almost a year. This is the first time they’ve ever been on strike. Their picket signs read, “Don’t mess with Memphis; We’re a union town” and “We feed your family, now it’s time to feed ours.” Some of their tents were blown away in a storm the week before, but they’re determined and optimistic.

They produce soy protein products used by Nestle, Nestle Purina, Abbott, Kind Bars and other companies to make baby formula, pet food, nutritional powder and beverages.

“You have to have it in your heart to do it right. You need to be mindful and conscious. People depend on this product for nutrition,” said Effie Graham, a 31-year worker. “All the company cares about is the almighty dollar, not us or the people who need these products.”

The bosses are pushing to take away paid lunch breaks, stop paying overtime after eight hours, and cutting contributions to workers 401(k) retirement plans. Health insurance costs have gone up dramatically for workers since the company changed insurers two years ago after International Flavors and Fragrances merged with Dupont.

“We’re paying too much, up to \$800 a month premiums for family coverage,” striker Zandra Lee said. Last year the cost of an EpiPen was \$12, this year it shot up to \$600!”

Now the company wants the right to change benefits with only a month’s notice to the union. The current contract allows changes with a year’s notice. As a couple of workers explained, “It’s all taking and no giving.”

Cedric Wilson, a dryer operator at the plant and president of Local 390G, told the *Militant* that overtime after eight hours is important. “Sometimes they will work people for 16-hour shifts and then shut down the plant at the end of the week. If the company gets their demands we wouldn’t get any overtime pay in this case, because we didn’t work over 40 hours.

“Overtime isn’t voluntary. If they need people to stay, they start at the top of the seniority list. If the high seniority people don’t want to work, the low seniority people have to stay. And they can tell us at the last minute they need us to stay over.”

A couple years ago, during the pandemic, the company tried to hire in



Militant/Betsy Farley

BCTGM Local 390 members picket International Flavors and Fragrances in Memphis, Tennessee, June 29, against cutbacks, for decent health coverage, higher pay for new hires.

workers for \$18 an hour, but couldn’t find anyone at that wage, strikers said. Trey Davis, a young worker who has been at the plant about a year, pointed to four or five other places nearby, including the railroad, where starting wages are higher.

Union fights for new hires

Wilson said the company asked the union leadership what to do to hold onto new hires. “We told them: You know what you need to do! Pay higher wages!” The company and union reached an agreement to hire new people into job classifications that start at a higher pay scale, \$26 or \$27 an hour. Davis and other new hires expressed strong support for the union.

“We had a good faith understanding with the company that in today’s negoti-

ation we’d get wage increases for service employees as well,” Wilson said. But the company has only offered 4%, 3%, and 3% raises over three years.

“With inflation and higher health care costs that’s not enough,” he said. “We’re not being unreasonable, but the company won’t even come back to the table. They tell the media that they’re willing to talk but they tell us this is their ‘last, best and final offer.’”

“They keep talking about ‘market share’ and ‘market standards,’” Wilson added. “I’m not going to tell workers they can’t have a raise because the company only made \$250 million in profits instead of \$260 million.”

Wilson said some 20 people are currently working in the plant, a few union members who crossed the picket line as well as scabs brought in from strike-busting outfits like Huffmaster.

“We’ve had lots of support from other unions and the BCTGM locals in the area. Memphis is a union town,” he said. “I think we’re part of a movement to rebuild and defend the union movement. It’s a fight for all of us. Members of the Teamsters have been out here supporting us, as they’re getting ready for their own fight at UPS.”

Wilson encouraged supporters to come out and join the picket line, which is up 24 hours a day at 4272 S. Mendenhall Road here.

The strikers receive \$205 a week in union strike benefits. The company cut off their health insurance June 30. Contributions are needed and greatly appreciated. The BCTGM International website has information on their GoFundMe page and a podcast on how to support the strike.

Betsy Farley contributed to this article.

Canada longshore union strikes over jobs, work conditions

BY KATY LEROUGETEL

MONTREAL — Some 7,400 members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Canada set up picket lines, halting maritime traffic at over 30 ports on Canada’s west coast July 1. Bosses are demanding the government intervene and impose back-to-work legislation to break the strike.

“Our fight is about defending our jobs, about automation and against contracting out,” ILWU member Tina Brooks told the *Militant* at the picket line on the Neptune terminal in Vancouver, British Columbia.

The federal government recently approved a plan to increase Vancouver’s container capacity by nearly 50%. A 3.5 billion Canadian dollar (\$2.6 billion) semi-automated container terminal is to be built near the Vancouver suburb of Delta. This will pave the way for further automation and likely

job cuts and speedup.

The union is also seeking a wage increase to protect longshore workers from rising prices.

“Tell your co-workers that their support is important,” said Don Macleod, who has worked on the docks for 37 years.

“A few years ago, we went to Seattle to support the hotel workers who were on strike and to support the Service Employees International Union in their fight,” he said.

Safety on the job is a constant concern. Strikers told *Militant* reporters how maintenance worker Dan Alder died after going into medical distress at the top of a crane last December. The elevator wasn’t working, forcing responders to climb 23 flights and to improvise a way to get him down.

During the pandemic, “our people had to go to work 24 hours a day, seven

days a week in unsafe conditions,” Rob Ashton, president of ILWU Canada, said. “Employers gorged themselves on record profits. The federal government must stay out of our business.”

Bosses call for gov’t to break strike

Over CA\$800 million in goods from lumber to automobiles to seafood pass through these ports daily. Vancouver is Canada’s largest port, and the gateway to markets in Asia for Canadian bosses.

“The federal government will have no choice but to introduce a back-to-work legislation if this continues,” said Jasmin Guenette, Canadian Federation of Independent Business vice president.

In 2021, the government enacted back-to-work legislation against 1,150 striking Montreal dockers who were fighting against schedules forcing them to work 19 days straight out of 21.

Solidarity is especially important in the face of the threat of more government intervention. Members of Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union locals 517 and 580 carried their union flags on the picket line in Vancouver July 2. And the ILWU website displays letters of support from maritime unions in Ivory Coast, Japan, New Zealand and other countries.

“Unions across Canada and internationally should oppose any attempt by Ottawa to impose back-to-work legislation,” said Félix Vincent Ardea, a member of the Communist League in Montreal. “The BC port workers fight is in the interests of all working people.”

Ned Dmytryshyn in Vancouver contributed to this article.

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Black rights, working-class battles

Continued from front page

concept of equal justice under bourgeois law, fought for and more broadly codified through the mass civil rights struggles, had been extended to encompass explicit and transparent *quotas* in hiring, college admissions, and promotions — what came to be known as affirmative action. It helped break down barriers that had long blocked large numbers of African Americans from achieving such social status.

During those same years, the urban rebellions by proletarians who are Black in Harlem, Watts, Chicago, Newark, Detroit, and smaller cities all over the country — as well as the rise of Black nationalist consciousness and organizations — convinced the US rulers they had better concede something more than formal equality. At least for a time, they had to accept the need for quotas. The ground the working class had taken — including, in some cases, through our unions — was registered in victories such as the *Weber* decision in 1979.

Today the privileged middle-class layers the current president [Barack Obama] is part of are proud of being “color-blind” to a degree that is new to bourgeois society in the United States. The glue holding these layers together is not color but social class — or, to be more accurate, their entrenchment in a *certain section* of a social class. And it’s not uncommon for some of those who are Black, Latino, or female to note that, in their own individual cases, *they* got where *they* are — or could have — without any need for affirmative action.

Born as a victory of the working class and of the mass struggle for Black rights, affirmative action was initially a course of action aimed at unifying working people and the oppressed, in order to strengthen our unions and our struggles against the employing class and its government. In a few short years, however, it had been substantially corrupted into a

tool of capitalist division benefiting the most privileged layers of Blacks, women, and other oppressed sections of the population — those seeking advancement into the meritocracy. Its corresponding political expression has been the attempt to suppress civil debate through wielding the “political correctness” club so hated by working people and others — a class reaction 2016 presidential contender Donald Trump has capitalized on.

A large section of the bourgeoisie today considers what they call affirmative action — which has little to do with its original social and class content — as necessary to the maintenance and reproduction of stable bourgeois social relations. The main function of such measures as they’ve come to be applied by the bourgeoisie is to reinforce illusions in imperialist democracy (i.e., “even a Black man can become president of the United States”). They are used to further divide African Americans and other nationally oppressed layers along class lines, and to deepen resentments and divisions within the working class as a whole.

At the same time, as both the labor movement and the struggle for Black rights receded, the rulers began taking back ground they had been forced to concede. The Supreme Court handed down decisions that increasingly restricted — in the words of a January 1989 decision — “the use of an unyielding racial quota.” Following another such Supreme Court ruling in 1995, the Clinton administration issued a memorandum calling for elimination of any program that creates “a quota,” “preferences for unqualified individuals,” or “reverse discrimination” — three longtime battle cries of opponents of hard-fought victories to strengthen working-class unity and solidarity, such as the *Weber* decision (see box).

A 2003 Supreme Court decision, while conceding the University of Michigan Law School could con-



Militant/John Cobey

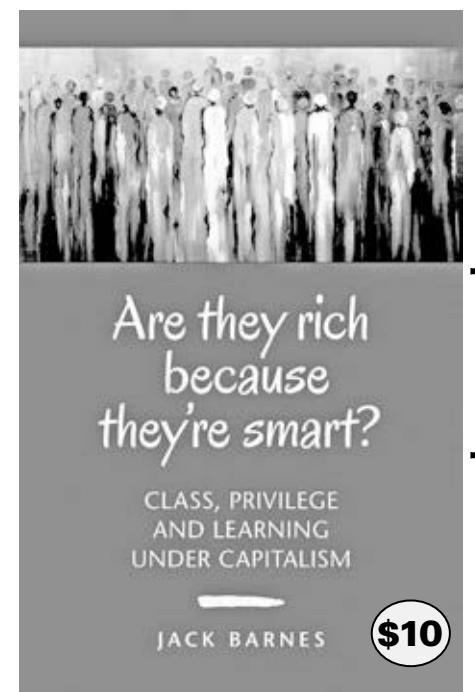
Strikers picket Newport News, Virginia, shipyard in February 1979. Successful battle by Steelworkers there for union recognition registered the strengthening of the working class and labor movement as a result of the hard-fought struggle led by Blacks that overthrew Jim Crow.

tinue to take discretionary measures to maintain “a diverse student body,” ruled at the same time that “universities cannot establish quotas for members of certain racial or ethnic groups or put them on separate admissions tracks.”

Communists and other vanguard workers unconditionally oppose the rollback of any gains workers have registered that have reduced racist and antiwoman patterns of hiring, promotions, firings, and college admissions. At the same time, we give no political support to the way in which the bourgeoisie has more and more often implemented what *they* call affirmative action over the past two decades. If the class struggle does not advance, then gains such as the *Weber* decision are perverted over time by the very operations of capitalist social relations themselves, as they become programs that provide a golden key for some to enter an exclusive club further up the

income rungs of US society.

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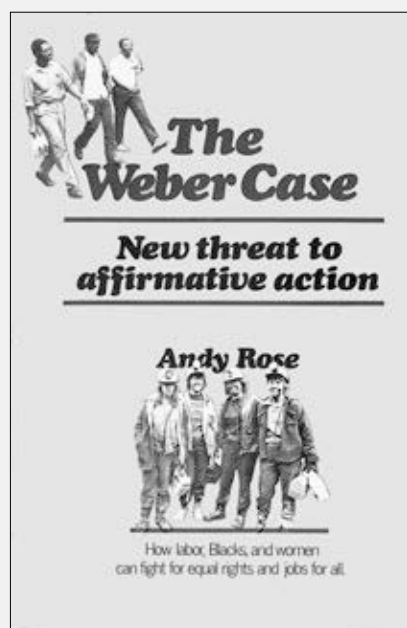
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The Weber decision: a gain for the working class

In June 1979 the Supreme Court upheld a contract negotiated by the United Steelworkers of America with Kaiser Aluminum. In order to upgrade employment for those targeted by longstanding discrimination, the contract had established a quota that one-half of the places in a new job-training program would be reserved for Blacks and women. The court rejected claims by attorneys for Brian Weber, a worker at Kaiser’s plant in Gramercy, Louisiana, that he had been illegally excluded from the training program because he was white.

Prior to that USWA contract, while 39 percent of workers at the Gramercy plant were African American, only five of 273 skilled jobs there had been held by Black workers, and none by women. At the time, socialist workers and others actively campaigned across the country and throughout the labor movement with the pamphlet *The Weber Case: New Threat to Affirmative Action; How Labor, Blacks, and Women Can Fight for Equal Rights and Jobs for All*. Published by Pathfinder Press, it cost 75¢.

— Taken from *Are They Rich Because They’re Smart? Class, Privilege, and Learning Under Capitalism*.



Miami Militant Labor Forum panel speaks out for constitutional rights

BY LAURA ANDERSON

MIAMI — “Defending and extending freedoms protected by the U.S. Constitution is at the center of class struggle today,” was the topic at a lively panel discussion here at the Militant Labor Forum July 1, attended by 20 people.

The speakers included Akilé Anai, director of media communications for the African People’s Socialist Party in St. Petersburg, Florida. She is one of the “unindicted co-conspirators” targeted in the July 29, 2022, FBI assaults on the APSP and Uhuru Movement headquarters and residences in St. Louis and St. Petersburg. Three members of their movement and one former member have been indicted on frame-up charges that include acting as “unregistered foreign agents.”

Also speaking was Laura Rodriguez, one of five activists known as the Tampa 5, who were attacked by police at a March 6 rally to defend “diversity” in higher education on the University of South Florida campus. They were arrested and charged with felony “battery” against the police, and face up to 10 years in prison. Rachele Fruit, of the Socialist Workers Party in Miami, chaired the forum.

Commenting on the significant support both cases are getting, Anai

said, “The government assumes our ideas are not popular, so they attack us. It’s the same for the Tampa 5. But they have miscalculated this.” Rodriguez reported that a resolution to drop the charges against the Tampa 5 has been supported by the North Florida Central Labor Council.

Fruit explained that “the stakes in demanding the charges be dropped are substantial in defending constitutional freedoms, whether against Uhuru and the African People’s Socialist Party, the Tampa 5 or Donald Trump. Working people need these freedoms to resist the worsening conditions we face.”

Anai announced that a coalition is being formed to organize a march on Washington in November.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

GEORGIA

Atlanta

Why Working People Must Fight to Defend Constitutional Freedoms. Speakers: Dr. Aisha Fields, African People’s Socialist Party; John Benson, Socialist Workers Party. Sun., July 16, 3 p.m. Donation: \$5. 777 Cleveland Ave. SW, Suite 103. Tel.: (678) 528-7828.

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

Teamsters mount ‘practice’ pickets in fight for UPS contract

MINNEAPOLIS — Some 30 members of Teamsters Local 638 and their supporters rallied in a “practice” strike picket in front of the West Broadway Avenue UPS facility here June 30. UPS drivers joined in on their way to work, alongside distribution center workers wearing red Teamster union shirts.

Several warehouse workers told the *Militant* about the conditions they face. They aren’t guaranteed more than 3 ½ hours a shift, with wages around \$16 an hour, doing work that is fast paced and hard. One of the shifts unloads packages off incoming trailers onto conveyor belts that are sorted and then delivered to workers on another shift to load on trucks for that day’s deliveries.

“UPS reaps millions of dollars off our labor,” said Rikki Schreiner, a full-time distribution center worker at the Eagan facility south of here. “We deserve good wages, more full-time work and better working conditions.”

Deborah Howze, a home health care worker and member of Service Employees International Union Local 12A, joined the picket line. “I think it is important to support workers fighting for decent wages and working conditions.”

Similar actions took place at UPS barns in New York, Maine, Tennessee, Arizona, Utah and California.

The union resumed talks with UPS bosses June 30, saying the company had five days to make a more serious offer. The next day Teamsters Local 804 posted a statement indicating significant breakthroughs amid ongoing talks.

“The Teamsters reached tentative agreement with UPS on three major economic issues,” the union said, “tearing down the 22.4 two-tier wage system, establishing Martin Luther King Day as a full holiday for the first time, and ending forced overtime on drivers’ days off.”

“But make no mistake, we are not done,” Teamsters National President Sean O’Brien said. Negotiations are continuing with a July 31 strike deadline.

— Edwin Fruit

Ascension nurses in Texas and Kansas strike over staffing

AUSTIN, Texas — Nurses at Ascension-owned medical centers here and in Wichita, Kansas, organized an historic one-day strike June 27, the largest nurs-

es strikes ever in both states, demanding higher staffing levels and better working conditions. Immediately after the National Nurses United announced the strike, Ascension said the nurses who struck would be locked out of their job for four days. The nurses, who are fighting for their first union contract, denounced this as a scare tactic.

Hundreds of nurses walked out of Ascension Seton Medical Center Austin and were joined by area unions and members of the community in a spirited picket line and rally, greeted with constant honks from passing cars and trucks.

“We’re looking to have our voice heard,” Lindsay Spinney, a neonatal intensive care nurse and member of the bargaining team at Ascension Seton, told the rally. “There are not enough nurses at the bedside right now in this hospital because they’ve chosen to cut staffing to save money. It’s a bottom-line business decision.”

Neonatal Intensive Care Unit nurses should care for a maximum of two babies at a time. Ascension Seton nurses are regularly caring for three to four babies, she said.

“There is no nurses shortage. There is a shortage of nurses who want to work under these conditions,” Sandy Reding, president of National Nurses Organizing Committee, told the rally.

In September 2022, 72% of the 800 nurses at Ascension Seton Austin voted to join National Nurses United. Six months later 1,000 nurses at the two Ascension hospitals in Wichita did too.

“Some of us began talking about how Ascension made the conditions during COVID the new norm. We started organizing the union and we won the union election and we are now fighting for a contract,” Matthew Clark, an intensive care nurse here who was part of the union-organizing committee, told the *Militant*. “We have been in continual negotiations since then with very little solid progress. We voted 98% to organize the one-day strike. The support from the community has been fantastic.”

“I support the fight of the nurses at Ascension. I saw the changes in health



Teamsters participate in “practice” picketing in Farmingville, New York, June 30. Similar actions took place in other states as union prepares for strike when contract expires July 31. protest_nyc

care when I worked at Texas Children’s Hospital in Houston,” said Bridgette Beinecke, who lives in Austin and came to the rally. “They showed on spreadsheets how nurses working four 12-hour shifts were cost efficient.” She said the same thing happened here when Ascension took over.

Ascension is the fourth largest hospital chain in the U.S. and second largest nonprofit. Ascension paid its chief executive \$13 million in 2021, has \$41 billion in investments and \$18 billion in cash reserves after making cuts to hospital staffing, the *Texas Observer* reported.

“I work in the transition nursery for newborns. I have had as many as 16 deliveries a night. I am the only night shift transition nurse,” Judith Garner said. “When Ascension took over it became more for profit and all about patient numbers.”

— Alyson Kennedy

Quebec teachers rally for better working conditions and pay

MONTREAL — Over 5,000 teachers from all over Quebec marched down Grande Allee in Quebec City June 10. They rallied in front of the National Assembly, demanding better working conditions and higher pay to keep up with inflation. The government is offering only a 9% wage increase spread out over five years.

“Reduce the workload before we quit!” read the banner at the front of the march. Members of the FSE-CSQ, the largest teachers union in Quebec, are demanding the government reduce class sizes and reorganize them to give the necessary attention to students with special needs. “The workload is getting more and more demanding and the teachers are being left alone trying to hold up to the demands,” Josee Scalabrin, president of the FSE, told the crowd.

These conditions have led to a teacher shortage in Quebec. Some 50% of new teachers quit before their fifth year.

“Give teachers what they need: professional autonomy, resources to help students, a decent workload, a salary increase that matches inflation and you will not have a shortage of teachers,” said Heidi Yetman, president of the Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers, which represents the English school teachers. “We have a shortage of good working conditions.”

All along the march people on the sidewalk applauded and cheered, “Hooray for teachers.” We could feel the solidarity.

Unions representing all Quebec government employees, including teachers, whose union contracts have lapsed are planning a Sept. 23 rally in Montreal.

— Josette Hurtubise, member of FSE-CSQ

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



July 13, 1998

BRONX, New York — The New York cop accused of choking Anthony Baez to death in 1994 was convicted in Federal court of violating Baez’s civil rights. Free on bond and facing up to 10 years in jail, Francis Livoti is to be sentenced September 24.

Livoti’s previous acquittal on charges of criminally negligent homicide in a state trial in 1996 had outraged working people in New York and triggered many demonstrations demanding justice.

Opening a meeting against police brutality June 29, Iris Baez, Anthony’s mother and a leader of the struggle against police brutality in the city, explained when she and her family were told that Anthony had died of asthma, “we knew the police were lying. We had to get out the truth and get justice,” she said. “I said when we began that victory would come. You have to keep struggling because what you are doing is right.”



July 13, 1973

News filtering out of the Soviet Union indicates that there has been a new outbreak of workers struggles in the south of the Ukraine, one of the most important industrial regions of the Soviet Union. In June 1972, 10,000 “rioters” took to the streets for two days in Dneprodzerzhinsk, a city of 270,000.

In Dnepropetrovsk, one of the largest industrial cities of the Soviet Union, strikes demanding a rise in the standard of living took place last September and were repressed at the cost of many dead and wounded. A month later riots broke out, demanding better provisioning, better living conditions and the right to choose a job instead of having it imposed.

These riots and strikes came at the same time that the Soviet bureaucracy was conducting mass arrests of Ukrainian oppositionists struggling against the Kremlin’s nationalities policy.



July 12, 1948

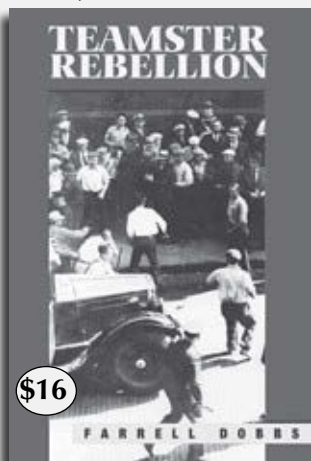
NEW YORK, July 6 — Cheering to the choice of Farrell Dobbs and Grace Carlson as first Trotskyist candidates for President and Vice President, the 13th National Convention of the Socialist Workers Party summoned the American people to join with the SWP in a forward march to a Workers and Farmers Government and socialism.

Climaxing this inspiring convention were three national radio broadcasts from the sessions. They included the keynote speech over ABC of James P. Cannon, SWP National Secretary and 40-year veteran of the American class struggle, and the acceptance speeches of Comrades Dobbs and Carlson over Mutual and ABC. Another address is being delivered by Dobbs tonight over the NBC network.

These addresses are the most powerful socialist appeals that have ever been made to the American working class, the working farmers and Negro people.

Teamster Rebellion

by Farrell Dobbs



The story of the 1934 strikes led by Teamsters Local 574 in Minneapolis, paving the way for the rise of the Congress of Industrial Organizations as a fighting social movement.

pathfinderpress.com

Putin and Ukraine sovereignty

Continued from front page

death of tens of thousands of Russian troops. Combat deaths from the war have exceeded the combined losses of all Russia's previous conflicts since World War II. As Prigozhin's forces ran into stiff resistance as they neared Moscow, the mercenary boss cut a deal with Putin — at least temporarily — and left Russia for Belarus.

Putin was alarmed by the degree of support to the Wagner mutineers among army officers and by many Russians in Rostov-on-Don, when Prigozhin's forces briefly took over the city, the base for Putin's forces in the Ukraine in southern Russia.

Prigozhin's armed march was triggered by the Russian Ministry of Defense order bringing his forces directly under Moscow's command. After denying any direct Moscow connection with Wagner for years, Putin revealed June 27 that the group had been heavily bankrolled by the Russian state. Billions of dollars, he said, were channeled to fund its international network.

Opposition to Putin's war

Store owner Dmitry Skurikhin from the village of Russko-Vysotskoye in the Leningrad region is set for trial July 19, accused of “discrediting” the Russian army. He has been charged several times since covering his store with anti-war slogans.

He painted a yellow stripe onto the Russian flag on the roof, “as a gesture of support for Ukraine. To be honest I was afraid to hang it. This means taking the side of Ukraine. But I'm on her side!” he said on a Telegram channel.

Since the mutiny Russian forces have been hit by further unrest. In a video appeal issued July 2, soldiers from Russia's 1428th regiment say, “We don't want to carry out senseless and suicidal orders.” They say they joined territorial defense units in Russia but were sent abroad to the frontline in Ukraine.

A similar video was released June 23 by Russian conscripts in Zaporizhzhia in eastern Ukraine. They complain that they were asked to defend trenches with almost no protection in the face of Ukrainian forces' counter-offensive, suffering heavy losses.

Origins of Putin regime

A capitalist-oriented government emerged in Russia from the breakup of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. Remnants of the Stalinist bureaucracy staged an attempted coup in 1991. But tens of thousands of working people in Moscow, Leningrad and elsewhere, seeing the threat to their newly opened political space, took to the streets and faced down the tanks.

Under “shock therapy” privatization programs heavily backed by Washington, Moscow bureaucrats seized state enterprises looking to enrich themselves.

The outcome for working people was devastating. Production dropped 40% in Russia in the opening years of the 1990s and joblessness hit double digits. Real wages plunged and pensions, health care and other social programs were slashed. More than half of all deaths of working-age Russians were due to alcoholism in the 1990s. Birth rates collapsed to an all time low.

Amid the widespread plunder, Putin, a former agent of the KGB, the all-pervasive murder machine used by the Stalinist regime to crush opposition to its rule, emerged as a rising political figure. He headed the FSB, the successor to the KGB, and set out to constrict political rights. He was elected president in 2000.

Putin promised the newly emerged Russian capitalist class he would restore Moscow's sway over its “near



Natalia Borisova/SOTA

Dmitry Skurikhin painted on his store near Leningrad, “Peace to Ukraine, freedom for Russia!” and names of Ukrainian cities hit by Moscow's invasion. Now under house arrest until July 19 trial for “discrediting” the army, he says many fellow villagers support his anti-war statements.

abroad” — former Soviet Republics like Ukraine. He also acted as an arbiter between rival forces among the exploiting class. Using KGB methods, he consolidated power through patronage alongside the arrest, torture or murder of bourgeois political opponents.

After Viktor Yanukovich, the Russian-backed Ukrainian president, was toppled by the popular Maidan uprising in 2014, Putin used 25,000 Russian troops stationed in Crimea to take control there and then mercenary forces to seize parts of Donetsk and Luhansk.

Iran oil union made strike gains, backs women's rights



Kagar

Protest at copper complex in Kerman, Iran, June 30 against transfer of workers' pension funds to Ministry of Welfare. Woman leader said they would block gate until they won.

BY SETH GALINSKY

Contract oil workers in Iran who made gains in a strike at over 100 worksites in April and May say they are now in a better position to prepare for future labor battles.

Led by the Organizing Council of Oil Contract Workers, the strikers demanded a 79% wage increase and a more humane work cycle of 20 days on and 10 days off instead of a grueling 24 days in a row with only six days off.

The overwhelming majority of the some 1 million workers in the oil industry in Iran are hired through contractors. Many are welders, scaffolders and pipefitters who help construct and repair oil facilities. Their jobs often last just six months or a year followed by months of unemployment

“Our strike worried everyone,” one of the workers wrote in a column posted on the union's internet page June 29, from what the union calls “mafia gangs” of contractors to the oil bosses and the government.

One of the biggest contractors is Khatam-al Anbiya, which is owned by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the main repressive force of the bourgeois clerical regime and one of the country's largest business owners in Iran.

Contract workers say their conditions at times are “unbearable,” getting worse food and housing than the permanent oil workers. They are often paid late or the contractors pay them less than the wage

agreed to by the oil companies, with the contractors pocketing the difference.

On June 19 the union noted that documents leaked that week from the Ministry of Intelligence admitted that at the high point of the strikes “more than 12,000 workers were on strike in the South Pars region alone.”

Sakhawat Asadi, the chief executive officer of the government's Pars Special Economic Energy Zone, threatened to fire 4,000 of the strikers if they didn't return to work. “Only about 300 people returned to work,” the union said.

Support for the strike was so strong that the Iranian Labour News Agency, which is affiliated to the government-funded Workers House, published an article titled “Protest against the arrest of eight South Pars workers. Hear the voice of the contract workers.”

By the end of May many contractors “agreed to a 30% wage increase, even 40%,” the union reported, and in many cases agreed to the more humane work schedule.

“By relying on this success and obvious weakness of the government in front of the united ranks of us workers, we can pursue our unmet demands with greater strength and unity,” the union said. That includes demanding the abolition of the contractor system itself.

Women's rights are workers' rights

On June 26 the oil contract workers union came out “firmly in support of

art students and other university students who are protesting against the imposition of hijab. ... From our point of view, women and all people have the right to choose their clothing. It is a simple and obvious right.”

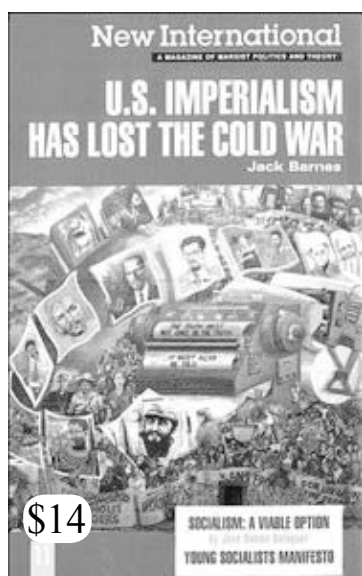
That was in response to arrests and beatings by plainclothes thugs of students at the University of Tehran art school. They had organized a sit-in protesting new university rules imposing not just a hijab to cover women's hair but the even more restrictive “maqna'a” that covers the head, neck and shoulders. University student groups across the country issued statements in solidarity with the art students.

In the wake of widespread protests over the death of a young Kurdish woman, Zhina Amini, after her arrest by the hated morality police in Tehran in September, the government pulled the morality police off the streets. The reactionary government hasn't yet been able to pass its revised hijab law, introduced in March, which calls for text message warnings to those identified by security cameras as violating the reactionary dress code to be followed by fines, but would ban physical violence to enforce the rules.

Meanwhile, Iran's national soccer federation announced June 30 that the National Security Council and Ministry of Interior had given the green light to women to go to sports stadiums to watch Premier League soccer games — starting with four locations — for the first time since a ban on women was reimposed in March 2022.

Amid the deepening capitalist economic crisis that includes 60% annual inflation, retirees protest daily demanding adequate pensions. There also have been strikes by factory workers, nurses and others.

On June 30 retirees and workers gathered in front of the entrance to the Sarcheshmeh complex in Kerman province — the second largest open pit copper mine in the world — protesting the transferring of their pensions funds to the Ministry of Welfare. In a video a woman is applauded by the crowd when she says that unless the government rescinds the decision, “We are not going to stop blocking the gate.”



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Russian Revolution: 'The great struggle for the liberation of mothers'

Women and the Family by Leon Trotsky is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for July. Trotsky, a leader of the Russian Revolution, describes how V.I. Lenin and the Bolsheviks led workers and peasants to fight to make and defend their revolution, transforming themselves in the process. One great goal was to liberate women from endless toil at home to be able to take part in the political life of the revolution. The excerpts are from Trotsky's 1925 article, "To build socialism means to emancipate women and protect mothers." Copyright © 1970 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Walter Meakin

Kindergarten in Moscow in 1920. Trotsky wrote that 1917 Bolshevik Revolution advanced child care, one step to free mothers from bondage, open door to social and political life.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY LEON TROTSKY

The most accurate way of measuring our advance is by the practical measures which are being carried out for the improvement of the position of mother and child. This index ... shows both the material successes and the cultural achievements in the broad sense. Historical experience shows that even the proletariat, already struggling with the oppressors, is far from prompt in concentrating the necessary attention on the oppressed position of woman as housewife, mother, and wife. Such is the terrible force of being accustomed to the family slavery of woman! There is no point in even talking about the peasantry. The burden and

hopelessness of the fate of the peasant woman, and not only from poor but even from middle families, can probably not be compared today even with the worst penal servitude. No rest, no holiday, no gleam of hope! Our revolution is only gradually reaching down to the familial foundations, mainly in the towns, for the moment, in the industrial regions, and only very slowly is it penetrating into the countryside. And the problems here are immeasurable.

To alter the position of woman *at the root* is possible only if all the conditions of social, family, and domestic existence are altered. The depth of the question of the mother is expressed in the fact that she is, in essence, a living point where all the decisive strands of economic and cultural work intersect. The question of motherhood is above all a question of an apartment, running water, a kitchen, a laundry room, a dining room. But it is just as much a question of a school, of books, of a place for recreation. Drunkenness beats down most mercilessly on the housewife and mother. Illiteracy and unemployment also. Running water and electricity in the apartment lighten the woman's burden above all.

Motherhood is the question of all questions. Here all the strands come together and from here they again go out in all directions. The undoubted growth of material sufficiency in the country makes it possible, and therefore also necessary, to carry consideration for mother and child incomparably wider

and deeper than hitherto. ...

Just as it was impossible to approach the construction of the Soviet state without freeing the peasantry from the tangles of serfdom, so it is impossible to move to socialism without freeing the peasant woman and the woman worker from the bondage of family and household. And if we used to determine the maturity of a revolutionary worker not only by his attitude to the capitalist but also by his attitude to the peasant, i.e., by his understanding of the necessity of freeing the peasant from bondage — so now we can and must measure the socialist maturity of the worker and the progressive peasant by their attitude to woman and child, by their understanding of the necessity of freeing from bondage the mother in penal servitude, of giving her the possibility of straightening her back and involving herself as she should in social and cultural life.

Motherhood is the hub of all problems. ... [E]ach new measure, each law, each practical step in economic and social construction must also be checked against the question of how it will affect the family, whether it worsens or lightens the fate of the mother, whether it improves the position of the child.

The great number of homeless children in our towns bears most terrible witness to the fact that we are still caught up on all sides in the tangles of the old society, which manifests itself in the most vicious way in the epoch of its downfall. The position of mother

and child was never so difficult as in the years of the transition from the old to the new, especially in the years of the civil war. The intervention of Clemenceau and Churchill and the Kolchak, Denikin, and Wrangel elements hit most cruelly at the woman worker, at the peasant woman, at the mother, and left us an inheritance of unprecedented child homelessness. The child is from the mother and the homelessness of the child is above all the fruit of maternal homelessness. Consideration for the mother is the truest and deepest way to the improvement of the fate of the child.

The general growth of the economy is creating the conditions for a gradual reconstruction of family and domestic life. ...

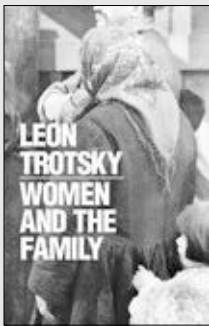
[T]he most basic "capital" is the people, i.e., its strength, its health, its cultural level. This capital requires renewal even more than the equipment of the factories or the peasant implements. It must not be thought that the ages of slavery, hunger, and bondage, the years of war and epidemics, have passed without a trace. No, they have left behind in the living organism of the people both wounds and scars. Tuberculosis, syphilis, neurasthenia, alcoholism — all these diseases and many others are spread widely among the masses of the population. The nation must be made healthy. Without that, socialism is unthinkable. ...

The struggle against the neglect of mothers must be given first place! Housing construction, the construction of child-care facilities, kindergartens, communal dining rooms and laundries must be put in the center of attention. ... Child-care, eating and laundry facilities must be set up so that by the advantages they provide they can deal a deathblow to the old closed-in, isolated family unit, completely supported on the bent shoulders of the housewife and mother. ... Caring for children in public facilities, as well as feeding of adults in communal canteens, is cheaper than in the family. But the transfer of material means from the family to the child-care centers and canteens will take place only if the social organization learns to satisfy the most primary demands better than the family. ...

The initiators in the great struggle for the liberation of mothers must of course be the advanced women workers.

July
BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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US rulers double down on lies about Cuba-China ‘spy bases’

BY SETH GALINSKY

The administration of President Joseph Biden — along with the *Wall Street Journal* — is stepping up a drumbeat of baseless allegations that the Cuban government has teamed up with Beijing to set up a spy station in Cuba. Trying to make it sound even more ominous, the White House now charges that Havana might allow Chinese troops to be stationed there.

The *Journal* first “broke” the story June 8, claiming the Cuban government had made a secret agreement to install a Chinese “eavesdropping station” in exchange for “several billion dollars.”

The Cuban government debunked the story the same day. “All of these are lies with the malicious intention to justify the unprecedented intensification of the blockade, destabilization and aggression against Cuba and to deceive public opinion in the United States and the world,” Cuban Deputy Minister Carlos Fernández de Cossío said.

The response of the White House and the *Journal*? Double down on their baseless accusations.

First they shifted their story. The White House said the original *Journal* article was “inaccurate,” and that the Chinese spy station has been operating in Cuba since at least 2019. Then White House sources claimed that Beijing had “reactivated” four Soviet spy stations on the island in 2019.

On June 20 the *Journal* reported “China and Cuba are negotiating to establish a new joint training facility on the island, sparking alarm in Washington that it could lead to the stationing of Chinese troops and other security and intelligence operations just 100 miles off Florida’s coast.”

The next day the paper claimed, “U.S. officials tracked workers from Chinese telecom companies Huawei Technologies and ZTE entering and exiting suspected Chinese spy facilities in Cuba.” But even they had to admit “neither Huawei nor ZTE” make “the sophisticated tools governments would use for eavesdropping.”

The *Journal*’s sources? “People familiar with the matter.” Anonymous “current and former U.S. officials” who allegedly have seen “highly classified” documents they describe as “convincing but fragmentary.”

The U.S. government has a long history of concocting fake pretexts to justify hostile actions against the Cuban Revolution. Here are just a few examples:

In 1998 the U.S. government claimed Cuba had set up laboratories to develop biological warfare. An outright lie. Cuba is well known worldwide for its medical system and selfless aid to those in need — including an offer to help the U.S. respond to the ravages of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.

Washington insisted it had evidence



Militant/Chuck Guerra

May 28 protest at Miami airport against U.S. rulers’ six-decades-long economic and political war on Cuba. Washington’s China “spy base” smears are used to justify tightening embargo.

of so-called sonic attacks on U.S. diplomats in Cuba — by a “weapon” that exists only in science fiction stories — and pulled out half of its staff from the U.S. Embassy in Havana in 2017.

In 2019 Washington claimed Cuba had 20,000 combat troops in Venezuela. The real number? Zero.

Robert Menendez, a Democrat and chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Michael McCaul, a Republican and chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, sent a joint letter June 22 to Secretary of State Antony Blinken and CIA Director William Burns. Without a shred of evidence they call the allegations “a direct provocation by our adversaries.”

The U.S. rulers have never forgiven the Cuban people for overthrowing the

U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, nationalizing U.S. companies and putting them under workers control, and opening the first socialist revolution in the Americas. They have never stopped looking for ways to weaken — and they hope, destroy — the revolution.

That’s why they’ve pursued a punishing economic war against the Cuban people for over 60 years under every Democratic and Republican administration.

“We need to keep exposing the lies of the U.S. government, demand an end to Washington’s embargo and get out the truth about the road forward the Cuban Revolution shows for working people the world over,” Róger Calero, Socialist Workers Party candidate for City Council in New York, told the *Militant*.

Defend constitutional freedoms won in over two centuries of class struggle

Continued from front page

from practicing law in New York without even a hearing, based largely on statements he made outside any court of law, which are fully protected by the First Amendment.

Jenna Ellis, another Trump lawyer, was disciplined by a federal judge for her political opinion that the 2020 election was rigged. However unfounded her claims might be, she has a constitutional right to express them, views that are held by millions, without having her livelihood threatened.

The message to lawyers is clear — represent the man Democrats bitterly hate and you’ll have no legal career.

During the first imperialist World War, lawyers were disbarred for opposing U.S. entry into the war and opposition to conscription. Suspension and disbarment were used in the 1950s against lawyers who dared to represent Communist Party members facing persecution by Sen. Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee. Their offer of legal representation made them “fellow travelers,” prosecutors argued, just as liberals today label Trump’s lawyers “enablers.”

Similar treatment was meted out to civil rights lawyers in the ’50s, especially in the South.

Smith is also going after Trump’s right, including his right as a presidential candidate, to speak out on the issues in his prosecution. In the unfolding espionage case, prosecutors won a ruling from a federal judge barring Trump from discussing the evidence in the case.

Both Smith in his indictment and

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, prosecutor in the hush-money case, have submitted charges that are intentionally vague. Bragg explicitly says he doesn’t have to say what they are. Smith leaves open filing additional charges as he goes along. All this makes it increasingly difficult for Trump and his lawyers to prepare a defense, as protected by the Constitution.

Prosecutors are also expected to demand that proceedings with the main evidence against Trump — government documents the FBI snatched in an armed raid on his Mar-a-Lago home — must be kept secret, as prosecution staff blithely leak excerpts to cohorts in the liberal media. That infringement on the right to an open trial — as opposed to a star chamber proceeding — has marked other cases where the government claims “national security” is at risk.

Each of these steps undermines crucial protections under the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution. Looking to be able to cook up more charges, Smith has moved to postpone the trial in Trump’s case. But anyone accused of a crime has the right to a speedy public trial, to be informed of the nature and the cause of the accusation, to be able to confront the witnesses against them and to have legal representation.

The liberal press keeps leaking unsubstantiated claims of a “smoking gun” from nameless “people familiar with the case” to try to prejudice the trial. CNN broadcast snippets it says are from a tape of Trump speaking to four people on July 21, 2021, where he says he has a document that disproves claims by Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint

Chiefs of Staff, that Trump was about to launch a military assault on Iran.

Days later, with much less fanfare, CBS noted that the document is not — at least not yet — part of the evidence in Smith’s indictment.

Defend rights tied to class struggle

Repeatedly defended under the pretext that “no one is above the law,” the drive to criminalize Trump tramples the Constitution underfoot. Because of this, the charges against Trump should be dropped.

Whatever they do to him, the same and worse has been, and will be, turned against working-class fighters, the unions and political groups. Members of the African People’s Socialist Party and Uhuru Movement were subjected to a heavily armed, provocative, FBI raid just days before the FBI raided Mar-a-Lago last year. Both raids violated protections from unreasonable search and seizure. They now face trial under witch hunt “foreign-agent registration” laws.

Using and fighting to extend constitutional freedoms has always been an integral part of every serious struggle by unions, organizations of the exploited and oppressed, and communist groups like the Socialist Workers Party. Whenever working people fight to wrest social and economic concessions from the bosses, organize opposition to the U.S. rulers’ wars or set out to build our own independent working-class political party, we’ve needed these liberties.

“From the day the Constitution was ratified on June 21, 1788, there were struggles by small farmers, craftsmen,

mechanics and other plebian layers, former slaves and bonded laborers, and later the rapidly expanding hereditary proletariat and other exploited producers to protect their interests within this new governmental structure,” explain Jack Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark in *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward*.

“Through hard-fought struggles they won amendments — changes — to the Constitution that provide protections from the state and exploiting class on whose behalf it rules.”

The Second American Revolution that overthrew chattel slavery and the ensuing rise of Radical Reconstruction led to the expansion of constitutional freedoms with the passage of the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments. These additions to the Constitution in the interests of African Americans and working people as a whole immediately came under attack. By the 1880s Radical Reconstruction was overthrown and the capitalist rulers imposed Jim Crow terror and segregation, inflicting the worst defeat ever suffered by the U.S. working class.

It took the mass Black-led working-class movement that uprooted Jim Crow in the 1950s and ’60s to win court rulings and legislation that defended the rights of Blacks and then women, often under the 14th Amendment’s “due process” and “equal protection” clauses.

The history of the working-class movement is deeply tied up with the fight for these basic liberties. So too, is its future.

Rail bosses' profit drive is behind disaster in East Palestine

Continued from front page
dent Russell Murphy told the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. "It is almost unprecedented that they come to a small town or a village and hold a hearing."

"I really don't want to call it an accident," Kelly Lundt told the *Post-Gazette*. "It was negligence."

Four unions participated in the hearings — the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen; Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers — Transportation Division; Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen; and the Transportation Communications Union/IAM (which represents car inspectors), with union officers serving both as witnesses and questioning other witnesses throughout.

SMART-TD reported on the hearings on its website, highlighting some of the railroad's self-serving responses to the derailment. This includes the fact that the rail bosses didn't provide the consist of train cars and their contents — which included toxic and hazardous cargos — to the fire chief and others responsible for deciding how to deal with the jumble of burning cars on the ground. Repeated calls to Norfolk Southern's Atlanta headquarters got no results. In the hearing, NTSB Chair Jennifer Homendy revealed Norfolk Southern had emailed the train information to one of its contractors within 12 minutes after the derailment, yet it took over an hour and much more for some agencies to get the same information to others there.

The crew of 32N was parked one mile from the derailment, as their emergency response guide instructed. "As the employee in charge of the train consist, 32N's conductor had all the information necessary to determine the correct course of action," the union said, "as well as all the contact information needed to get a hold of the shippers and manufacturers of the chemicals." But the company never put the crew in contact with the townspeople.

The SMART article also explains how testimony at the hearing showed Norfolk Southern bosses ramrodded the decision to "vent and burn" five cars containing toxic vinyl chloride. They argued that one of the cars was heating up and likely to explode. They gave East Palestine Fire Chief Keith Drabick 13 minutes to decide.

In fact, as a large graph at the hearing showed, the temperature in the suspect car was going down. Officials from Oxy Vinyls, the Texas company that made the chemical and packed 700,000 pounds of it into the cars, testified they contacted Norfolk Southern to say there



Militant/Jacquie Henderson

Rail workers rally at Columbus, Ohio, Statehouse Dec. 13, 2022. Unions fought for a contract with improved safety for themselves and communities near tracks. President Biden led bipartisan Congress to bar a strike after rail workers voted down bosses' proposals.

was virtually no danger of an explosion. For that, oxygen would have to be getting into the cars, which wasn't happening. They advised them not to do a burn. This information was never communicated to the fire chief.

SMART safety official Jared Cassity asked Norfolk Southern contractors if they could have called off the burn in light of the falling temperature in the cars. They admitted they could have. All this was news to area residents, including Chief Drabick.

Under pressure, Drabick had allowed the contractors to proceed. The vinyl chloride was drained into a ditch and set on fire, sending toxic chemicals into the air, area streams and the soil. Any other solution, the SMART article said, "would have been inconvenient to the goal of moving freight" as soon as possible.

And that's what the rail bosses did. They "got the trains going faster," SMART said, "while leaving a black cloud over East Palestine."

Within hours after the burn-off, area residents began seeing thousands of dead fish in area streams, sick pets and family members getting ill. Residents cried bloody murder.

Their public outcry was the only thing that forced Norfolk Southern to rip up the new tracks they'd laid and be-

gin what became five months of digging up and carting away tens of thousands of tons of contaminated soil and water. Even then, they made sure one track was always open, running trains and earning profits.

Bosses shut down train inspections

Jason Cox, national representative of the Transportation Communications Union Carmen Division, told the hearing that train 32N never got an inspection by a qualified Norfolk Southern carman on route that day, even though it passed three rail yards where they were working.

Norfolk Southern has slashed the numbers of inspectors as part of its drive to cut crews and boost profits. And they've cut the time for inspecting a car from several minutes to one or less.

The NTSB reported that when the cars on the train were inspected after the derailment, 20 were found to have defects. "It's my understanding that those defects were found visually by the Federal Railroad Administration after the disaster," Cox said, meaning they would have been easily seen by carmen.

In the final session of the hearing on "Rail Tank Car Safety" it was reported the tankers holding vinyl chloride were newer, stronger cars that weren't breached during the derailment.

But five standard tankers, designated as DOT-111 cars, derailed and did break open. These are the same kinds of cars that derailed and exploded in Lac-Mégantic in 2013, killing 47 people and destroying the town's downtown.

The NTSB reported these cars spilled three chemical loads, including 30,000 gallons of butyl acrylate. All three chemicals are dangerous, but butyl acrylate is particularly dangerous, with acute toxicity to the respiratory system. It's also a deadly threat to fish and all aquatic animals.

Randy Keltz, manager of Tank Car Safety Programs for the Federal Railroad Administration, said they would like to see these cars phased out, but the rail companies are resisting. He said they saw them as "50-year assets" and they want to get their money's worth and "we have to weigh the costs and benefits."

For workers control over railroads

Norfolk Southern CEO Alan Shaw tried to do damage control even before the hearing, telling The Associated Press June 21 that the company is looking to work with the unions to improve safety. "That interaction and that engagement with our craft colleagues is really important to me," he claimed.

"Mr. Shaw comes across to me as kind of that used car salesman trying really hard to sell Norfolk Southern and saying all this great stuff," replied James Orwan, TCU general chairman on Norfolk Southern.

Shaw told AP that Norfolk Southern has hired a nuclear power expert to advise on its "safety culture." Eddie Hall, president of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, had the answer for that — "Hiring outside consultants may sound good to investors, but the experts are working every day in the cab of the engine."

This is the bottom line. The answer to rail "safety culture" is for rail workers to use their unions to take control over the operations of the railroad. All the bosses' business secrets and real financial records need to be forced out into the public.

Workers can assure trains are limited to 50 cars, with a crew of four — two on the head end and two on the rear.

Wabtec workers walk out over right to strike on grievances

BY CANDACE WAGNER

ERIE, Pa. — The strike by 1,400 United Electrical Workers members against Wabtec Corp. here that began June 22 remains solid and spirited. Workers at the plant build rail locomotives.

The two striking UE locals, production workers in Local 506 and office workers in Local 618, have called a protest outside Wabtec's national headquarters in Pittsburgh July 6. Other unions in the area are organizing to participate, including the Communications Workers of America and Teamsters union members who have been involved in a bitter, long-term strike against the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

Workers told the *Militant* the most important issue in the walkout is the right to strike over grievances. "The right to strike is the foundation of unions," explained striker Jason Lloyd. "Before Wabtec bought the company from Gen-

eral Electric, we had the right to strike over unresolved grievances. We used that tool very rarely. We didn't have to. Having the right was enough to force the company's hand, keep them in check."

David Ferguson, a member of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers union, who had come to find out more about the strike and offer solidarity, told strikers about his past experience as a union coal miner. "When the union safety committee said, 'It's not safe,' the mine was shut down. This right is very important."

Another issue strikers wanted to discuss was the 10-year wage progression for new hires. The union is demanding newly hired workers reach full wage scale much faster. "I think that the raises they are offering us should all be given to the new guys," striker Jim Hebbler said. "They need it."

Bryan Pietrzak, a heavy-equipment

operator in the plant and treasurer of Local 506, said health care is also a central issue. The company is demanding to impose a plan where costs and benefits can change at any time, with just one month's notice, during the four years of the contract. The union says no.

"With the low wages they want to offer, they can't hire skilled workers," he told us. "They're hiring workers with no factory experience and giving little training. Newer workers get hurt. Safety isn't high on the company's priority list."

Pipefitter Frank Kovacs agreed. "I had to learn my job by taking pictures of what the guy on the second shift had done. I taught myself."

"I believe that the pendulum is swinging toward the unions today," Kovacs said.

Solidarity from area unions is growing. On June 28 members of Ironworkers

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A road to defend workers and our families

Statement by Laura Garza, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate from California, July 5.

The confidence and determination shown by striking Los Angeles hotel workers is a boost to the entire labor movement.

Thousands-strong, UNITE HERE Local 11 members walked off the job to fight insufficient wages and unlivable schedules and conditions that tens of millions of fellow workers share. Their fight is in the interests of all workers. Alongside efforts to win much-needed solidarity, their fight poses questions about the broader program unions need to advance to protect workers and our families from the crushing impact of today's capitalist crisis.

Hotel bosses are determined to preserve their profits at the expense of workers. They do so by tearing away at the ability of workers to form and provide for their families. They seek to impose lower wages and cut down health care and pensions. After slashing the workforce during the pandemic, they've refused to hire as bookings have grown, dumping more and more work on fewer workers. The final indignity is demanding workers pay \$200 a month for the "privilege" of parking at the hotel!

The hotel workers are saying, "No!" They're fighting to unify all the workers, demanding bosses quit using E-Verify, the government database they use to threaten the jobs of workers without papers. This is an example for the entire labor movement!

A significant majority of the strikers are women, many single parents. Like workers everywhere they face rising costs of child care and everything else their families need. Fewer young workers can afford

to move out and get a place of their own. Many strikers have to take on a second, or third job, leaving little time for family life, recreation or activity in the union or working-class political action.

These conditions are shared by working people everywhere. The birth rate is falling, life expectancy is shrinking. The labor movement needs to champion demands that allow working people to feed and clothe our families and have a full life as well. For cost-of-living adjustments in all wages and benefits so that our wages automatically rise every time prices go up. For 30-hours work for 40-hours pay to spread the available work around and prevent layoffs. These demands are central to prevent bosses offloading more of the crisis onto our backs and deepening divisions in the working class.

Millions need to supplement their incomes. Not by taking two or three jobs or relying on demeaning welfare programs that exclude working. All working people need an income that makes it possible to keep our jobs while meeting the needs of our families, while the labor movement fights for universal child care and medical care. An income that allows workers to stay in the workforce and be part of union struggles.

Hotel workers are proud their union is demanding an end to bosses' use of E-Verify to target immigrant workers. Our unions need to fight for amnesty for the 11 million-plus undocumented workers in the U.S. This would help unify working people, strengthen our unions and inspire organizing the unorganized.

This program is also at the center of the fight for women's emancipation — a struggle that is indispensable to charting a working-class road forward.

Calif. hotel workers strike over pay, workload

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using E-Verify, the Department of Homeland Security-run database used to deny workers without all the proper papers the right to hold a job.

"The main things are wages, better contributions to pensions, to maintain affordable health care and a safer and more humane workload," Maria Hernandez, communications organizer for UNITE HERE Local 11, told the *Militant* on the picket line July 2. "These hotels have not increased staffing to pre-pandemic levels. A job that requires three, four, five people, they make one or two people do."

An article on the union website reports that on June 29, a day before the contract expiration, the Westin Bonaventure, L.A.'s largest hotel, reached a tentative agreement with the union on wages, benefits and staffing levels that will return jobs and hours to pre-pandemic levels; increase contributions by bosses for workers' pensions; provide access to union jobs for formerly incarcerated individuals; and ban the use of E-Verify in hiring.

Worker after worker on the picket lines told the *Militant* how difficult it is for them to raise a family in the Los Angeles area with the steep increases in rent, food, gas and other costs they face here.

"We've been trying to negotiate for the last three months," said Emerson Aparicio, a 37-year-old cook who works at a restaurant on the 69th floor of the Intercontinental Hotel. "They want to take away our health care and benefits. They don't even want to give half of what we're asking for in wages.

"Many of us have to work more than one job to make it. Everything is so expensive," he said. "We don't want to be out here but it's necessary. I'm doing this for my family and all my co-workers who have kids and need health care and pensions. We're here to stay until we win the fight."

"This is my first time on strike," April Mendoza, a 30-year-old housekeeper at the Intercontinental, told the *Militant*. "I have to pay about \$200 per month just to park my car in the hotel. I have a 14-year-old daughter. They want us to pay for health care. I pay \$2,300 for a two-bedroom apartment. My landlord just raised my rent \$150.



Militant/Bill Arth
Laura Garza, right, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate from California, joins picket line of striking hotel workers, members of UNITE HERE Local 11, at Intercontinental Hotel, Los Angeles, July 2.

Down the street from the L.A. Convention Center at the E-Central Hotel, the *Militant* spoke with picket Juliza Duran. She has worked here for 17 years and cleans rooms. The bosses make us clean 10 rooms a day, she said. "They give us 45 minutes to complete a room. The bathroom is all glass and you get disciplined if there is even a spot on the glass."

Duran said she is a single parent with three children. "The rent each month is one full paycheck and half of another," she said. "You can't survive like this.

Duran added she's glad the union has taken up the fight to end the government E-Verify check on workers' immigration status. "This is fight not just for us, but for everybody," she said.

Latrice Longino has worked at the E-Central a few months, after several years at the Intercontinental. "It feels great to be out on the picket line, everybody except those not scheduled for work today joined the line as soon as the strike was called," she said. Like several other workers, she discussed the challenge she faces sustaining and raising her daughter on her current pay. "I also hate the idea they make me pay for parking to go to work every day."

The strikers need, and deserve, widespread support. For information on how you can support the union, go to the union website www.unitehere11.org.

Strikers returned to work July 5 — for now — as negotiations resumed.

NYC board hikes rents on 1 million apartments

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

NEW YORK — Working people here are once again facing rising rents as the city's Rent Guidelines Board voted June 21 to increase rents by the highest amount in a decade on some 1 million rent-stabilized apartments.

Rents for a one-year lease will rise by 3% and 6% by the end of a two-year lease, starting in October. The decision affects 2 million families, comprising a quarter of the city's population, who live in rent-stabilized apartments.

"I see more and more of my neighbors being displaced because they are on fixed incomes and their income doesn't rise," Queens resident Sabah Munawar said at a June 12 rent board hearing in Jamaica, Queens, reported Spectrum News. "And the [board] passed a huge increase last year." It jacked rents up 5% on a two-year lease in 2022.

The ruling by the unelected nine-member rent board comes after several public hearings held across the city where hundreds of working people protested the proposed increases. They expressed outrage over the already high rents they're paying, and that more raises will lead to more evictions, homelessness and greater difficulty being able to both live and work in the city.

Housing costs are rising faster than workers' wages. A 2021 city survey found that one-third of those renting apartments in New York paid landlords over half of their income. A Moody's Analytics report said that as of the end of last year on average workers in the city were forced to put a staggering 68% of their wages toward rent.

Board members are appointed by the mayor. Supposedly two represent the interests of the landlords, two the renters, and the rest represent the "public."

They tried to justify the hikes with claims that small landlords with just a few tenants are feeling the pressure of rising prices and need relief. The 5-4 vote approving the increases included the votes of the "representatives" of the tenants.

After the vote, Mayor Eric Adams praised the increase, claiming it was "ensuring small property owners have the necessary resources to maintain their buildings and preserve high-quality, affordable homes for New Yorkers."

"But many landlords of rent-stabilized buildings are big companies," the *New York Times* noted after the meeting, like "Cammeby's, Lefrak and L&M Development, who each have several thousands of rent-stabilized units in their portfolios, in addition to market-rate units."

Wabtec workers strike

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Regional Shop Local 851 mobilized to join the pickets. When they went on a successful strike in 2021, the UE workers at Wabtec were a mainstay of support.

United Auto Workers Local 1186 from the Accuride aluminum plant here brought solidarity, as did International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 459, whose members drove a procession of boom trucks past the picket line in support.

Students from Northwestern University in Chicago traveled to Erie to support the strike. Graduate student instructors there are organizing into the UE.

Strikers on the picket line have been following the fight by rail workers and residents in East Palestine, Ohio, for control over safety, the train derailment cleanup there and access to health care. Ferguson explained how rail unions intervened in the recent hearings of the National Transportation Safety Board there to tell the truth about the cause of the disaster — the profit drive of the bosses.

"Without the power of the unions behind this fight, Norfolk Southern won't do what's necessary in the long run for those affected, or prevent more dangerous derailments," Ferguson said. "We need our unions to fight for control over our working conditions, both for us, and for the surrounding communities."

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