

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

**Build the unions!
March Labor Day!**

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 87/NO. 33 SEPTEMBER 4, 2023

Build support for grocery workers strike in Toronto

BY KATY LEROUGETEL

TORONTO — On the strike picket line at the Eglinton Square Metro grocery store here Aug. 11, Shannyn St. Aubin told the *Militant* she gets paid the minimum wage, 15.50 Canadian dollars (\$11.47) an hour. “I’d like to help my family with groceries, but I can’t,” the part-time worker and student said, adding that Metro workers don’t get an employee discount on purchases.

Over 3,700 Unifor union Local 414 members at 27 Toronto-area Metro stores went on strike July 29.

Laura Barter, a part-time worker with 17 years seniority, said she earns CA\$18 an hour. “We’re out for better wages, better benefits, job security.”

“I need more hours,” said Subhiksha Srinivasan. “They don’t give us more hours because they don’t want to give us benefits or paid breaks.” Over 70% of the workers are part time and have limited access to benefits. For those employees eligible for benefits, Metro has cut them off during the strike.

Company bosses announced higher
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New indictment of Trump is frontal attack on free speech

Defend constitutional rights! Drop the charges



Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call via AP Images

Image of Donald Trump fills screen at June 16, 2022, hearing in Washington on Jan. 6, 2021, riot at Capitol. Democrats’ witch hunt against former president aims to stop him running today.

BY TERRY EVANS

On Aug. 14, Fani Willis, the Democratic district attorney in Fulton County, Georgia, announced the indictment of former President Donald Trump and a number of his political supporters un-

der the notorious anti-union RICO law. A grand jury she has been conducting charged Trump with orchestrating a criminal gang, claiming it carried out a far-reaching conspiracy to try to overturn the 2020 election.

RICO stands for the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, adopted in 1970 to go after the unions. It allows for prosecuting unrelated “crimes” as a racketeering conspiracy. These laws are used by the government to intervene in the unions and restrict the right of union members to elect the officers of their choice. And
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SWP candidates advance program for working class to take political power

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Socialist Workers Party candidates and members are discussing the party’s revolutionary program with fellow working people as they campaign door to door, visit union picket lines and join protests against the effects of the capitalist crisis.

They’re also getting back to *Militant* readers to encourage them to renew their subscriptions, helping to build the paper’s long-term readership.

Seth Galinsky, SWP candidate for New York City Council and party member Roy Landersen joined a protest of 300 in New York Aug. 20 to demand freedom for imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny and
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Crisis deepens in Africa after coup in Niger

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

The Economic Community of West African States, led by the government of Nigeria, rejected a proposal by Niger’s new military junta Aug. 21 to relinquish their rule and hold elections within three years. This increases the threat of conflict, with even more devastating conditions for workers and farmers.

Governments in ECOWAS have threatened military intervention if diplomatic efforts do not restore the rule of Niger’s President Mohamed Bazoum, who was toppled in a July 26 military coup. “If push comes to shove we are going into Niger with our own contingents,” Abdel-Fatau Musah, ECOWAS’ commissioner for political affairs, warned Aug. 17.

The bloc of 15 West African governments has also suspended all commercial transactions with Niger and frozen its state assets in the regional central bank. The rulers of France and the U.S., which have troops stationed in the country, have suspended financial aid, as has the European Union. The 55-member
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Maternal health care declines in US as bosses drive for profits

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

Two days after Shamony Gibson from the Brooklyn borough of New York City came home from the hospital with her baby boy in September 2019, she began experiencing chest pains and shortness of breath. Her partner, Omari Maynard, told the *Wall Street Journal* that they called the hospital several times and were told she might be moving too much and needed to rest.

Two weeks later Gibson collapsed
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Evidence shows capitalist greed, gov’t policies led to Maui disaster



Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources

Burned-out homes in Lahaina on Maui, Hawaii, surround old Pioneer Mill smokestack. Wildfire started Aug. 8, fueled by overgrown invasive grasses on abandoned sugar plantation land.

BY JOHN STUDER

Two weeks after a fast-moving wildfire wiped out the city of Lahaina on Maui, evidence mounts that the culprit is decades of capitalist exploitation and oppression exacerbated by recent government decisions to prioritize spending money on fighting “climate change” over measures to prevent more frequent fires.

The history of Hawaii revolves

around the social effects of the rule of the Big Five sugar barons — Alexander & Baldwin, Castle & Cooke, American Factors (now Amfac), C. Brewer and Theo H. Davies. These ruling families introduced the concept of private ownership of the land, consolidated political power by the end of the 19th century, overthrew the native government and succeeded in
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‘Pay us for our time,’ Alaska Airlines flight attendants say

Wisconsin dairy workers strike for wage raise, health coverage

Interest in Pathfinder books high at Federation of Blind convention

BY HARVEY MCARTHUR

HOUSTON — Some 2,500 people attended the annual convention of the National Federation of the Blind here July 1-6. For the second year in a row, Pathfinder Press was among the 100 exhibitors, publicizing titles it now makes available in accessible formats through the bookshare.org website.

There are over 7 million blind and vision-impaired people in the U.S. Some work in manufacturing and warehouse jobs, others as teachers, engineers, accountants, attorneys and in other jobs. An estimated 70% of working people who are blind are unemployed, and many others face low wages and discrimination by employers. The big majority who do have jobs are not organized in trade unions.

According to the federation's constitution, it aims to be "a vehicle for collective action by the blind," promote their "equality with the sighted," and improve their "overall condition and standard of living."

The National Federation of the Blind and its affiliates encourage blind people to learn skills, including walking with a white cane, reading Braille and using new computer and cellphone technology to work, communicate, shop and get around. In a report to the convention, President Mark Riccobono reviewed the NFB's efforts.

Federal law allows bosses to pay blind and other disabled workers less than minimum wage. The NFB has helped win legislation or regulations to phase out subminimum wages in 15 states.

Riccobono said the federation has

taken up the cause of blind workers hired to work in Amazon distribution centers, some of whom have been told to go home because the company would not provide the accommodations they need to do their job. The organization, he said, is collaborating with Amazon's blind employees to reduce discrimination and expand employment opportunities in the company's distribution centers.

The organization supports blind students seeking to obtain books and other materials in an accessible format they can use. Riccobono also stressed the challenges faced by workers behind bars who are blind. The federation has filed a lawsuit on behalf of seven blind prisoners in Virginia and has succeeded in Colorado and Maryland in winning blind inmates' access to computer technology so they can read and write mail, file grievances and take advantage of employment and educational programs.

Reggie Herbert, 36, a teacher and NFB activist from Montana, told the *Militant* the Missoula County public school system has been unsuccessfully looking for a Braille teacher for five years. "There is a shortage of Braille instructors because they are not valued enough in this society to be paid a living wage."

Interest in Pathfinder books

Discussions at the Pathfinder Press booth covered the importance of the defense of constitutional rights, recent strike actions, the fight for Ukraine's sovereignty in face of Moscow's invasion and war, the origins of women's



Militant/Josefina Otero

At National Federation of the Blind convention July 2, Pathfinder volunteer Gale Shangold, right, spoke with, from left, Marva Hall and Casshia Cooks Coplin, a UPS worker who got *Militant* subscription. Discussions covered unions, constitutional freedoms, women's rights.

oppression and the challenges of sustaining family life in today's crisis-ridden capitalist society.

Shay Collazo and her 13-year-old son Dean stopped by. "It is great that Pathfinder books are available from bookshare.org, making them available to my son in Braille," she said. "I like that the *Militant* has a different point of view. If you just read the mainstream papers, you would think there are no unions, but there are plenty of them, and they are active and relevant."

Pathfinder books available at book-

share.org can be downloaded in a file format for Braille readers. Pathfinder volunteers distributed hundreds of flyers in Braille and large print, and their stand displayed dozens of Pathfinder titles. Convention participants bought seven subscriptions to the *Militant* and 30 Pathfinder books. One of the top sellers was *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward* by SWP leaders Jack Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark. Five copies of this book were purchased.

Miami SWP denounces threats against Jewish mayor in Surfside

BY STEVE WARSHALL

MIAMI — On Aug. 4 Shlomo Danzinger, the Orthodox Jewish mayor of Surfside, received an email from someone who identified himself as representing the "Fourth Reich" and threatened to come to Danzinger's house to "teach his family a lesson."

Having read about the threat in the *Jewish Press*, Rachele Fruit, chairperson of the Socialist Workers Party here, wrote and delivered a letter of solidarity to Danzinger.

"Today we see acts of Jew-hatred both from rightists and middle-class liberals and radicals," Fruit wrote. "On the left there are actions raising

the Hamas slogan, 'From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free' — free of Jews, they mean."

"At times of rising economic and social crisis, the capitalist rulers resort to antisemitism to scapegoat Jews and divert ruined middle-class layers and demoralized workers away from the class struggle," Fruit wrote. "We see the contradictory reality that while antisemitism among working people is at a low ebb, individual assaults on Jews are on the rise. Every act of Jew-hatred must be answered and combated, no matter where it comes from." Unions and organizations of the oppressed should "join

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THE MILITANT

Unions resist rail bosses' deadly drive for profits

With four fatalities on the job recently and regular derailment disasters, the fight for workers control of safety, working conditions, is ever important. The 'Militant' backs rail unionists in battles to protect the life and limbs of workers and communities near the rail lines.

Trains/David Lassen
Unions protest unsafe conditions impacting rail workers' lives, May 2022 in Kansas City.

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The Militant

Vol. 87/No. 33
Closing news date: August 23, 2023

Editor: John Studer
Managing Editor: Terry Evans

Editorial volunteers: Róger Calero, Seth Galinsky, Martín Koppel, Roy Landersen, Jacob Perasso, Vivian Sahner, Brian Williams.

Published weekly except for one week in January, two weeks in June, one week in August, two weeks in December.

Business Manager: Bob Bruce
 The Militant (ISSN 0026-3885), 306 W. 37th Street, 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.
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E-mail: themilitant@mac.com
Website: www.themilitant.com

Correspondence concerning subscriptions or changes of address should be addressed to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.
 Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.

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Florida forum: ‘Stop gov’t attack on immigrant rights’

BY RACHELE FRUIT

MIAMI — “The Fight for Immigrants’ Rights Is in the Interests of All Working People” was the title of the Aug. 19 Militant Labor Forum here, called to protest Florida law SB 1718, which took effect July 1. On the panel were Sonia Moreno from the Florida Immigrant Coalition; Winnie Tang, vice president of the Asian American Federation of Florida; and Steve Warshell of the Socialist Workers Party.

The new law makes it a felony to “knowingly and willfully” transport into Florida a person who has illegally entered the U.S.; prohibits drivers from using driver’s licenses available for undocumented immigrants in some states; and makes it a felony for “unauthorized” immigrants to use false ID documents. Beginning July 2, 2024, it imposes sanctions on employers who don’t use “E-Verify,” the Department of Homeland Security’s database.

This doesn’t only affect immigrants. “We have been educating about the impact on workers — the loss of jobs and separation of families,” Moreno said. “We knocked on doors, organized protests and involved immigrants who are citizens to oppose the law. If a mother without papers drives with her U.S.-born daughters to Georgia, and then drives back to Florida, her daughters can be charged with ‘human trafficking.’ This is unconstitutional.”

“There are 19 states that issue driver’s licenses to immigrants. None of these are acceptable in Florida now,” she said. “Hospitals that accept Medicaid are required to ask patients about their immigration status, so people are afraid to seek medical care.”

“They don’t explain that answering is optional, whether or not you are considered ‘legal,’” Tang said.

She also spoke about another law, SB 264, which targets people from seven “foreign countries of interest,” including, China, Cuba, Iran and Russia. It bans them from purchasing agricultural land or property within 10 miles of any military installation or “critical infrastructure” in Florida. “They want us to see Chinese people as a threat,” Tang said.

“We call it the 2023 version of the Alien Land Law of 1913, which first targeted Japanese farmers in California. They couldn’t own land or become citizens. That law was eventually implemented by at least 15 states, including Florida. We began a

20-year fight in 1998 to get it repealed from the state constitution and were finally successful in 2018,” she said.

Wang explained how Chinese laborers built the transcontinental railroad. “By 1869, 85% of the workers were Chinese, many of whom died, but no Asians were present at the completion ceremony,” Tang said. “The policies of the Republicans and Democrats differ very little if at all,” Warshell said. “In the past 24 months, hundreds of thousands of human beings have been deported from the U.S. The government’s intention is not to stop immigration, but to instill fear among undocumented immigrants and sow divisions among all workers. The bosses use this to keep wages low and impose unlivable hours and working conditions.”

The battle to win the labor movement to “demand an amnesty for all undocumented workers in the U.S. today is needed to advance working-class solidarity,” Warshell said. “It is inseparable from the fight to build, extend and strengthen our unions.”

The defense of constitutional rights is at the center of the class struggle today, he added. “We should oppose all of the government’s frame-ups,



Militant/Chuck Guerra
Militant Labor Forum in Miami Aug. 19 on fight to defend rights of immigrants. From left, Sonia Moreno, Florida Immigrant Coalition; Winnie Tang, vice president of Asian American Federation of Florida; Rachele Fruit, Socialist Workers Party, Militant Labor Forum chair; and Steve Warshell, SWP.

from Donald Trump to the African People’s Socialist Party. No matter who the immediate victim, the rulers’ assaults on freedoms protected by the U.S. Constitution will inevitably be directed against working people, unions and political organizations of the working class and oppressed.

During the discussion, Tang described an 1897 Supreme Court decision ensuring the citizenship of children born in the U.S. to noncitizen parents, guaranteed under the 14th Amendment. The case was brought by Wong Kim Ark, a U.S. citizen of

Chinese parents. He fought for and won his right to reenter the U.S. after a visit to China. The state had attempted to keep him out under the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which wasn’t repealed until 1943.

The forum was advertised on Tang’s weekly radio program, ACE Talk (Asian Caribbean Exchange) and in the United Chinese News of Florida. Among the 17 people in attendance were Flore Latortue from the Haitian Caucus of the Democratic Party and Paul Christian Namphy from the Family Action Network Movement.

SWP candidates advance program for working class

Continued from front page

other political prisoners in Russia, and for the end of Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine. Most participants were recent immigrants from Russia.

“Protests like this show that it’s not the Russian people who are responsible for the invasion,” Galinsky told those he met. “It’s the government of Vladimir Putin. Winning more people in Russia to the side of the fight for Ukraine independence is crucial to stopping the war.”

Galinsky pointed out that V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, leaders of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, backed Ukraine sovereignty and its right to be independent. But Putin and the regime in Moscow don’t want working people in Russia to know that history. Galinsky showed protesters the Russian-language edition of *The History of the Russian Revolution* by Trotsky.

“You think that book tells the truth?” one person asked him.

“Yes,” he said. She bought the three-volume set. Two participants subscribed to the *Militant* and doz-

ens took copies of the party’s statement against Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine, including translations of it into Ukrainian. Another participant who is Russian took the statement to give to her Ukrainian roommate.

In Seattle, Vincent Auger, SWP candidate for City Council District 1, and party member Barry Fatland met Teamsters union member Samuel Chesneau at his doorstep Aug. 14. “Our campaign supports fights by the unions,” Fatland said, “and we’re for organizing independent of the Democrats and Republicans. What’s needed is a labor party based on the unions that can represent the interests of all working people whether they’re in a union or not.”

“I give as much attention to voting for the two parties as I would to a poll on my favorite soda,” Chesneau said.

“The kind of social programs working people need to improve our working and living conditions won’t be given to us by the bosses and their government,” Auger said. “We need to fight for them.”

Chesneau agreed: “The only way for us to get what we need is to cut into their revenues.” He was interested in the informational picket line by Alaska Airlines flight attendants that the SWP members told him about. Chesneau signed up for a *Militant* subscription and got the book *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes.

In Montreal, members of the Communist League participated in an Aug. 9 protest of dozens to oppose the deportation of an Indian couple, Rajvinder Kaur, 70, and Randhir Singh, 79. They are seeking asylum. The Canadian government had said they would be sent back to India Aug. 12. However, in response to protests and other publicity about their case, the government backed down.

SWP protests antisemitic threats

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actions to protest” antisemitic violence.

The threat against Danziger is not an isolated incident. The July 28 *Pensacola News Journal* reported a string of antisemitic acts since mid-July, including perpetrators breaking windows of synagogues with bricks covered with swastikas and the slogan “No Jews.”

The *Sun Sentinel* reported March 27 that hundreds of plastic bags were tossed on lawns and driveways in Fort Lauderdale, Miami Beach and Surfside, containing an antisemitic message that blamed Jews for “the Covid agenda.”

According to a report by the Anti-Defamation League, the number of antisemitic incidents increased 41.5% in Florida to 269 last year compared to the year before.

“I was heartened to receive your letter of support today in response to the recent threat my family faced from an individual claiming affiliation with the Fourth Reich,” Danziger replied to Fruit. “Your support is genuinely appreciated.”

Copies of Fruit’s letter were sent to the press as well as Jewish and Islamic organizations in the area. Radio Miami Today posted it on its website.

The Communist League literature table at the action became a lively spot for political discussion. One participant bought *Che Guevara Talks to Young People*, and another, *Women in Cuba: The Making of a Revolution Within the Revolution*.

In Minneapolis, Edwin Fruit and Gabrielle Prosser, SWP candidates for City Council in Ward 1 and 11, are on the ballot after each paid the \$250 filing fee.

Prosser told the *Militant*, “We’re looking forward to discussing with fellow workers and working farmers — our allies on the land — how we can resist the scourge of the capitalist crisis on our livelihood. We’re looking forward to the opportunities to expand the reach of the Socialist Workers Party.”

To join in campaigning with SWP candidates, contact campaign offices listed on page 8.

Further reading

pathfinderpress.com

Maternal health care declines

Continued from front page

and went into cardiac arrest, dying the next day from a blood clot in her lung, a treatable condition if caught early.

As the bosses drive to push their deepening economic crisis onto our backs, health care for working people has been one of their targets — making it harder to come by and more expensive. As medical workers in understaffed hospitals are pushed to the limit, deaths from inadequate, or lack of, medical attention are becoming more common.

The number of mothers who died within a year of pregnancy doubled from 1999 to 2019, even as the birth-rate dropped. In 2021, more than 1,200 women died while pregnant or shortly after giving birth, the highest number since 1965.

Maternal deaths are higher in the U.S. than any other developed capitalist country. Despite African Americans being only 14% of the overall population, 30% of maternal deaths are among Black women.

These deaths, overwhelmingly preventable, contributed to the drop in life expectancy in the U.S. to 76 years, the lowest in more than a quarter of a century.

Over the last five years, administrators of 300 hospitals, many of them in rural areas, have closed down maternity wards in order to cut costs. According to an Aug. 1 report by the March of Dimes, more than 5.6 million women in the U.S. live in counties with limited or no access to maternity care. This is highest in the Midwestern and Southern states.

“A person’s ability to have a healthy pregnancy and healthy birth should not be dictated by where they live and their ability to access consistent, quality care,” March of Dimes President Elizabeth Cherot said in the report. “Maternity care is simply not a priority in our healthcare system.”

These appalling figures didn’t just happen. Decisions to ruthlessly put profits above all else, combined with the bosses’ callous indifference to the life and limbs of workers and our families, made them inevitable. Under capitalism, medicine is a for-profit business, not a social necessity.

After some special federal pandemic programs ran out in April, Democratic and Republican state officials began the process of kicking up to 15 million people — lower-income individuals and families — off Medicaid or the Children’s Health Insurance Program. Medicaid pays for 41% of births and is the largest insurer for children.

More than a million people, including many children, have already lost coverage, despite still being eligible, merely because they never received a letter or missed a call about policy changes.

In May, Liz Adams in Tallahas-

see, Florida, was informed that her two kids were no longer covered. The news came a day before her 7-year-old son Bryan was scheduled for needed leukemia care. “I am mad. I am mad at how they can do this to a child,” she told ABC News.

Working-class families bear the brunt of these attacks, which go hand in hand with longer work hours; increasing workloads and more dangerous working and living conditions; skyrocketing costs for child care; and more. Steady employment at wages sufficient for young people to begin or sustain a family are less and less available. Family breakdowns, once seen as an “African American affliction,” are now more widespread among all working people.

It’s contract battles and broader social struggles led by the union movement that can begin to prevent this carnage. Millions of workers need wage increases to cover the rising costs of food and housing, as well as work schedules and conditions that make family time possible. This is crucial for social activity together, to care for children who are sick, and to read and take part in union, political and cultural activity.

Thousands of workers through their unions — from hotel workers on strike in Los Angeles to International Flavors and Fragrances workers in Memphis, Tennessee, and nurses in New Jersey — have begun fighting around some of these issues.

“These union fighters, and others like them, deserve our support,” Sara Lobman, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New York City Council, told the *Militant*. “Out of these battles, our unions can grow stronger and take the leadership needed to advance the interests of all those exploited and oppressed by capital.”

Russians from New York to Moscow protest Putin’s war



Photos by Militant/Roy Landersen

NEW YORK — “Stop Putin! Stop war!” “We stand with Ukraine!” and “Free Navalny! Free political prisoners! Free Russia!” chanted over 300 demonstrators, mainly recent Russian immigrants, here Aug. 20. The protest was organized by supporters of Alexei Navalny, a framed-up and imprisoned liberal bourgeois opponent of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Similar actions were held in the U.K., Europe, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and Israel, as well as in Georgia and Armenia, which have large Russian émigré populations. Individual demonstrators were arrested in St. Petersburg and Moscow while others came out in Samara in southern Russia and Makhachkala, capital of Dagestan.

In a new Moscow trial and conviction Aug. 4, Navalny’s prison sentence was extended by 19 years. Putin keeps intensifying moves to silence opposition voices as his 18-month-old invasion of Ukraine takes losses and drags on.

One woman told the rally how Moscow’s military invasions of its “near abroad” began way before Ukraine with the 1992 intervention in Moldova, the 1994 and 1999 Chechnya wars and push into Georgia in 2008.

A young woman from Free Navalny named Anastasia told the crowd that her first protest — over a deadly Russian missile strike on a residential tower block in Dnipro July 28 — was in Moscow where she was detained. “Ukrainians are our brothers, not our enemies,” she said. Despite Putin’s repression, “a lot of people are against the war.”

On Aug. 19, a Russian rocket devastated a theater on the main square in Chernihiv in northern Ukraine, killing seven people and injuring 144. After the attack, flowers reappeared in Moscow at the monument to Lesya Ukrainka, an early 20th century Ukrainian poet and writer. The statue has often been used by opponents of Putin’s war as a makeshift memorial to civilian Ukrainian victims.

— ROY LANDERSEN

History of Grenada Revolution marks Brooklyn festival

BY SETH GALINSKY

NEW YORK — “I was part of the revolution and it’s important to remember,” Angela Gabriel told Socialist Workers Party member Willie Cotton who was helping to staff the Pathfinder book booth at this year’s Grenada Day Festival in Brooklyn Aug. 20. She was referring to the 1979-83 revolution in Grenada, a small English-speaking Caribbean Island, that brought to power a government of workers and farmers led by Maurice Bishop.

The revolutionary government began carrying out land reform, organized

90% of workers into trade unions, involved working people in determining the affairs of the country, made medical and dental care free, organized a militia made up of workers and farmers and carried out other measures to increase working-class consciousness, discipline and self-confidence.

Bishop, who was prime minister throughout the revolution, linked Grenada’s working-class course with Cuba’s socialist revolution. He told a May Day 1980 rally in Havana, “We recognized in Grenada just as the imperialists recognize, that without the Cuban

Revolution of 1959 there could have been no Grenadian Revolution.”

But Bishop and five other central leaders of the revolutionary government were assassinated on Oct. 19, 1983, by a Stalinist secret faction of army, government and party officials organized by Deputy Prime Minister Bernard Coard. The Coard clique’s coup destroyed the revolution. Washington seized the opportunity to invade and occupy the island a week later.

“We were so young then and we still don’t know what happened,” Gabriel said. She bought two copies of *New Internationalist* no. 6 with the article “The Second Assassination of Maurice Bishop” by SWP leader Steve Clark to share with others. “I want to be able to explain it to people.” The article by Clark explains the roots of the coup and the living legacy of the revolution today.

Grenada Day participants bought 19 copies of *New Internationalist* no. 6 and 14 *Maurice Bishop Speaks*, which contains 27 of his speeches and interviews.

As the worldwide capitalist crisis deepens, more working people are looking to find a road forward. Among the more than \$700 worth of literature sold at the Pathfinder booth were seven subscriptions to the *Militant*, and copies of *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward*; *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation*; and *Thomas Sankara Speaks*.



Militant/Sara Lobman

At Grenada Day Festival in Brooklyn Aug. 20 SWP leader Steve Clark shows *Maurice Bishop Speaks* to participant. Bishop led workers and farmers in 1979-83 Grenadian Revolution.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

CALIFORNIA
Oakland
U.S. vs. China and Russia, War Threats Mount: Why the Working Class Needs Our Own Foreign Policy. Speaker: Maggie Trowe, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Sept. 1. Refreshments, 6 p.m.; program, 6:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 675 Heegenberger Road, Suite 250. Tel.: (510) 686-1351.

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

‘Pay us for our time!’ Alaska Airlines flight attendants say

SEATAC, Wash. — Several hundred members of the Association of Flight Attendants, their families and supporters rallied outside Alaska Airlines headquarters here for a new contract Aug. 15. Similar actions took place at the airline’s facilities in San Diego; Los Angeles; San Francisco; Portland, Oregon; and Anchorage, Alaska.

The old contract dates back nine years. It was extended twice — once due to a merger with Virgin America airlines and the second time because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This means flight attendants are working under a wage structure and working conditions set almost a decade ago.

Association of Flight Attendants national President Sara Nelson spoke at a rally held in nearby Angle Lake Park. “This is a movement. This is the working class fighting together,” she said. “We have more in common than anything that could ever divide us.”

Ian Haywood, a flight attendant for six years, told the *Militant* Alaska Airlines has only offered a 9% raise in recent negotiations. And flight attendants face a lot of unpaid work, he said. They aren’t paid when they’re checking people onto the flights during boarding, and only start getting paid when the cabin door is shut and the plane is in the air. One of the most popular signs at the rally was “We demand boarding pay without delay.”

“Last week I worked an L.A. turn which was 10.5 hours,” Haywood said, “but was only paid six hours because 4.5 hours were on the ground.” And attendants aren’t paid between flights when they’re stuck away from home.

“We only work about 75-80 hours a month. Working 25 hours in the air in a week is a good week, and getting 75 hours makes you full time.”

There are 1,000 Alaska Airlines flight attendants in the Seattle area alone, he said, and all the hundreds at the action were ones who happened to be in town and on their own time between flights at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. This *Militant* worker-correspondent saw some carrying lug-

gage with them to the rally and picket lines down International Boulevard.

One attendant said she wasn’t sure what kind of response they would get to holding a picket, but she was pleasantly surprised. Drivers passing by constantly honked in support.

Two days of negotiations were taking place, including on the day of the rally, Haywood said. “We do all the care for our guests and the airline needs to take care of us.”

Flight attendant Justin Wetherell said the airline keeps announcing higher profits. Overall, it reported a record revenue of \$9.6 billion in 2022. “Enough is enough!” he said.

Some flight attendants printed up T-shirts for their kids at the protest, with demands supporting their parents. Most flight attendants are women.

A number of uniformed pilots joined the picket, along with representatives from UNITE HERE, International Association of Machinists, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, SMART-TD rail conductors’ union and International Association of Fire Fighters members from the Gig Harbor fire department.

— Rebecca Williamson

Chicago airline workers picket for new improved contract

CHICAGO — Some 50 members of Communications Workers of America Local 4201 — customer service workers for American Airlines — held a lively informational picket line at O’Hare Airport here Aug. 15. Similar actions took place in St. Louis; Charlotte, North Carolina; and other American bases.

Negotiations are occurring in Dallas-Fort Worth covering 20,000 union members nationally. The CWA-Teamsters also represent American’s customer service workers on the West Coast.

The unionists include reservation agents, gate and ticket counter agents and customer assistance workers. “Our union contract expired on Dec. 15, 2020,” Qushaun Naugle, president of Local 4201 with nine years seniority, told this *Militant* worker-correspondent. “Negotiations had been delayed for two years because of COVID.”



Militant/Rebecca Williamson

Flight attendants at Alaska Airlines rallied outside company headquarters at Sea-Tac airport in Washington Aug. 15. Unionists demand new contract with full pay for all the hours they work.

In additions to wages — workers haven’t received a pay raise in four years — the customer service workers are demanding job security and safer working conditions.

Several American Airlines flight attendants joined the picket line. American’s pilots have voted for strike authorization and the flight attendants are in the middle of voting on this as well. All three unions come under the anti-labor Railway Labor Act, which entangles negotiations with piles of red tape and no-strike rules.

“I’m on lunch,” Samrina Yousaf said. “Rent goes up, food goes up, gas goes up, why not wages? We need more than the minimum wage to pay the bills.”

Pickets chanted, “What do we want? Contract! When do we want it? Now!”

Local Vice President Jennifer Morales said, “The issue we are fighting for include wages, job security, and health benefits. We have been negotiating since October 2022.”

Susan Lund, with 37 years seniority, said, “We need the same health care insurance as the flight attendants.”

— Dan Fein

Wisconsin dairy workers strike for wage raise, health coverage

DE PERE, Wis. — Over 30 members of Teamsters Local 662 have been on

strike against New Dairy Select Milk here since July 10. The company is demanding workers take an inferior and more expensive health care plan.

On July 24, area building trades unions organized a barbecue on the picket line to show solidarity. Carpenters, ironworkers, laborers union members and staffers cooked bratwurst for the strikers.

“We are making them money and they want us to pay more for health insurance,” Pat Lensmire, who has worked at the plant for 34 years, told the *Militant*. It’s his first time on strike.

Striker Rob Anderson, with 24-years seniority, said, “Before I never paid much attention to the union, even though I was a member. This strike has changed my perspective — if I see a picket line now, I’ll stop and help picket or drop off some water.”

On the picket line Aug. 15, Local 662 Secretary-Treasurer Tom Strickland said the company rejected a union proposal to put workers on the Teamsters’ health plan, which would be less expensive with better benefits. “They actually said they don’t want the plan to be too attractive, because then more workers would sign up!”

The workers produce sour cream for Taco Bell, Wendy’s and Hello Fresh. The plant employed well over 100 union members until May 2022, when the bosses decided to stop processing liquid milk and focus on making sour cream, laying off the majority of the workforce. New Dairy Select Milk, formerly known as Morning Glory, is a subsidiary of the giant Borden company.

Jordan Steinhorest works in the lab. This is her first union job and her first strike. “The company says we are family. This strike shows the opposite,” she said. “The UPS trucks are honoring our picket line. Other trucks have refused to cross. They are doing production with management and three union members who have crossed the line, but they are not producing much.”

The union has set up a solidarity fund to support the strikers here and some 40 members of Local 662 on strike at Leinenkugel Brewing Co. in Chippewa Falls. The central issue in the brewery strike is wages.

Contributions can be sent to Teamsters Local 662 Solidarity Fund, 850 Hwy 153, Suite D, Mosinee, WI 54455. Join the picket line, 4 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday.

— Dan Fein and Naomi Craine

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



September 7, 1998

At 6:00 a.m. Aug. 14, members of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees struck Conrail. The system-wide strike was called after Conrail broke an agreement with the union and contracted with a nonunion outfit to construct track in Marysville, Ohio. The BMWWE represents about 3,400 track maintenance workers throughout Conrail.

Like all rail unions, the BMWWE is constrained by the National Railway Labor Act. This anti-labor law trammels union power, especially the use of strikes. In this walkout, U.S. District Judge John Giles issued an order demanding the workers return to the job.

Nonetheless, the nine-and-a-half hour strike gave a picture of the power of rail labor and a glimpse of the discussion and spirit of resistance in the rail industry, where workers are feeling the results of years of substantial crew cuts.



September 7, 1973

A number of former FBI agents and officials admitted last week that the FBI has been carrying out illegal burglaries for more than 30 years. This evidence confirms assertions by the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance that such illegal spying and harassment has been directed against them.

In a statement, Norman Oliver, SWP candidate for mayor of New York, said: “This is not news to my party. We have already filed suit in court against President Nixon, the director of the FBI, and other government officials for infringements of our democratic rights.”

The disclosures prove that Watergate tactics have been standard procedure for both Democrats and Republicans. The *New York Times* lamented, “The saddest side-effect of Watergate across American society is the degree to which respect for the processes of government has been tarnished.”



September 6, 1948

The entry of Socialist Workers Party candidate Grace Carlson in the vice-presidential campaign has a particular significance for the women of America. To be able to develop their personal talents in the social and economic fields, as well as in the field of bearing children, women must be freed from the fear of insecurity and want.

The solving of the problem of women’s rights can only be done by women organizing themselves to fight for their rights and aligning themselves with the great progressive movements in our society. But no more than other oppressed groupings can they win these rights by supporting the parties of capitalism.

Grace Carlson is a symbol and a banner-bearer of this struggle. Voting for Carlson will be voting for a candidate who symbolizes the fight for women’s rights and a new mass party of the working people.

Cuban youth leaders tour in Australia and New Zealand

BY LINDA HARRIS
AND MIKE TUCKER

SYDNEY — Marianniz Díaz Hernández and Iván Barreto López, leaders of the Union of Young Communists (UJC) in Cuba, visited Australia and New Zealand July 25 to Aug. 16 to speak about the challenges Cuban workers and farmers face and to build solidarity with Cuba's socialist revolution.

Díaz is a research scientist who worked on trials of the successful COVID vaccines developed in Cuba. Barreto works in the Institute for Friendship with the Peoples department for the Pacific-Asia region.

Their tour to Auckland, New Zealand, and Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth and Sydney, Australia was hosted by the Cuba Friendship Societies in both countries.

In addition to public forums, meetings were organized with trade unions. "Our people stand in solidarity with the working class in Australia and continue to strengthen bonds with trade unions," Barreto told a meeting of the Maritime Union of Australia in Sydney.

They were the featured speakers at an event of 100 here to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the attack on the U.S.-backed Fulgencio Batista dictatorship's Moncada army garrison in Santiago de Cuba.

Tanieris Diéguez, Cuba's ambassador to Australia, also spoke. "We are commemorating a critical event in our history," she said. The Moncada assault "became the spark of a movement of struggle that resulted in the 1959 victory" of the revolution. "We commemorate those who lost their lives and pay tribute to the outstanding role of Fidel Castro."

Barreto outlined the history of the over 60-year U.S. economic war on Cuba. Various U.S. administrations "have changed tactics but not their purpose," which is to bring down the revolution. "Right from the beginning of the revolution," he said, "during the literacy campaign and the agrarian reform, U.S. sanctions were imposed on Cuba."

Washington "recognized that the majority of Cubans supported Castro," he said. To try to change that they moved "to create difficult economic conditions inside Cuba and to isolate it internationally." That is why "international solidarity condemning the blockade and actions of support" are important.

Díaz described how, despite U.S. economic pressure, Cuba vaccinated almost the entire population against COVID. "We did this through working together and mobilizing the whole of society."

Students and communist youth volunteered to provide free meals and medicine for those in isolation in special centers, Barreto said. "I was a volunteer in one of the centers," he said. "For young people, it was our Moncada. It was a way to contribute."

Asked if there was opposition to getting vaccinated, Diéguez said that in Cuba "people trust the government in its health decisions, which stems from 60 years of popular revolution and of education."

Young people led the voluntary effort, but also many of Cuba's mass organizations were involved, she said. "The pop-

ulation was unified in face of the pandemic and the process of vaccination."

The two Cuban youth also addressed a meeting of 35 at Sydney University Aug. 7.

Cuba has one of the highest vaccination rates in the world and was "the first country to vaccinate children from the age of 2," Díaz said. As a result, COVID infections in the population had gone from very high initially to among the lowest in the world.

The development of COVID vaccines was possible because the Cuban government has prioritized the funding of biotechnology research for more than three decades, she said. Cuba's COVID vaccines have been made available to many countries, often for free.

Asked how the measures against COVID were able to be implemented in isolated rural communities, they said this was because health services already existed there.

Others asked if there is growing inequality in Cuba, is there declining support for the revolution, what are the principles that guide Cuba today,

New Trump indictment is frontal attack on free speech

Continued from front page
they call for severe sentences.

The real aim of the indictment, which draws in 19 named conspirators on 41 counts, is to drive Trump out of politics in 2024 and show anyone who agrees with him politically that they too can be victimized. Like each of the three other indictments against Trump — in New York, Washington, D.C., and Florida — the Georgia charges toss aside constitutional protections of free speech and political association to accomplish the Democrats' political ends.

Unlike the three other cases, the latest charges are not prosecuted in federal court. If Willis' prosecution prevails and Trump is convicted, it would preclude a victorious President Trump from being able to pardon himself, leaving him behind bars in Georgia for years.

Democrats, Never-Trump Republicans and the middle-class left are determined to silence the Republican front-runner. The Georgia indictment is based overwhelmingly on statements Trump and his supporters made. Willis claims he began a conspiracy one day after the 2020 election by giving a speech saying he had won. She says tweets by Trump making the same claims were "an overt act in furtherance of the conspiracy." And she claims appeals by the Trump campaign for Georgia legislators to send electors pledged to Trump to the electoral college were a crime.

She also charges Trump with soliciting a public officer to violate their oath, based on what he said in a highly publicized phone call to Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger: "All I want to do is this. I just want to find 11,780 votes, which is one more than we have. Because we won the state." But lobbying state officials and lawmakers seeking to change their minds is not a crime. It's free speech.

The 2020 election was far from the first time the results have been sharply contested. Harvard law professor Alan



Militant photos by Bob Aiken
Aug. 6 meeting in Sydney, above, marked 70th anniversary of attack on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba, the opening battle of Cuban Revolution. Inset, Marianniz Díaz and Iván Barreto, leaders of Union of Young Communists of Cuba.



what lies ahead?

"Cuba is facing very big challenges right now," said Barreto, made worse by Washington's economic war. "Some say that communism has been a failure in Cuba," a view found "mainly among young people."

Many young people "don't know what Cuba was like before the revolution," he said.

Cuba is not communist, he added. "We are struggling for socialism as a stage toward communism." Working people made great gains through the

revolution, he said, for example, access to housing.

"Revolution is not made in an instant," he said. "The Cuban Revolution is an ongoing struggle to advance." And this has been aided because "we have had international support since the beginning."

Barreto also described how Cuba had welcomed and treated over 20,000 children and others from Ukraine following the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear meltdown there. "Cuba has always extended international solidarity."

Dershowitz denounced the indictment, saying what Trump did was "very similar" to what Dershowitz and the Democrats did challenging Al Gore's loss to George W. Bush in 2000.

"We challenged the election, and we did much of the things that are being done today, and people praised us," he said. "Now they're making it a crime."

Turning challenges to an election result into a criminal offense and targeting free speech is a serious danger for working people.

Every election under capitalism is rigged to benefit the main capitalist parties, the Democrats and Republicans, and against working-class parties like the Socialist Workers Party. Huge petitioning requirements to get on the ballot are used to exclude a working-class voice in most states. Being able to speak out against the rigging of elections is a constitutionally protected right.

RICO laws target the working class

Georgia's RICO law is even more far-reaching than the federal statute. It doesn't require prosecutors to show there was an underlying criminal enterprise, only that several illegal acts were carried out to advance a single goal. It is entirely set up for use in "turning" witnesses against each other and forcing confessions through plea bargains. Willis boasts she's an expert in procuring RICO convictions.

Government prosecutors and the bosses have used RICO laws for years to target the unions.

In an effort to break a three-year strike by the United Steelworkers union at Titan Tire in Des Moines, Iowa, in 2000, bosses used RICO to sue some 90 members of USW Local 164. The company claimed striking workers "implemented a massive conspiracy to extort money" and conspired to "receive income from a pattern of racketeering" — i.e., winning higher wages. The union won and the anti-labor suit was dismissed in 2006.

Ironworkers Local 401 official Joseph Dougherty was sentenced to 19 years in jail in 2015, after being convicted under federal RICO laws in Philadelphia. The prosecutor alleged Dougherty used bullying to force nonunion contractors to hire union members. Before his trial, 11 other Ironworkers officials and members were bullied into pleading guilty to similar charges. The *Militant* denounced the frame-up.

Rush to trial violates rights

All four prosecutors trying to jail Trump are pushing for rapid trials set early in the 2024 election race. Willis wants the Georgia trial to start March 4.

Jack Smith, special counsel for President Joseph Biden's Justice Department, demands Trump's federal trial on charges of trying to overturn an election begin Jan. 2.

The Democrats, FBI and liberal media moguls have been laser-focused on bringing Trump down for over seven years. Democrats choreographed a monthslong show-trial of Trump during the Jan. 6 congressional hearings last year, a predecessor of today's indictments.

Democrats used vast congressional resources to interrogate witnesses and gin up a case, but now insist those accused only get five months to prepare their defense.

The sixth amendment to the Constitution guarantees the accused the right to a legal defense. That requires the time needed to see all the evidence and bring witnesses in their defense. But Democrats are riding roughshod over due process in order to ensure Biden stays in the White House.

The judge hearing the case in Georgia has already limited Trump's right to discuss the witch hunt against him and speak out on the lack of evidence.

All defenders of constitutional freedoms should demand the charges against Trump be dropped.

Tehran tries to block protests marking Zhina Amini's death

BY SETH GALINSKY

The bourgeois clerical regime in Tehran has launched new moves against working people and its political opponents, hoping to head off protests on the one-year anniversary of the death of Zhina Amini. The 22-year-old Kurdish woman died Sept. 16, 2022, after her arrest by the hated “morality police” for not heeding the mandatory dress code.

Over the next several months hundreds of thousands took to the streets to protest across the country. The regime’s thugs and police killed more than 500 people.

Family members of those killed in the earlier protests are being warned that public remembrances will not be tolerated. On Aug. 16 a dozen women’s rights and political activists were arrested in Gilan province, charged with planning to incite “chaos and vandalism,” and with working for foreign spy agencies, including Israel’s.

The anniversary of Amini’s death is five days before schools reopen. Authorities have been summoning students and warning them not to protest.

After Amini’s death the regime pulled the “morality police” off the streets. But after the protests died down in the face of repression it has tried to reimpose its reactionary laws. This includes closing some businesses for serving women who enter without “proper” hijab. But thousands of women are ignoring the decrees.

Divisions in the capitalist class

A proposed new “Hijab and Chastity” law would require police to first issue warnings then successively higher fines and confiscation of vehicles for repeat offenders. One sign of the divisions in the ruling class has been debate over the proposal, with parliament voting that it would be held privately.

Sayyed Ghani Nazari, a member of Parliament from Ardabil province, which is mostly Azerbaijani, voted against a secret debate. “The government’s priority should be the economy,” he told *Asr Iran* news site. If the police enforce hijab laws “it will not have enough people to deal with theft and smuggling.”

MP Ahmad Alireza Begi told reformist daily *Shargh* that the bill will end up like the “Satellite Law,” which banned satellite dishes to block foreign news and cultural influences. Despite the destruction of more than 100,000 dishes, millions continue to flaunt the law and cops usually look the other way.

Conservative daily *Farhikhtegan* wrote that since the hijab was reimposed by law in 1983, “citizens had reached a kind of peaceful co-existence with each other.” It warns against taking a hardline now.

In fact, there has been a noticeable change in the attitude of workers, farmers and the middle class toward the counterrevolutionary capitalist government. Confidence has grown among workers that they can win support for their demands.

Amid over 30% annual inflation, gas shortages and speedup on the job, there is a modest uptick in protests: retired workers demanding adequate pensions and health care; workers

demanding unpaid earnings, wages to match inflation and opposing attempts to raise the retirement age; farmers protesting lack of water and low prices for their produce; teachers demanding the release of imprisoned unionists and more.

Even Alireza Mahjoub, secretary general of the government-funded Workers House, has had to speak out against the worsening conditions and called for respecting the constitutional rights to assembly and free speech. “These freedoms must be protected,” he told the Iranian Labor News Agency, noting that the police have interfered when “retirees gather in front of parliament to make their voices heard.”

Fight for democratic rights

In Zahedan, in the Baluchistan region, a weekly Friday march resumed Aug. 18, after a several week hiatus, demanding freedom for political prisoners. Thousands had marched there for at least 41 consecutive weeks after the regime’s thugs killed 60 people outside the mosque.

Week after week Sunni cleric Maulana Abdul Hamid has put forward demands for basic democratic fights. He has spoken out against discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities, including Sunnis, who are excluded from many government positions. He has denounced the persecution of people of the Baha’i faith and calls for equal rights for women.

In his Aug. 18 speech, he said that

Crisis deepens in Africa after Niger coup, threats of war

Continued from front page

nations of the African Union suspended Niger Aug. 22 and say they’ll impose sanctions on military junta members.

“Nigeria has cut the power supply to Niger,” Ibrahim Hamadou, general secretary of l’Union des Syndicat Libres des Travailleurs du Niger, told the *Militant* in a phone interview Aug. 17. “The biggest impact is on hospitals. Operations have been cancelled.”

“Food is going bad because there is no refrigeration,” he said, adding that the price of a bag of rice has gone up by a third.

“If they leave the border like this, people will die,” a Nigerien truck driver who has spent the past two weeks waiting to cross into Niger, told *France 24*. “There’s no work. From morning until night I have nothing to eat.”

“People are suffering under sanctions, but they’re opposed to military intervention,” Hamadou told the *Militant*. “My union supports the coup. I believe that it was carried out in a bad way, but now a fight for liberation from the French is taking place.”

“Before the coup there was already famine,” Hamadou said. “With Jihadists running free in some areas, peasants flee and they’re unable to work the land. The longer the land is left idle, the harder it is to make it productive again.”

An attack by an Islamist terror group in the western part of the country Aug. 15 killed 17 Nigerien soldiers. Another 20 were wounded.



Group of Union Retirees

Retired teachers in Kermanshah, Iran, Aug. 22. Teachers union has backed weekly nationwide protests demanding freedom for imprisoned teachers, increase in pensions, political rights.

members of Parliament should not be the representatives of the “system” but should “defend the people’s rights,” including on questions of “foreign policy.” That’s a reference to the Shiite-based regime’s increasingly unpopular military adventures in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and beyond, as it seeks to extend its counter-revolutionary power in the region.

Abdul Hamid again called for release of the thousands of political prisoners and denounced the attacks on peaceful protesters.

“We hate the evils and oppression of America, Europe and Israel, but why not take their good things?” he asked. He noted that in Israel there were huge protests against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s plans to “reform” the judiciary. The “surprising” thing, he said, was that unlike in Iran “no one was killed. Israeli forces kill Palestinians, but they do not kill their own people.”

Two days later, Fathi Mohammad Naqshbandi, the Friday Iman in Rask, Baluchistan, was arrested for criticizing the government. Abdul Hamid and protests across the province called for his release.

Abdul Hamid’s speeches and the Baluch struggle have had an impact well beyond the Sunni minorities. In early July some 15 Shiite academic and cultural figures — some living in Iran and some outside the country — issued a statement “in support of Maulana Abdul Hamid and the oppressed Sunnis of Iran.”

The statement noted that Kurds and Baluchis “have suffered oppression and discrimination more than anyone else.” They note that Abdul Hamid’s sermons are “not limited to Sunni religious people. ... These demands are the demands of the Iranian nation with every ethnic, linguistic and religious orientation.”

Hundreds of thousands of families have been driven out of their villages by the Islamist forces.

Boubacar Daoudou, who made his living selling household goods, fled Tassia, in western Niger, with his wife and two children after his father and uncle were killed.

When they arrived in nearby Gotheye, they received a warm welcome and aid. But “I’m tired of asking for more food and water, not being able to work and earn my own money,” he told reporters. “I am an unemployed person, against my will. My greatest desire would be to return to my native village, where I could work, build my house, and contribute to the local economy.”

More than 80% of the families in Niger earn a living as farmers or herders. The country of 25 million is one of the poorest in the world. Life expectancy is 63 years. Only the southern third of the country’s land can be used for agriculture, as the rest is desert, which continues to expand by a quarter of a million acres a year.

In other areas the land has been destroyed by pollution. After mining uranium for almost 50 years, a French company, Orano, shut down operations in Arlit, Niger, in 2021, leaving 20 million tons of radioactive mud there. The soil and underground water — that 100,000 people living in the area drink — are contaminated.

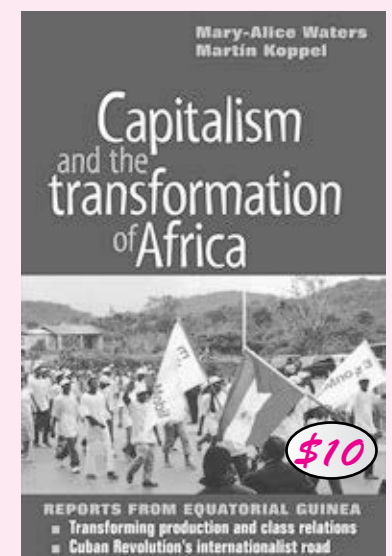
On Aug. 21 a convoy of 300 trucks, mainly loaded with food, reached Niger’s capital, Niamey, from Burkina

Faso, the last open border.

Across the Sahel region Islamist terror groups have taken advantage of a deep social and economic crisis and distrust toward the former colonial powers to extend their influence, wreaking havoc with the lives of working people. The failure of Paris’ military to defeat the Islamists has deepened opposition to intervention by French forces among local populations.

Since 2020, governments in Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali have been overthrown. The military regimes of Mali and Burkina Faso have expressed support for the coup in Niger, saying ECOWAS intervention would be a “declaration of war” against them too.

Further reading



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Thomas Sankara pointed revolutionary road forward in Africa

Thomas Sankara Speaks is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for August. Sankara was the outstanding leader of a revolution in Burkina Faso, one of the poorest countries in Africa, from 1983 to 1987. His speeches explain how the workers and peasants of this West African country established a popular revolutionary government and began to fight the hunger, illiteracy and economic backwardness imposed by imperialist domination, and the oppression of women inherited from millennia of class society. The excerpt is from Sankara's Aug. 4, 1987, speech "Our revolution needs a people who are convinced, not conquered." He was assassinated in a counterrevolutionary coup nearly 11 weeks later. Copyright © 2007 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Fidel Castro welcomes Thomas Sankara in Havana Sept. 25, 1984. Sankara, a communist, looked to Castro's Marxist leadership and the voluntary mobilizations of workers and peasants in Cuba's socialist revolution as he led a popular, democratic revolution in Burkina Faso.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY THOMAS SANKARA

Comrades, the fourth anniversary of our revolution takes place under the banner of our dynamic peasantry. The peasantry — the community of those who solve the concrete question of food concretely every day for everyone.

Yes, it is this peasantry, emerging from the shadows of the Middle Ages and backwardness, that, under the most precarious conditions, beats the odds every year one way or another. This

peasantry, our peasantry, makes up the largest part of our population. It is the part that has been subjected to — and continues to be subjected to — the most intense exploitation at the hands of the remnants of feudal-type forces and of imperialism. It is this part that has suffered the most from the ills we inherited from colonial society: illiteracy, obscurantism, pauperization, cruelty in many forms, endemic diseases, and famine.

So it comes as no surprise that our peasantry today is a force that wants change, revolutionary change, because only the revolution, by overturning the old order, can satisfy the peasantry's legitimate aspirations. In order to respond to this legitimate desire and mobilize all available energies, the democratic and popular revolution has transformed the peasantry into an organized political force by creating the National Union of Peasants of Burkina. ...

[T]he term *peasant* should cease to be the derogatory term we know today and should become a synonym for respect — the respect owed a proud and worthy combatant who defends just causes and who successfully meets the targets for his part in social production as a member of the great body that is the people.

The peasantry should not be left to fight this battle alone. The working class and the revolutionary, intellectual petty bourgeoisie should assume their historic responsibility, and work to reduce the

gap between town and country through selflessness and sacrifice. The working class and the revolutionary, intellectual petty bourgeoisie should consider this celebration an important milestone in the process of strengthening their strategic alliance with the peasantry. Today is the festival of the peasantry and therefore of its allies, too — symbolized by our emblem, the emblem of the democratic and popular revolution. ...

The democratic and popular revolution needs a convinced people, not a conquered people — a convinced people, not a submissive people passively enduring their fate. ...

During the past four years of revolution, we have constantly had to confront reaction and imperialism. They have hatched the most vile plots aimed at hindering our work — or worse, at overthrowing our revolution. Imperialism and reaction are, and will remain, fiercely opposed to the transformations taking place every day in our country, threatening their interests.

Yet for the past four years our people have constantly proven that with the revolution, it's possible to end exploitation, do away with misery, and create happiness for all through the power of our hands and hearts. Those living in luxury based on the exploitation of others have opposed our struggle and will do so even more tomorrow. ...

Our revolution, just like others, is

constantly threatened by all kinds of counterrevolutionary dangers. We must be conscious of this, highly conscious, and firmly commit ourselves to the permanent defense of the correct perspective that will guide us to the ultimate goal. Above all, we must be aware that these problems are created dialectically by the sharpening class struggle, and that, on the contrary, if there were no such problems, it would actually signify the underhanded suppression of the revolutionary struggle in favor of class collaboration.

Comrades, we must take time today to draw the lessons and learn from our past activity in order to enrich our revolutionary theory and practice, and deepen our commitment to the struggle in an organized, more scientific, and more resolute manner.

Many tasks — and complex ones — lie ahead of us. The enemies of our people and revolution have redoubled their energies and ingenious efforts to bar our road forward. And we'll need more courage, more conviction, and more determination to keep marching forward. This determination and conviction will come, in part, from the lessons we're able to draw from four years of struggle. ... Yes, we need such an assessment.

In four years of revolution we've carried out many important revolutionary transformations. We've laid the basis for solving numerous problems facing our people. We've been very active throughout different sectors of our society. We've given the impression that we want to change everything, and do it immediately. We've been criticized sometimes, and we understand that very well. Furthermore, we ourselves have noticed that other important tasks have been neglected or downplayed. We must devote Year Five specifically to carrying out tasks of a political, ideological, and organizational character.

The deepening of our revolution and the future success of our political activity will depend on how well we solve these issues of organization and ideological orientation in our country. The revolution cannot go forward and achieve its goals without a vanguard organization able to guide the people in all its battles and on all fronts. Forging such an organization will require a big commitment on our part from now on.

August
BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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Build the unions! March Labor Day!

More workers today find themselves locked in battles with bosses seeking to push down our wages, health care, work schedules and working conditions. Unions are the key weapons workers have to fight back. We need to strengthen the unions, join in the marches, rallies and other events on Labor Day.

The actions are an opportunity to meet fellow workers, to discuss what we face. Most importantly, they're an opportunity to build much-needed solidarity with workers on strike resisting boss attacks.

The ruling capitalist families face greater competition for markets and profits today. Their answer is to target working people. We need to prepare to fight to prevent them from imposing even worse conditions that tear working-class families apart.

Bakery Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers union members at International Flavors and Fragrances in Memphis, Tennessee, are on strike against boss moves to cut overtime pay, end paid lunch breaks and win the power to change workers' health insurance on 30-days notice. Nurses organized by the United Steelworkers are striking at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick, New Jersey, for more staff to ease backbreaking workloads and provide the care patients need.

Unifor-organized grocery store workers at Metro stores around Toronto are striking for better wages and benefits. Most are part time, with few benefits and no paid breaks. The Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists and Writers Guild of America members are on strike over wages and boss demands to own their images forever.

The contract of some 150,000 United Auto Workers at the "Big Three" auto companies runs out Sept. 14. The labor movement needs to be ready to come to their side.

These fights lay the groundwork for a fighting program for labor action: for automatic cost-of-living adjustments in all wages and benefits to combat price hikes; 30 hours work for 40 hours pay to combat layoffs by spreading the work available around; and workers control of production to combat life-threatening conditions imposed by the bosses in their never-ending drive for greater profits.

This means a united struggle against the class that exploits us. This brings to the fore the need for labor to break with the bosses' parties and form our own party, a labor party based on the unions, that can fight in the interests of all those exploited and oppressed by capital.

Take action on Labor Day!

Capitalist greed, gov't policies led to Maui disaster

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turning the islands into a colony of Washington.

They took control over all the resources needed to assure handsome profits from sugar production. They gained control over thousands of acres on Maui and elsewhere. They diverted water supplies into growing and processing sugar cane, a notoriously water-consuming enterprise. They brought immigrant workers from throughout Asia and elsewhere to labor in their fields.

For decades the profits rolled in. Then, after the second imperialist World War, when competition from bosses with cheaper labor elsewhere ate at their profits, these now mightily wealthy families sold off their plantations. The last one shuttered in 2016. They used their accumulated fortunes, control over water and other resources, and political influence after Hawaii became a U.S. state in 1959 to diversify into vast holdings in the rapidly expanding tourist industry, retail chains, construction, land speculation and other investments.

Wild grasses and shrubs rapidly covered the land they left fallow. Native plants that had never faced competition fell before them. Today, fully one-quarter of state land in Hawaii is covered by invasive grasses. These grasses expanded to the edges and then into Lahaina, the former capital of the Hawaiian peoples.

One of the two biggest mills on Maui was the Amfac-owned Pioneer Mill, located in the outskirts of Lahaina and spreading into the foothills. It's 14,000-acre cane fields employed more than 50,000 workers in the 1930s.

What caused the disaster?

When the deadly wildfire swept through Lahaina, it destroyed much of the city. As of Aug. 23, some 115 people are known dead and at least 800 still missing. Homes, stores, and all remnants of many people's entire lives, including immigration papers, deeds and other government papers, were destroyed. Because schools were closed when the fire started, many children were left at home or with elderly relatives when their parents left for work. Some youth perished.

Local authorities, state officials and the Hawaiian Electric power company bosses were well aware of this history and of the growing likelihood of wildfire disasters.

The company had made proposals in 2022 to spend \$190 million on some measures, including removing dead trees, replacing and upgrading power lines and other protective measures. But the bosses refused to begin work, saying nothing would be done until the

state government approved a rate increase to make customers pay for the fixes. This is "a common occurrence when utilities seek to make large investments," the *Wall Street Journal* said.

An even bigger problem is that utility bosses planned to spend more funds, not on protections against wildfires, but on increasing electricity generation and targeting "climate change-related stresses." They were under pressure from Democratic-run state and federal government-mandated "green energy transition."

Hawaiian Electric subsidized rooftop solar power and contracted for large-scale renewables to plug into its grid. And it spent less than \$245,000 on wildfire projects on Maui between 2019 and 2022.

"Looking back with hindsight," Doug McLeod, a consultant who served for years as the Maui county energy commissioner, told the *Journal*, "the utility was going out for bid with all these big renewable-energy projects."

In fact, Hawaiian Electric officials privately told people that "the state's parched grasslands were less of an urgent threat than California's vast and dry timberlands."

Many of the state's Democratic Party-dominated elected officials try to blame "climate change" for the disaster. They can't admit that it was a result of their indifference, inaction or the effects of decades of for-profit capitalist rule.

The liberal media repeats endlessly that the fire was so deadly because of winds whipped up by nearby Hurricane Dora. But there is no scientific basis for this claim. "Dora, even though it was a major hurricane, had a very small wind field, and it's very far away from the state," Honolulu-based meteorologist John Bravender told Reuters Aug. 21. The high winds that swept the fire across the grasslands and into Lahaina were caused by the way they accelerated coming down from the mountains.

And higher temperatures from "climate change" weren't involved either. For days the temperatures had been in the 80s, average for this time of year.

"The largest factor at play with this fire," climatologist Abby Frazer told Reuters, was the invasive grasses.

Thousands on Maui have lost their jobs, homes, and most of their possessions, and many have lost loved ones. They're angry at the government for the lack of response or help. "We were all on our own," 72-year-old Tina Bass told the *New York Times*.

It was only the selfless solidarity of fellow workers and aid from working people near and far that have got them through.

Toronto grocery strike



Aiden Shon

Unifor Local 414 members picket in Toronto Aug. 13. The grocery workers struck July 29 for better wages, benefits.

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than expected third-quarter profits Aug. 9: "Adjusted net earnings were \$314.8 million compared to \$283.8 million last year, a 10.9% increase."

Working two part-time jobs, 31-year-old Sheldon Scantlebury has been at Metro for 10 years. "When I first started striking, I thought people would be negative," he said. "But they're very supportive. They complain about the high prices, and say, 'They charge us \$6 for bread, they can afford to pay you more.'"

Employers and government spokespeople in Canada have been touting the recent announcement that the official inflation rate is down to around 3%. But working people are only too aware of what necessities are going for. The cost of a typical bag of groceries has increased by 20% in the past two years, Toronto Dominion Bank senior economist Leslie Preston reported.

Widespread solidarity

Some neighbors come by the store to drop off homemade pastries, water and donuts for the strikers, while others pick up a union flag themselves and join the line. "A guy pulled up in his car and said, 'The film industry is shut down, the Emmys are cancelled, can I join your line?'" Jose de Villa, head picket captain at the Metro store on Kennedy Road and Highway 401, reported. "I want to fight with you because I know you'll fight for us." The Unifor strike supporter was referring to the current strike by actors and writers in the U.S.

Retired UPS dispatcher Reginald Housand talked with this worker-correspondent when I knocked on his door in the neighborhood. "Even though it's inconvenient, I support them. They should get what they deserve," he said, adding that he's gone to the picket line across the street from his apartment to sit with the strikers in his wheelchair.

Ontario Public Service Employees Union member Susan Berman described an Aug. 17 union solidarity delegation from her workplace that she joined. "Seven of us went. We chanted and got constant, loud honks of support, and cyclists rang their bells. Strikers thanked us for coming. One said it was the best day ever on the line. One of my co-workers said this was good preparation in case we strike some time."

Two weeks into the conflict, Metro requested government mediation. Unifor refused. "Metro cannot strong-arm workers to accept a lesser contract. They must return to the table with an offer that takes workers' demands seriously," said Local 414 President Gord Currie. The strike began after union members voted down a tentative agreement between Unifor and Metro because the wage gains didn't match rising costs for necessities.

Metro workers are just the first of more than 11,000 Unifor-organized grocery store workers in eastern Canada whose contracts are running out, and their fight stands to set the bar. Help get the word out. Join a picket line. Send solidarity messages to 414contact@uniforlocal414.ca.

'Militant' Prisoners' Fund

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