

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Freedom Caravan trials are
attack on rights in Canada
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 88/NO. 30 AUGUST 12, 2024

Israelis face threat of wider war by Tehran and Hezbollah

BY SETH GALINSKY

Hezbollah's missile attack on Majdal Shams, in the Israeli-ruled Golan Heights, killed 12 Druze Arab boys and girls and wounded 16 more at a soccer field July 27. The barbaric attack by the Tehran-backed group has increased the threat of a wider war.

That danger was exacerbated after the death of central Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in a strike attributed to Israel at a guesthouse in Tehran July 31.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken had pressed Israel not to carry out any major retaliation, worried it will upset the stability that Washington seeks to advance its own interests in the region, including securing markets and resources for the U.S. rulers.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited Majdal Shams July 29, telling Druze leaders, "These children are our children," and vowing retaliation. A day later the Israeli military killed a top Hezbollah commander, Fuad Shukur, in an airstrike on a suburb of Beirut.

Hezbollah, a key part of the Iranian rulers' "axis of resistance," has

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Endorse the Socialist Workers Party campaign!

'The working class needs its own party, a party of labor'



Militant/Betsy Farley

Kevin Dwire, left, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate, and bakery worker Tyler Hurtgen campaigning at 90th anniversary celebration of 1934 Minneapolis Teamster strikes. Rafael Espinoza, a union leader during 2001 UFCW organizing drive at Dakota Premium Foods in St. Paul, signs petition to put Rachele Fruit, the party's presidential candidate, on the ballot in Minnesota.

US rulers stabilize their two parties, SWP wins a hearing

BY TERRY EVANS

In recent weeks the U.S. rulers have succeeded in reestablishing some stability in their two-capitalist-party political setup, with both Democrats and Republicans uniting behind their respective

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Workers across Minnesota sign to put SWP on ballot

BY GABRIELLE PROSSER

MINNEAPOLIS — Thousands of workers in Minnesota are learning about the Socialist Workers Party and its candidates, Rachele Fruit for U.S. president and Dennis Richter for vice president, as the party campaigns for ballot status here.

SWP campaigners are finding interest from workers who are trying to make sense of the crisis of capitalism and find

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Black sailors exonerated 80 years after port disaster

BY ERIC SIMPSON

OAKLAND, Calif. — On July 17 Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro announced the exoneration of 50 Black sailors who had been tried for mutiny and jailed during World War II.

The announcement came on the 80th anniversary of a huge explosion that rocked the entire San Francisco Bay Area. The Port Chicago Naval Magazine, a freight depot where live ammunition was transferred from trains to ships, had blown up.

AS I SEE IT

The explosion killed 320 people, including 203 young Black sailors loading the S.S. E.A. Bryan cargo ship; 67 crew members of that ship and another one next to it; 29 armed Naval guards; Coast Guard sailors on a nearby barge; and several rail workers. Hundreds more were injured. Buildings in the area were flattened, thousands of nearby residents were terrorized.

The biggest death and injury toll was to Black sailors — "Negro soldiers in 'labor battalions' doing long-shore work," the *Militant* reported at the time. They were loading the arma-

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Congress discusses upgrading the draft and conscription of women



Exhausted U.S. troops in Vietnam in 1967. Washington's 15-year war ended as opposition grew in the working class and among GIs, demonstrations spread. Protests also targeted the draft.

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

Since the watershed in world politics marked by Moscow's 2022 invasion of Ukraine and the explosion of Jew-hatred on the heels of the Oct. 7 Tehran-backed Hamas pogrom that killed over 1,200 people, mostly Jews, in Israel, capitalist governments worldwide have looked to expand their military might. They've

boosted "defense" budgets, weighed new military alliances and looked anew at the size of their armies.

Any illusions that technology can replace soldiers, that the rise of machines, drones, robots or "artificial intelligence" can replace humans as cannon fodder for the capitalist bosses is a pipe dream.

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Over 20,000 Boeing workers vote to authorize a strike in contract fight

BY HENRY DENNISON

SEATTLE — More than 20,000 Boeing workers, members of International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers District 751, met here

Join fight against Florida prison ban on the 'Militant'!

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

It has been three months since prison authorities at Jackson Correctional Institution in Malone, Florida, banned *Militant* issue no. 17. The *Militant* promptly appealed the ban and since then dozens of letters have been sent to the Florida Department of Corrections Literature Review Committee urging them to overturn the paper's impoundment. More are needed.

Maintaining this ban, especially over such a long period of time, is a serious

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at the Mariners Major League Baseball stadium July 17 and voted by over 99% to strike if they don't have a new, better contract in place by mid-September. Boeing had to shut its production lines down for the meeting.

The workers let the aerospace giant know that they are ready to stop work if they are not offered a 40% plus wage raise, benefit gains and an end to mandatory overtime. Signs around the ballpark read, "No pay, no planes"

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Freedom Caravan trials are attack on rights in Canada

BY JOHN STEELE

MONTREAL — Despite a strong ruling by Federal Court Justice Richard Mosley earlier this year saying Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government invoking the draconian Emergencies Act to crush a truckers' protest in 2022 was unconstitutional and illegal, the trials of leaders and participants in that Freedom Convoy on criminal charges are continuing.

At the center of these trials is defense of free speech and assembly to protest government policies — political rights won in struggle that working people need to organize, demonstrate and build unions. This is crucial to defend ourselves against efforts by Canada's capitalist rulers to make working people pay for the deepening economic and social crisis caused by their profit system.

Using the Emergencies Act for the first time, Trudeau's government mobilized 3,000 heavily armed cops to clear out a three-week-long encampment of thousands of truckers and supporters. They had peacefully camped in downtown Ottawa with their rigs to demand that Trudeau end government-enforced COVID-19 vaccine mandates that threatened their jobs. The protest was supported by several U.S.-Canada border truck blockades in solidarity.

The Freedom Convoy protest "did not constitute threats or use of serious violence to persons or property," Mosley ruled.

Trudeau's use of the act "would open the door for any sufficiently

disruptive event — say a legal strike at a port — to be deemed a threat to national security," the editors of the *Globe and Mail* said Jan. 24.

Ottawa is appealing Mosley's ruling.

Over 200 protesters were arrested and charged with various criminal offenses, the most common being "mischief over \$5,000," for which the maximum penalty is 10 years in prison.

Frame-up trials

Tamara Lich and Chris Barber, two spokespeople for the convoy, are being tried as "co-conspirators" before Justice Heather Perkins-McVey in Ottawa.

The state's case is based not on what Lich or Barber *did*, but statements they made. Their free-speech fight is being supported by two civil liberties groups: The Democracy Fund and the Justice Center for Constitutional Freedoms. Defense lawyers say conduct by Lich and Barber is protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The trial, which began last September, was supposed to last 16 days, but has been prolonged by procedural delays. Final arguments are now scheduled for Aug. 13-15, after which the judge has six months to render a verdict.

"The trial is a major attack on free speech and the right to protest," the Communist League in Canada said in a statement released at the beginning of the trial. "The unions and all defenders of democratic rights should demand an immediate end to the trial and the withdrawal of all



Adrian Wyld

Truckers protest in Ottawa, Canada's capital, Feb. 8, 2022, calling for an end to government pandemic restrictions threatening their livelihoods. Trudeau government put Freedom Convoy leaders on trial despite court ruling its use of the anti-labor Emergencies Act was illegal.

charges against them and other participants in the protest."

The trial of trucker Pat King began in May. He faces nine charges, including mischief, intimidation, obstructing police and disobeying a court order. Using videos of remarks made by King, prosecutors are trying to prove he was a leader of the Ottawa protest and used his control and influence to break the law. The state is demanding a four-year jail term.

Final arguments in King's case were presented July 26. The prosecutors claimed his statements encouraged the protest and show he crossed the line from expression of views into criminal activity. Defense lawyers said he was peacefully exercising his right to protest. A verdict is expected Oct. 4.

In another frame-up case, Alberta truckers Alex Van Herk, Marco Van Huigenbos and Gerhard Janzen were each found guilty of mischief over \$5,000 for blocking the border crossing in Coutts, Alberta, for two weeks. They await sentencing. The courtroom was packed with supporters.

Federal prosecutor Steve Johnson claimed these truckers were key players in the protest and spoke on behalf of the protesters. "They used the words 'we, our and us,'" he said.

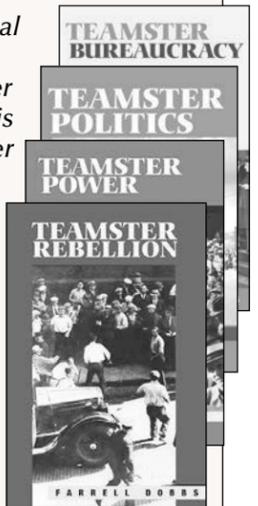
Van Herk told the press he is proud of participating in the protest. "If that's what it takes, that we can show politicians what is right, and we'll do what-

ever sentence that is, I'd do it again tomorrow," he said.

Over the coming months more trials and appeals will take place for Freedom Convoy protesters. Working people need to stand up against these attacks on the rights of the working class.

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THE MILITANT

Workers face soaring costs for medicine

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Telephone: (212) 244-4899

Fax: (212) 244-4947

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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant's* views. These are expressed in editorials.

Black sailors are exonerated

Continued from front page

ments, including incendiary bombs with their fuses already attached, into the ship's hold.

The sailors were in segregated units, commanded by white officers who made bets on which crew could be driven to work the fastest and surpass production quotas.

The union on the docks, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, was appalled at the way Navy officers ran the loading operation. They offered to demonstrate their own safety protocols, saying they feared a disaster. They were ignored.

The union didn't permit workers to load ammunition unless they had at least five years' experience, but some of the Black sailors were put on ammunition after only two to three months training. Fully 15% of all Black U.S. naval casualties in the war occurred in Port Chicago that day.

After the blast the surviving Black sailors told the Navy they wouldn't return to work under the same unsafe conditions. The officers' threats and harassment got 208 of them to go back to work. But when 50 wouldn't budge, the brass charged them with mutiny.

After a 33-day show trial court martial, it took the Naval panel just an hour and a half over lunch to find them guilty and sentence them to 15 years hard labor. These sentences were cut short at the end of the war.

The other 208 were convicted of disobeying orders and given bad conduct discharges. They weren't paid for three months.

"A monstrous crime has been com-

mitted in this case — against the fifty Negro sailors who are being railroaded to prison," the *Militant* said in a Dec. 2, 1944, editorial entitled "Jim Crow Verdict."

'Crime committed by Navy brass'

"That crime has been committed by the Navy brass hats, by the military high command and by the Commander-in-Chief in the White House [Franklin Roosevelt at that time], who enforce Jim Crow policies in the armed forces and relegate Negro sailors to the most menial and dangerous tasks."

The *Militant* campaigned for the verdict to be overturned.

It took 80 years for the Navy to admit the wrong that was done. A lot of credit goes to Robert Allen, who brought the story of the Port Chicago sailors to light in a book, *The Port Chicago Mutiny*. It was published in 1989 after he interviewed many of the surviving sailors. The facts he uncovered were damning and led relatives of workers on the dock, supporters of Black rights and others to fight to overturn the convictions.

All 50 men who set this example of resistance are now dead, as is Robert Allen, who died July 10, just a few days before the exoneration. It is up to us to keep the story alive and draw the lessons that are important for all workers today.

Del Toro, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and numerous politicians, including Kamala Harris, have all praised the Navy's exoneration, but continue to cover up what was really involved.

During World War II opponents of Jim Crow segregation and racist oppression refused to keep quiet. The history of this movement is recorded in the excellent book published by Pathfinder Press, *Fighting Racism in World War II*.

The Roosevelt administration maintained the segregated armed forces to carry out the aims of the U.S. imperialists in the war while police brutality and lynch-mob violence were rampant in the North as well as the South. The explosives shipped through Port Chi-



Loading ammunition at Port Chicago, California, naval depot. In October 1944, 50 Black enlisted men were court-martialed for "mutiny" for refusing to return to jobs after explosion there killed 320 people. Inset, Dec. 2, 1944, *Militant* editorial denouncing the verdict.

cago were used by Washington to advance its imperialist interests in the Pacific. U.S. napalm burned down the workers' districts in Tokyo, killing 100,000 civilians. In August 1945 the U.S. rulers dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The war in the Pacific was a war between two imperialist nations — the U.S. and Japan — over which power would dominate and profit from exploitation of Asia and the South China Sea.

Fight against Jim Crow

Far from supporting the fight for Black rights during World War II, Roosevelt, both the Democrats and Republicans, as well as the Stalinist Communist Party fought to hogtie the movement for Black rights as well as the union movement in the name of support for the U.S. war effort. The rise in the fight against Jim Crow, coupled with the powerful effects of colonial uprisings on the heels of the war, forced the rulers to finally desegregate the armed forces, starting in 1948.

Not only did it take 80 years for the Navy brass to finally exonerate the sailors, but their motivation had nothing to do with Black rights or justice.

Their goal is to improve the image of the U.S. military, in hopes of making it more effective in the new wars the capitalist rulers are preparing.

The fight for Black rights during World War II, and the mass proletarian movement that crushed Jim Crow, have put working people in a stronger position to unite and fight against low wages, speedup, high prices and all the ills brought by the capitalist system today, including racist oppression.

The SWP 2024 campaign will help get out the truth about the Port Chicago mutiny trial and explain that working people can move forward only if we break with the parties of the bosses and form our own party, a party of labor, to unite all those exploited by capital. A party that can put us on a course to take political power into our own hands.

Eric Simpson is the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress in California's 12th District.

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25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



August 16, 1999

Thousands of working people, youth, soldiers, and others have hit the streets in cities and towns throughout Serbia. They are taking advantage of the first openings since the U.S./NATO bombardment of Yugoslavia began March 24 to express their outrage against the Belgrade regime and its policies.

The main demand is the resignation of president Slobodan Milosevic, explained Dusan, a leader of the Student Union of Yugoslavia. "The demonstrations are positive," said Dusan, who asked that his last name not be used. "It's the only way to get rid of Milosevic, who is to blame for the war."

Working people are now faced with the disastrous results of the imperialist bombing campaign. While electricity and water services are mostly restored, the massive destruction of the country's infrastructure has left millions of workers without income.



August 16, 1974

DETROIT — More than 250 women attended the Southeast Michigan Organizing Conference of the Coalition of Labor Union Women. The conference was organized for the purpose of establishing chapters in the five counties of Southeast Michigan.

The composition reflected the breadth of CLUW's appeal and the heterogeneity of women in the labor movement. About one third were Black. All ages were represented, from young women just entering the workforce to union retirees. The vast majority were rank-and-file members, but all levels of union leadership were involved.

Olga Madar, national president of CLUW, stressed the importance of going to the unions and orienting them to fight for women's issues. To do this effectively, she said, the unions will have to be democratized so that they represent the needs of all their members.



August 15, 1949

JOBLESS MILLIONS NEED ACTION NOW

Our Program on Unemployment

The following is the program of the Socialist Workers Party and The Militant to ensure decent living standards for the growing army of unemployed and their families:

1. For a federal system of unemployment compensation equal to full regular union wages for all unemployed and for the entire period of unemployment.
2. For full-scale public works of a socially beneficial character, including government-built low-rent housing, hospitals, schools, etc., to provide jobs at union wages and to be financed by the billions now going for war preparations.
3. For a 30-hour week, six-hour day with no reductions in take-home pay.
4. For an all-out campaign for higher wages to raise mass purchasing power.

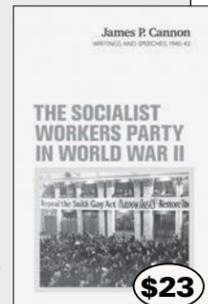
Fighting Racism in World War II

A week-by-week account from the *Militant* of efforts to advance the Black rights struggle in face of patriotic appeals to postpone resistance to lynch-mob terror and racist discrimination until after U.S. "victory" in World War II.



The Socialist Workers Party in World War II by James P. Cannon

The Socialist Workers Party's campaign to organize working-class and union opposition to U.S. rulers' imperialist aims in World War II in face of Washington's efforts to silence anti-war militants.



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Canada rail workers fight for safety, demand right to strike

BY PHILIPPE TESSIER

MONTREAL — Rail workers across Canada are awaiting the decision of the Canada Industrial Relations Board on their right to strike. The 9,300 conductors, engineers, yard workers and dispatchers at both the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Kansas City railroads, members of the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference, have voted twice — in May and in June — by more than 98% in favor of strike action.

The Canadian government May 19 suspended the right to strike and bosses' locking out of workers, claiming this could jeopardize "the health and safety of Canadians." The board is supposed to clarify what is and what is not an "essential good" that needs to be exempted from any strike. The Canada Industrial Relations Board, a government-appointed body, has said it *intends* to reach a decision on Aug. 9, but it could take longer.

"The government is doing everything it can to prevent us from striking while hiding behind the pretext of safety for Canadians," Eugen Bernard, who has been a conductor at Canadian National for nine years, told the *Militant*. "Both CN and CPKC, with the government, don't care about safety, they only care about profits."

"Hit by labour shortages, both CN and CPKC are trying to squeeze more availability out of train crews," the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference said in a June 29 statement. "CPKC aims to gut the collective agreement of all safety-critical fatigue provisions." Meanwhile, "CN is targeting fewer articles around fatigue,

but their offer is contingent on the acceptance of a forced relocation scheme. ... Compromising on safety, or threatening to tear families apart for months, are not solutions to staffing problems."

"CN and CPKC are trying to force changes to our collective agreements that would move the clock back on working conditions and rail safety. The Teamsters are trying to stop them," the statement said.

"I voted for the strike," said Giulio Archambault, another train conductor at Canadian National. "Safety on the job is a critical issue, and I feel like it would be strongly hindered" if we accepted the company proposals. "I want to be considered a human being, not a machine."

On top of the earlier delays, CPKC bosses have asked for a 30-day "cooling-off period" if the Canada Industrial Relations Board allows a strike.

Many rail workers followed closely the recent walkout by over 600 mechanics at WestJet, Canada's second-largest airline, members of the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association.

The Liberal Minister of Labor, Seamus O'Regan, asked the industrial relations board to ban the strike and impose arbitration. While the board agreed to impose arbitration, they did not try to stop a strike.

The union went out for three days, forcing WestJet to negotiate with them before approving an improved contract by over 96%.

It wouldn't have been good "if they imposed arbitration on the WestJet mechanics, because they could do it to us," Loupca Fournelle, a conductor at Canadian National, told the *Militant*. "They showed that we have a lot of power when we go on strike."

Cuba celebrates July 26 in Sancti Spiritus



Photos by Radio Havana

Thousands of Cubans gathered in Sancti Spiritus July 26 to celebrate the 71st anniversary of the rebel assault led by Fidel Castro on the Moncada and Carlos Manuel de Céspedes garrisons in 1953. It was the beginning of constructing a movement capable of leading Cuban workers and peasants to power less than six years later.

"July 26 marked a decisive turning point in Cuba's history," Cuban Vice President Salvador Valdés Mesa, inset, the main speaker, told the crowd. It "defined the unwavering attitude we must maintain in face of dangers, challenges, and difficulties, however insurmountable they may seem."

"The intensified blockade" facing Cuba today, he said, "together with the rest of the aggressive measures implemented against Cuba by the United States government, constitutes the fundamental cause of the current economic difficulties."

"There will always be little recognition for this people, who face the difficulties of daily life, without losing confidence that only socialism can overcome them with justice," he said, "without leaving anyone abandoned to their fate."

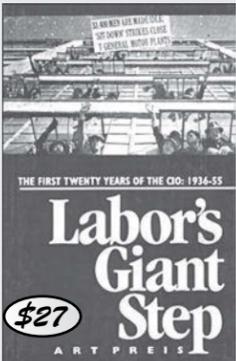
Quoting Castro, Mesa said, "We remain the same as we were on July 26, 1953, in one respect alone. We still have the same faith in the destiny of the homeland, the same confidence in the qualities of our people. We remain just as certain of victory."

The event was attended by Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel, General of the Army Raúl Castro, Commander of the Revolution Ramiro Valdés, and José Ramón Machado Ventura, a combatant and doctor in the rebel Army Second Eastern Front and longtime leader of the Cuban Revolution.

Groups of supporters of Cuba's revolution, including the Juan Rius Rivera Solidarity Brigade from Puerto Rico, joined in demanding the end of the economic, commercial and financial blockades imposed on Cuba by the U.S. government and the removal of Cuba from Washington's "State Sponsors of Terrorism" list.

— VIVIAN SAHNER

Read about the battles that forged the US labor movement



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Boeing workers vote 99% to authorize a strike

Continued from front page

and "Paid medical now! Pension now. COLA." On Sept. 12, workers will vote on any Boeing contract offer and take a second strike vote.

"We come to get what we deserve. We haven't had a contract negotiation in 14 years," mechanic Kenneth Chestay told the *Militant* outside the stadium. "With inflation our wages

didn't go up. Rent, gas and food are too expensive. People have to work overtime to make ends meet. We can't afford a home." The lowest paid mechanics at Boeing get \$23.50 per hour.

The union has been locked into its current contract for the past 16 years. Under company pressure over jobs, it has made concessions since then.

Workers fear for their job security after a series of disasters resulting from the dog-eat-dog profit drive of Boeing's bosses. "The bad decisions made at the executive level of the Boeing Company are short-term decisions with long-term consequences," IAM District 751 President Jon Holden said after the vote. "We are fighting to change this company and to save it from itself."

Cutting costs to boost income led to the deadly crashes of two 737 Max 8 jets, one in 2018 on a Lion Air flight in Indonesia killing all 189 people on board and another in Ethiopia the next year killing all 157.

The cause for both crashes was a software glitch the bosses knew about but covered up that pushed the planes into a dive. The U.S. government bears some responsibility, because it handed over Federal Aviation Agency responsibility for oversight to Boeing's bosses.

Then this past January, a door plug flew off Alaska Air Flight 1282 at 16,000 feet, causing an uncontrolled

decompression. The crew was able to stabilize the plane and make an emergency landing back in Portland, Oregon. It turned out the plug had been improperly installed, but Boeing had "lost" all records of how that happened.

The workers are fighting to exert more control over production.

Boeing firefighters set an example

In early May Boeing got a taste of the workers' readiness to fight after the bosses locked out the in-plant fire department and medical response workers. These unionists, members of International Association of Fire Fighters Local I-66, held spirited picket lines at various company facilities and won support from fellow Boeing workers, truckers, rail workers, area firefighters and other working people. Boeing has a string of manufacturing plants and other facilities throughout the Puget Sound region.

On May 28 the firefighters won pay raises up to more than \$21,000 a year, four hours overtime pay in their 24-hour shifts, accelerated progression to full pay and other benefits.

Contribute to the 'Militant' online at themilitant.com

Endorse Socialist Workers Party 2024 campaign!

Rachele Fruit for president & Dennis Richter vice president

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SWP campaigns in Minnesota

Continued from front page

ways to defend themselves. They're interested in the party's call for a break with the Democratic, Republican and other capitalist parties and the need for a party of labor. Campaign supporters are reaching out to go well over the 2,000 signatures required. As of July 30 some 1,512 people have signed up to put the SWP ticket on the ballot.

"Many Latinos support Trump because the economy was better when he was president," farmworker José Merrieza told SWP campaigner Naomi Craine at a Walmart parking lot July 24.

"Whoever is in the White House has very little effect on the economy," Craine said. "What the bosses call a 'strong economy' refers to their profit rates. It doesn't mean things are getting better for workers. For us, the tendency is toward more exploitation, high prices and competition for jobs.

"Only a workers government can make the resources of society available for everyone. That's what they did in Cuba when they took political power into their own hands," Craine added.

"If a rich person gave up all his money to the poor, after some time he would end up rich again," Merrieza said.

"The solution isn't the redistribution of money," Craine replied. "It's ending the system of exploitation. We have to transform the organization of society, and only the working class can lead that." Cuba's socialist revolution shows that's possible, she said. Merrieza bought a copy of the Spanish edition of *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward* by SWP leaders Jack Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark to learn more.

"Socialists opposed to Jew-hatred, I have to sign that," one woman in Buffalo, northwest of Minneapolis, told SWP campaigners July 29. The party urges workers and unions to act against every move to slander, scapegoat or attack Jews. It defends Israel's right to exist as a refuge for the Jewish people.

Four SWP campaigners spent July 25-26 on the Mesabi Iron Range, a 110-mile-long strip of northern Minnesota. The livelihood of tens of thousands there depends on the mining of taconite, a low-grade iron ore used to make steel.

"I inherited a hay farm, but like most farmers I couldn't afford to keep it going," Robert Ansell told SWP campaigner Iona Gersh at a Walmart parking lot in Virginia. "The price of seed and equipment is too high. So I sold the farm and became a construction worker.

"I'm retired now. The idea of a labor party sounds good, but where does that leave retired and unemployed people?"

A party of labor would organize all

working people, in or out of work, unionized or unorganized, to fight together, Gersh said. She pointed to the example set by the Minneapolis Teamsters during their historic strike in 1934. "The union recruited workers without jobs to an unemployed section and helped fight for public relief for them and to prevent trucking companies from using them as strikebreakers. The union organized a women's auxiliary and reached out to farmers." Ansell signed the petition and got a copy of the *Militant*.

In Pengilly, construction worker Del Halling signed and subscribed to the paper. "I've given up hope in the Democratic and Republican parties," he said. "I don't even vote anymore."

"The Socialist Workers Party says you should vote for what you're for, not who you're against," Gersh replied. "Working people need a party of labor that can help organize our class to fight for what we need, like cost-of-living adjustments in all contracts so when prices rise, wages go up automatically, and for a shorter workweek with no cut in pay to prevent layoffs. "But why is socialism the answer?" Halling asked.

"The working class creates the wealth of the world," Gersh replied. "And our class is the only class that can run society with the interests of the majority. Work-

Child care crisis facing working people worsens

BY JANET POST

The crisis of child care for the working class has worsened since the government's \$24 billion pandemic relief program ended last September. Pressures are increasing, especially on women, to quit work in order to look after children, while the rise in prices on other essentials is leading many young workers to put off starting families.

Between 2019 and 2023 child care costs jumped more than 30%.

"I knew day care was expensive, but I guess I didn't put into perspective how much it would be," Carmen Luong, 29, told the Philadelphia *Inquirer*. "It's a whole mortgage payment or rent basically." Infant care in the city costs on average more than 22% of median family income. When Luong's retired father heard about the cost, he volunteered to look after her 4-month-old son in South Philadelphia.

Not everyone can turn to family members.

Jane Roberts told the Associated Press that she and husband Mike, both teachers in Pocatello, Idaho, realized the high cost of child care meant it was out of the question for their son. As a result Jane decided she'll quit her job this fall.

Tyler and Amy Salovin pay \$26,000 a year for child care for their two daughters in Springfield, Pennsylvania. "It's not the only reason we're not having any more kids," said Amy, "but it's a factor."

In New York City a family spends on average over 25% of its income for the care of one child.

Some 80% of families in that city cannot afford child care for children under 5, and nearly four out of five families cannot pay for out-of-school care for children ages 6 to 12, the Citizens' Committee for Children reported last year. In the Bronx and Brooklyn, the group says, "the cost of child care or out-of-school care would consume up to more than half (63%) of their annual income."

The rising costs of child care have nothing to do with what child care work-



Militant/Betsy Farley

Sherry Hurt, a medical assistant in Maplewood, was "happy to sign the petition" to put SWP presidential candidate Rachele Fruit on the ballot July 31. She also endorsed the campaign.

ing people thrive on solidarity and unity. The capitalist rulers thrive on exploiting us and creating divisions that weaken our ability to fight together. Workers need to fight for political power."

"I wish I had run into you a lot earlier," Halling said. He told Gersh he remembered the miners strike on the Iron Range in 1977. Gersh said she got hired at the Minntac mine there just after that fight. "Because of workers' unity, they won a lot of their demands and were an inspiration to others. The strikers traveled around the country to win support

and to give support to other workers fighting for unions, like the shipbuilders in Newport News, Virginia."

Today, SWP campaigners have been building support for park workers in Minneapolis who recently won a tentative contract after a three-week strike.

Alongside collecting signatures to get on the ballot, SWP campaigners have also won 14 people to endorse the campaign, and sold 16 subscriptions to the *Militant* and 19 books by leaders of the Socialist Workers Party and other revolutionaries.

ers get paid. In New York a quarter of them live in poverty. Median pay nationally for child care workers is \$15 an hour. Staffing shortages are rampant throughout the country, at both licensed and nonlicensed facilities.

Some 43% of parents have waited more than four months for an opening at a day care center. "There was such a long list for all of them," Rebecca Lane told the *Inquirer*, "we would have had to have signed up on a wait list before I knew even that I was pregnant."

High prices for rent, child care and other essentials lead many workers to try to hold down two or more jobs, leaving no time to relax, nor for union or social activity, nor time with families.

Adriane Burnett, a single mom in Birmingham, Alabama, earns \$2,800 a month as a customer service representa-

tive, spending more than a third of that on care for her 3 year old. In October her child aged out of a program that provided her with some child care benefits. Burnett had to take a second job as a food delivery driver, borrowing her father's car for the job after she lost her own when she got behind on payments. She gets her 14 year old to babysit the toddler while she's making deliveries.

In rural areas the child care crisis is worse. Nearly two-thirds of families live where there are at least three young children for every licensed child care opening — or no licensed providers at all.

The labor movement needs to lead a fight for universal child care and medical care as an integral part of the fight for jobs, wages and cost-of-living protections. That's the road to advancing the fight for women's emancipation.

Australia: Nurses in New South Wales rally for more pay, staffing

BY LINDA HARRIS

SYDNEY — Nurses and midwives rallied outside public hospitals across New South Wales July 23-24. Members of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association are demanding an immediate 15% pay raise.

"We are calling for fairness," Fran Cavallaro, who works at the Cumberland psychiatric hospital, told a rally of more than 80 nurses outside Westmead Hospital July 23. "A 15% rise in one year is essential to bring us to parity with nurses in other states."

"NSW nurses are the lowest paid in the country," Dave Russell, a Westmead nurses delegate, told the rally, "yet the cost of living is higher than other states."

Russell had thought that after the election of a Labor government in New South Wales in 2023 their conditions and pay would improve.

But NSW Labor Premier Christopher Minns has only offered a wage

increase of 10.5% over three years. The low pay here is leading nurses to move to other states. "The 15% we are asking for would improve staffing," Russell said.

The Nurses and Midwives Association points to how the "high levels of exhaustion and a decade of wage suppression, coupled with rising cost-of-living pressures, have taken a considerable toll on the nursing and midwifery workforce across our state."

Cavallaro told the *Militant* that many nurses like her are only just making ends meet. "Every time I get a bill I'm scared to open it," she said.

Ramsay Health Care nurses at St George Private Hospital in Sydney stopped work for three hours July 25. Their wages are lower than public sector nurses, as well as at other private hospitals. More than 150 nurses and midwives rallied, demanding a pay raise and better staff-to-patient ratios.

International tours

Rachele Fruit
SWP candidate for U.S.
president
Manchester, UK
Sun. Aug. 18,
London Sat. Aug. 24.

Dennis Richter
for U.S. vice president
Sydney, Australia
Sat., Aug. 17.

For more info see p. 9 directory

Ukraine writer, shot by Putin's troops, lives on in secret diary

BY ROY LANDERSEN

The story of a Ukrainian author, Volodymyr Vakulenko, executed by invading Russian forces in March 2022 — and the discovery and publication of his hidden journal by his father and a fellow writer — sheds light on the depth of Moscow's drive to destroy Ukrainian culture. Russian President Vladimir Putin insists independent Ukraine doesn't, or shouldn't, exist, despite yearslong heroic resistance by the Ukrainian people to his reactionary dream of a resurrected Russian empire, with himself as the czar.

Putin's occupying forces want to "systematically erase" Ukrainian culture, the novelist Victoria Amelina, who made Vakulenko's buried diary public, said at his funeral. "They want to kill those they cannot turn into a Russian," she told NPR.

After Russian tanks rolled into his village near Izium, 75 miles southeast of Kharkiv, Vakulenko, 49, a writer of poetry and children's stories, recorded in a notebook his observations of life under Russian occupation. As a strong supporter of Ukraine's independence, he had joined the mass popular protests in 2014 in Kyiv's Maidan Square that brought down the pro-Moscow regime of Viktor Yanukovich.

After Moscow's troops occupied his village, Vakulenko decided to stay to care for his parents and his autistic son. His home was raided and searched and he was taken away, interrogated and brutally beaten. His refusal to speak Russian and his shelves of Ukrainian-language books marked him as a "nationalist," a target of Putin's occupiers.

Returning home but expecting an-

other, more deadly knock on the door, Vakulenko buried his notebook in a plastic bag under a cherry tree in his backyard. He told his father to give it to Ukrainian forces when they liberated the area.

The next day, Russian paramilitaries dressed in black seized him at gunpoint. His body, shot twice with a pistol, was later discovered in the forest. He was buried by the occupying forces along with over 400 others, about half of them women, in a mass grave.

Six months later, a Ukrainian counteroffensive drove Moscow's forces out of Izium. The mass grave was exhumed, with signs of torture on many of the bodies. It drew international attention.

Putin's invasion "introduced a reign of terror on the occupied territories, to keep them under control," Oleksandra Matviichuk, from the Kyiv-based Center for Civil Liberties, told the *Guardian*. "Occupation is not a matter of exchanging the flag of one state for that of another. Occupation brings torture, deportation, forced adoption, denial of identity, filtration camps, mass graves."

Secret diary found by fellow writer

Before the war, Amelina was an award-winning novelist and author of children's stories and essays. But the shock of Moscow's invasion changed her life. In a poem she described the reality of Putin's war as "devouring all punctuation / devouring the plot coherence / devouring."

She started to investigate reports of Moscow's war crimes, which led her to interview Vakulenko's parents. Aided by his father, after hours of digging,



Author Victoria Amelina near tree where she dug up diary about Russian occupation by Volodymyr Vakulenko, a Ukrainian children's book writer. He had buried it before being murdered. Amelina published it in 2023 before she was herself killed by a Russian airstrike.

she unearthed his journal. She said the discovery made her think "about all the Ukrainian manuscripts that have been lost over the past centuries, and this might have been another one."

In an essay for PEN Ukraine, Amelina wrote she feared the suppression of Ukrainian culture after Moscow's invasion. She noted how this echoed what happened under the Russian empires of the czars and in the Stalinist-run Soviet Union.

Ukraine culture flowered with Lenin

For a few years in between, however, the Russian Revolution of 1917 inspired millions of working people worldwide. As part of that history-making advance, Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin led a fight to defend national self-determination as part of the revolution's proletarian internationalist course. This enabled the flowering of language and culture for Ukrainians, Jews and all nationalities oppressed under the czarist

"prison house of nations."

In her PEN essay, Amelina described how in the 1930s the Stalinist regime in Moscow had Ukrainian writers and intellectuals murdered, their manuscripts destroyed and their memory wiped away.

The mighty revolution led by Lenin and the Bolsheviks, and its support for the rights of Ukrainians, was brutally overthrown in a bureaucratic counter-revolution led by Joseph Stalin. He ordered a mass seizure of grain, which led to the death of millions of working people in the countryside, especially in Ukraine in 1932-33. It was known as the Holodomor, which means "death by starvation." The systematic purge of Ukrainian culture was part of this.

This year the Kyiv Arsenal Book Festival featured a display of charred books, a testimony to Moscow's war on Ukrainian literature. They had been salvaged from among 50,000 volumes burned in a May 23 Russian missile strike on a Kharkiv printing plant, one of the country's largest. The attack killed seven workers there.

The manuscript of Vakulenko's diary is now kept in the Kharkiv Literary Museum. Along with a selection of his poems and a preface by Amelina, it was published in June 2023 as *I Am Transforming: A Diary of Occupation*. It was then presented by Vakulenko's mother and Amelina at the Kyiv book fair.

In her preface, Amelina said, "As long as a writer is read, he is alive."

Amelina herself was killed, along with 12 others, in a Russian missile attack on a restaurant in Kramatorsk shortly after the 2023 book fair. But not before she succeeded in keeping alive Vakulenko's — and her — fight for Ukrainian culture.

Israelis face threat of wider war

Continued from front page

launched over 6,000 missiles, drones and other projectiles at northern Israel from Lebanon since Oct. 8, the day after Hamas' murderous pogrom. Its goal is to force Israel to accept a cease-fire in Gaza, allowing Hamas to recover and prepare more anti-Jewish pogroms. And to accept a permanent presence of Hezbollah near the border, a dagger aimed at the existence of the Jewish people in Israel.

The pro-Tehran Resistance News Network immediately posted videos of the attack on Majdal Shams claiming there were "11 wounded settlers" and bragging that "over 100 rockets have been fired from southern Lebanon in the last hour." But when it realized that those killed and wounded were Druze Arabs and not Jews, it changed its tune and blamed Israel.

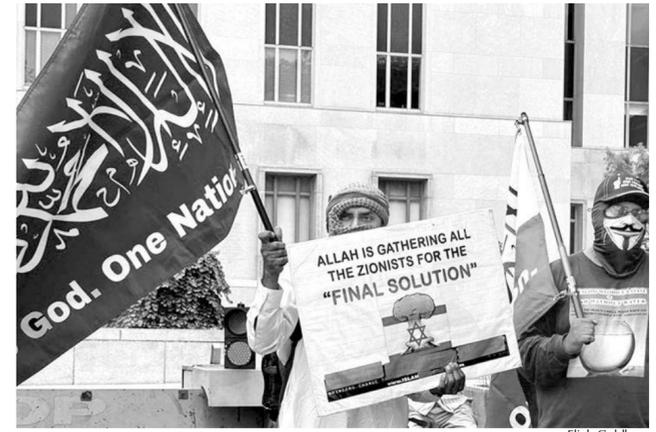
There are some 300,000 Druze in Lebanon and 700,000 in Syria, in ad-

dition to 140,000 in Israel. Hezbollah and Tehran fear the reaction of the Druze in Lebanon and Syria. While not supporters of Tehran, the Druze in Lebanon and Syria had not risen up to oppose Tehran's Jew-hating course in recent years.

Some U.S. news outlets joined the cover-up of the Hezbollah attack. The *Washington Post's* banner front-page headline July 29 proclaimed, "Israel hits targets in Lebanon: Strikes against Hezbollah installations muted amid international calls for restraint."

Adding to this twisted view, directly above the headline the paper ran a photo of grieving family members in Majdal Shams. The caption reported that "the Iranian-backed militant group denies connection to the attack." Two days later the *Post* finally admitted that all evidence points to Hezbollah.

The anti-Israel bias is no surprise.



Sign held by Hamas supporter at Washington protest against Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu speaking to Congress July 24, shows "anti-Zionism" is simply Jew-hatred in the Nazi tradition.

Since the Oct. 7 pogrom, the *Post* has focused its coverage not on the murderous, Nazi-like actions of Hamas, but on false accusations that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza.

Netanyahu addresses U.S. Congress

The attack on Majdal Shams came a few days after Netanyahu addressed the U.S. Congress July 24.

As the central leader of Israel's capitalist government, Netanyahu appealed to the imperialist parties in the U.S. to stand with Israel to fight Jew-hatred and prevent Tehran from advancing its reactionary influence in the region. With or without Washington's support, he said, "Israel will always defend itself."

"Three thousand Hamas terrorists stormed into Israel" Oct. 7, he recalled, appealing for broader popular support in the U.S. and around the world. "They butchered 1,200 people from 41 countries."

"These monsters, they raped women, they beheaded men, they burnt babies alive, they killed parents in front of their children and children in front of their parents. They dragged 255 people, both living and dead, into the dark dungeons of Gaza."

Netanyahu pointed out four Israel Defense Forces soldiers in the audience who demonstrated great courage in battle against Hamas, including an Ethiopian immigrant and a Bedouin Arab.

"The men and women of the IDF come from every corner of Israeli society, every ethnicity, every color, every creed, left and right, religious and secular," he said.

In his pitch for backing from the U.S. rulers he urged them to view Israel as a bulwark that defends Washington's interests against Tehran and its Hamas, Hezbollah, and Houthis proxies, which seek to eradicate Israel and the Jewish people.

But the U.S. imperialist rulers are focused on advancing their own economic and political interests, not in fighting against Jew-hatred or defending Israel as a refuge for Jews.

Democratic Party candidate Kamala Harris demagogically boycotted Netanyahu's talk, as did some 50% of her fellow Democratic congressmen and senators.

The next day Harris met with Netanyahu at the White House. In a break with diplomatic protocol, she held her own press conference afterward, without informing Netanyahu.

"I will always ensure that Israel is able to defend itself," she said, before getting to her main point, which

was to demand that Israel carry out a cease-fire before Hamas is defeated. "I will not be silent" in the face of the "human suffering in Gaza," she said, not once mentioning that the suffering is a result of Hamas' continued use of civilians as human shields, placing its command posts inside schools, mosques and U.N. buildings and its refusal to free the remaining hostages.

Druze in Lebanon, Syria and Israel

The Druze are an Arabic-speaking people with their own religion. They've been part of Israel since its formation in 1948, when thousands of Jews who survived the Holocaust were refused entry by Washington and other imperialist powers and emigrated to what became Israel. Alongside forces led by Amin al-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and collaborator of Adolf Hitler in the Second World War, bourgeois Arab leaderships and Islamist groups attacked the new Jewish state. The Druze opted to stand with Israel and became Israeli citizens. Most Druze men proudly serve in the Israel Defense Forces.

But the history of the Druze in Golan Heights is different. Until 1967, when Israeli forces headed off an invasion by the Egyptian army and other Arab regimes, the Golan Heights was part of Syria. The Israelis defeated those armies in six days, wresting control of the Golan Heights, the West Bank and all of Jerusalem.

For decades the Druze in Golan Heights viewed themselves as Syrian citizens living under Israeli occupation. But over time many have become more integrated into Israeli society, especially the youth. Today some 20% are Israeli citizens.

Some Druze, angry at discriminatory treatment by the government and what they view as insufficient action to end months of Hezbollah attacks in the north, heckled Netanyahu when he came to pay his respects. Others agreed that Hezbollah "should be obliterated."

Jewish citizens of Israel reached out in solidarity with the Druze victims of Hezbollah. Ynetnews reports that "countless citizens have made pilgrimages to the local playground, laying down bouquets of flowers or tying black ribbons to the charred fence" where the rocket struck.

"We are all brothers and one people," Shmuel Hazan told the paper, while visiting the site. "We must only strengthen and support each other."

Join fight against Florida prison ban on the 'Militant'

Continued from front page

violation of the constitutional rights of prisoners to read and discuss political literature of their choice, as well as the right of the *Militant* to reach its readers behind bars.

The Literature Review Committee informed *Militant* attorney David Goldstein that it would hold a hearing July 18 to review the prison authorities' impoundment. No information on what it decided has been communicated to the *Militant* or its attorney since then.

This underscores the importance of continuing to urge the Literature Review Committee to overturn the ban. Individuals and organizations that have

already submitted letters can request an update from authorities on where this case stands.

Why is it important for all those defending constitutional freedoms to continue to speak out against the banning of the *Militant*?

The prison authorities objected to the *Militant* printing a widely circulated Associated Press photo accompanying an article in the paper opposing Jew-hatred. It shows the body of a Jewish man murdered by Hamas during its Oct. 7 pogrom in Israel being driven around Gaza City to cheers by the Islamist thugs' supporters.

Jackson Correctional Institution officials wrote, "Picture shows dead person being paraded around on a motorcycle; Magazine depict hatred toward a specific race."

"Nothing could be further from the truth," said *Militant* editor John Studer. "The *Militant* doesn't depict hatred toward any race. It opposes Jew-hatred and calls for uniting Jewish, Arab, immigrant and other workers to defend their common class interests.

"At issue," he continued, "are the rights of prisoners to read what they wish and to form their own opinions about political developments outside of prison walls. Another question is freedom of the press, and the rights of the *Militant* to reach the growing number of readers it

has among workers behind bars."

Prison authorities claim the photo is "dangerously inflammatory" and violates prison rules, by encouraging "riot, insurrection, rebellion" and "organized prison protest."

"Nothing in the photo, even standing alone, could possibly be construed as advocating or encouraging riot, insurrection, etc.," Goldstein wrote in his appeal of the ban on the paper.

Among organizations that have sent letters calling for the ban to be overturned are the American Civil Liberties Union in Florida and nationwide, Florida Press Association, PEN America, Amnesty International and others.

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The fight against Jew-hatred and pogroms in the imperialist epoch

\$5

See page 9 for distributor near you

US rulers stabilize their parties

Continued from front page

candidates, Kamala Harris and Donald Trump. They're each setting out to rally interest and support among working people who confront the effects of a deepgoing capitalist crisis.

The 2024 election comes as a decades-long retreat by the working class and our trade unions has come to an end. "The intensified speedup, longer and longer hours, attacks on job safety, declining real wages, lack of steady employment, and spiraling social and moral blight — conditions produced by the ruling class families in the United States and capitalism's dog-eat-dog social relations — are pressing more and more working people to say, 'Enough is enough.'" Socialist Workers Party leader Mary-Alice Waters writes in *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward*.

Thousands of workers at Boeing and at ports on the East Coast are fighting for better contracts. Many more have walked picket lines in recent strikes.

The fact that workers are in the mood to fight is the key factor in politics today, creating more openings to advance a working-class road forward. It's the reason that campaigners for the Socialist Workers Party presidential ticket — Rachele Fruit for U.S. president and Dennis Richter for vice president — find serious interest in the party's program, especially the SWP's call for a break with the bosses' parties and for workers to establish a party of labor that can organize all working people into struggles to defend our own class interests.

Ever since Donald Trump emerged as a figure in capitalist politics, he has pushed to transform the way the Republican Party presents itself. "You're going to have a workers' party," he said in May 2016, "a party of people who haven't had a real wage increase in 18 years."

He has largely accomplished this to-

day. He invited Sean O'Brien, general president of the Teamsters, to be the first union leader in years to speak at the recent Republican convention.

For decades, Democrats claimed to be the party that stood up for workers, drawing union officials into backing so-called friends of labor on the Democratic Party line, subordinating workers' interests to a party that defends the U.S. bosses at home and abroad.

Today tens of thousands attend Trump's rallies as he pounds away at questions that are barely mentioned by Democrats, but resonate deeply with working people. In Grand Rapids, Michigan, July 22, Trump claimed he'd "end the inflation nightmare." It's "a class buster. It busts everything. Low-income, middle-income especially."

As Trump points to the conditions bearing down on workers, he also scapegoats immigrants, seeking to divert workers' attention from the real cause of the capitalist crisis — the bosses' drive to profit at our expense — and to deepen divisions among workers.

Trump seeks to keep workers looking toward the bosses' two-party setup. Nothing he says points workers toward relying on each other and our capacities for class struggle, let alone the need to organize independently of the ruling class and its parties.

Democrats pull behind Harris

Since Democratic Party bosses shoved Joseph Biden aside for Kamala Harris, a rapturous liberal media has showered her with support. "Harris raises \$200mn in first week of 'record shattering' election campaign," the *Financial Times* cooed July 29.

So far, Harris has centered her campaign largely on the same theme pushed by Biden — vilifying Trump. As a former prosecutor, "I took on perpetrators of all kinds," she said at her first cam-

in their tens of millions overthrew the hated rule of the U.S.-backed shah.

Today's bills in Congress are a long way from being passed, and none of them would actually reimpose the draft at this time. They would accumulate a larger pool of potential draftees.

For working people, the proposed increase in draft age from 25 to 26 is a grim reminder that in the lead up to World War II, men in the U.S. were required to register between the ages of 18 and 45. Some 10 million draftees were forced into the bloodiest inter-imperialist slaughter in history.

Politicians on both sides argue automatic registration will cut down on red tape and "help citizens avoid unnecessary legal issues." In fact, they are trying to address the problem of the 16% who aren't registering now, while at the same time hoping to avoid the wildly unpopular prosecutions against those who refused to register in the 1980s.

Draft of women proposed

The proposal in the Senate to register women for the draft — buried in a 1,197 page bill — has stirred debate.

Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley told Fox News, "We need to get reality back in check here. There shouldn't be women in the draft." But more than 250,000 women today serve in the U.S. military, serving in every capacity, largely for the same reason as men, to get a cheap edu-



Militant/Betsy Stone

Striking nurses picket Santa Clara County hospital in Gilroy, California, April 3. More workers are willing to fight today, leading to interest in the Socialist Workers Party 2024 campaign.

paid event July 22. "So hear me when I say I know Donald Trump's type."

Biden helps push the Democrats' line, saying July 29 that the key question in the election is the menace of Trump and his "increasing threats to America's democratic institutions." Behind Trump is what they really fear, the millions of workers who are looking for a change.

What Biden and Harris call "democracy" is the state apparatus that serves the U.S. imperialist rulers. All Democrats and Republicans claim this is "our" government, representing everyone.

But what working people need are protections *from* that state, which serves the exploiting class. That's what was written into the Constitution — protection of the right to free speech, to bear arms, to worship freely, to a timely and fair trial and more. These rights are increasingly important as workers fight attacks from the bosses and their government today.

At a campaign event in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, July 27 Harris claimed Trump "intends to take our country backward" to "a very dark past." She pointed to the "generations of Ameri-

cans before us [who] led the fight for freedom," referring to the struggles that toppled Jim Crow segregation.

That momentous struggle, and the ongoing fight to end the national oppression of African Americans, remains decisive to uniting the working class and charting a road toward replacing capitalist rule with a government of our own.

But advancing the fight for Black freedom has nothing to do with what Harris represents. As she proudly points out, she's a former prosecutor, part of the rulers' criminal "justice" system that operates to keep working people in their place. Democratic Party leaders have long claimed they speak for Black rights, but even a cursory study of U.S. history shows their record is as a bulwark of racist oppression. It was a powerful independent mass movement of working people that toppled Jim Crow and changed U.S. politics forever. From Franklin Roosevelt to Lyndon Johnson, Democrats fought it tooth and nail.

The opposite course was pursued by Malcolm X. He explained that both the two main parties upheld a system based on exploitation and oppression. He backed efforts of Black rights fighters to run independently of the Democrats and Republicans in 1964 on the Freedom Now ticket and gave encouragement to Clifton DeBerry, the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president.

For working-class political action

The rulers' success in stabilizing their two-party system doesn't change what faces working people.

The idea that "Republicans are more 'reactionary' than the Democrats ... is an illusion," James P. Cannon, a founder and central leader of the Socialist Workers Party, wrote in August 1944. "The two big class parties," Cannon wrote, have "differences of tradition, composition, sectional interests. ... But one can lose his bearing entirely if he does not recognize their secondary character."

These differences effect how "the big capitalists have to manipulate the masses in order to assure their firm rule," Cannon said. "But in the absence of an independent class opposition on the political field they will continue, as in the past, to solve the problem without too much difficulty." On all the fundamental questions, he said, the two parties support the U.S. rulers.

Recognizing the pervasive anti-working-class character of the Democratic and Republican parties is the first step to understanding why breaking from them is crucial. It's why workers should build a party of our own, a party of labor. That's what the SWP campaign offers fighters today.

Congress discusses upgrading the draft, adding women

Continued from front page

Democrats and Republicans — the two parties that defend the interests of the U.S. capitalist class — are discussing how much to raise last year's \$883.7 billion military budget, an amount larger than the defense budgets of the next nine largest countries combined.

But dishing out more money doesn't guarantee a big enough army. In 2023, the U.S. military collectively fell short of its recruiting goals by some 41,000. The Defense Department says since the disastrous wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the number of volunteers has dropped.

New bills introduced in Congress would allow the military to automatically register all young men for the draft at age 18, add an additional year for their draft eligibility to 26, and a proposal in the Senate to include women in draft registration. They're being debated, largely out of the public eye.

The political costs of a draft — ordering young workers to fight whether they want to or not — are high, as the capitalist rulers learned in Vietnam. The army became a hotbed of opposition to the war and Washington was forced to abandon the draft in 1973.

In 1980, protests of thousands erupted across the U.S. when Democratic President Jimmy Carter reintroduced draft registration, as the capitalist rulers chafed at restrictions on their use of the army, especially as the Iranian people

How U.S. troops turned against Washington's war in Vietnam

Out Now! A Participant's Account of the Movement in the U.S. Against the Vietnam War by Fred Halstead is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for July. As the Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate in 1968, Halstead, who had been part of the "Bring Us Home" movement among GIs in the Pacific after World War II, visited and talked with GIs in Saigon. U.S. imperialism lost the Vietnam War thanks to the determination of the peoples of Indochina to defend their independence, along with growing opposition of U.S. workers in uniform to the war and anti-war protests by tens of millions in the U.S. and around the world. The excerpt is from the chapter titled, "The crumbling of U.S. military morale." Copyright © 1991 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY FRED HALSTEAD

Until 1968, most American GIs in Vietnam still rationalized that the war had some good purpose. But when they returned to the U.S. after the regular one-year tour of duty, they inclined to turn against the war, in part because they could now think about it without the psychological trauma of admitting they were facing death for no good reason, and in part because by 1968 the anti-war sentiment had penetrated deeply among the American youth population.

After the spring of 1968, the rank-

and-file replacements to Vietnam tended to be anti-war, or at least very doubtful before they went over, and their experience on the scene tended to reinforce this attitude. While the U.S. troop level did not exceed 550,000 in South Vietnam, because of the one-year tour of duty some 3 million American military personnel served there in the course of the Second Indochina War. From 1968 on, this constant coming and going reinforced the antiwar sentiment among Americans both in Vietnam and at home, and by 1971 it reached a critical point in Vietnam itself.

This crucial interrelationship between the antiwar movement in the U.S. and the antiwar sentiment in the army in Vietnam was expressed in a letter sent to President Nixon in early 1971 by forty young army officers, mostly infantry, en route to Vietnam. Of civilian antiwar activists it said:

Many of these "troublemakers" at home are our younger brothers, or our friends, our girl friends, our wives. We share many of their views.

Now we are asked to lead men who are unconvinced into a war in which few of us believe ourselves. This leaves us with only survival — "kill or be killed" — as a motive for our mission. If the war continues much longer, young Americans may simply refuse to co-operate. You must have us out of Vietnam by then. ...

The American operation in Vietnam was always top-heavy, with only about 10 percent of the men sent out on combat missions on any particular day. The great bulk of the remainder were rear-echelon troops, manning bases, handling supplies, maintaining aircraft and other machinery, and so on. To be stationed at some big base in Vietnam, like Cam Ranh Bay, was not much different from being on duty at a comparable base at home, except that boredom, frustration, drug addiction, and the atmosphere of colonialist corruption saturated the place. ...



David Warren
Active-duty GIs and retired general, center, lead 500 military personnel in San Francisco anti-Vietnam War protest Oct. 12, 1968. Growing opposition by troops helped win millions of workers at home to turn against the war.

For the ordinary combat soldier ("grunts," as they were known) it was another story. The draft supplied only a small part of the U.S. military personnel around the world.

In combat infantry units in Vietnam, especially after 1968, the ratio of draftees was far higher, sometimes 90 percent, and heavily weighted toward the poor, the Black, and other oppressed nationalities. ...

It was the habit of the American command to count progress in terms of "body count," supposedly the number of NLF and NVA soldiers killed. These statistics were notoriously exaggerated, sometimes including simple falsifications on paper as commanders sought to make themselves look "good." On many operations there was little if any distinction drawn between combatants and the civilian population in "VC territory." These areas were frequently designated "free fire zones." ...

But the moral disintegration ... was only one side of the story. I know of an artillery spotter who made his choice when a commander radioed him to place a barrage on a village where he could see many civilians, including children. After he reported this situation, the order was reiterated. He directed the strike to an empty area and reported a

heavy "kill." From then on he misdirected fire as a matter of course, except when the lives of GIs were at stake. Solidarity with his buddies was still the cardinal rule, and if it hadn't been, he wouldn't have lasted very long.

It was a common occurrence for a patrol out of sight of the command to fire their weapons in the air, then report "kills" where there had been no action at all. For all these reasons, the American ground-combat force in Vietnam had become a net liability by 1971, and this reality, above all, forced Nixon to continue the withdrawals in spite of the failure of "Vietnamization."

Col. Robert D. Heinl, Jr., (Ret.), a marine corps

historian, was one of the many American military experts who considered the force the U.S. had in Vietnam in 1967 to have been the best American army ever put into the field. Yet, in the June 7, 1971, *Armed Forces Journal*, he made the following astounding statements:

The morale, discipline and battle-worthiness of the U.S. Armed Forces are, with a few salient exceptions, lower and worse than at any time in this century and possibly in the history of the United States.

By every conceivable indicator, our Army that now remains in Vietnam is in a state approaching collapse, with individual units avoiding or having refused combat, murdering their officers and non-commissioned officers, drug-ridden, and dispirited where not near mutinous. ...

The author cited some evidence to substantiate his conclusions and then continued:

All the foregoing facts — and many more dire indicators of the worst kind of military trouble — point to widespread conditions among American Forces in Vietnam that have only been exceeded in this century by the French Army's Nivelle Mutinies of 1917 and the collapse of the Tsarist armies in 1916 and 1917.

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