

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Cincinnati meeting celebrates Ned Measel's 48 years building the SWP
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 90/NO. 33 SEPTEMBER 21, 2026

1963: Freedom Rider Jerome Smith takes on the Kennedys

BY TERRY EVANS

From his youth, Jerome Smith had dedicated his life to the fight to bring down Jim Crow segregation, where he grew up in New Orleans, as well as in the 1961 Freedom Rides across the South and the fight against racism in the decades afterward. He died from cancer Aug. 21. He was 87.

Smith stood up to U.S. Attorney General Robert Kennedy at a meeting at one of the Kennedy family's homes in New York, May 24, 1963. The dispute captured the determination of many civil rights fighters and Blacks across the South not to subordinate the struggle to end Jim Crow to the needs of the Democrats, who ruled with the support of racist Dixiecrats based in the South. The clash laid bare the administration's desire to get civil rights groups to tone down their actions going into the 1964 presidential elections.

After dropping out of high school, Smith became a longshoreman and got involved in the unions on the docks. He joined and helped lead sit-ins to desegregate lunch counters

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Stand with Cuba in fight to defend its revolution!

Protest US rulers' blockade, threats of war



Estudio Revolución

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel, right, meets with water supply workers Aug. 27 in Havana. Cuba is taking steps to revive production crippled by U.S. rulers' attacks, defend its revolution.

Cuban workers take steps to make conditions more livable

BY KATY LEROUGETEL, MARTÍN KOPPEL AND CLAUDIA KAISER-LENOIR

HAVANA — One of the most visible changes today, which was just beginning when our *Militant* reporting team was here in February, is the hundreds

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In face of US assaults, Cuba acts to revive industry, farming

BY MARY-ALICE WATERS AND RÓGER CALERO

Three months ago the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba held an Extraordinary Plenary Session, convened by first secretary of the party and president of the republic, Miguel Díaz-Canel. That June 17 meeting approved a sweeping political package of some 176 measures that, taken as a whole, affect virtually every aspect of the country's economy, including prop-

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Working people have no interest in backing their rulers' trade wars

BY BEATRICE BOWEN

MONTREAL — “When the acrimonious trade talks between Washington and Ottawa broke down Aug. 21, Prime Minister Mark Carney proclaimed: ‘We are at war.’ It wasn't entirely an exaggeration,” Steve Penner, the organizer of the Communist League in Canada, told a Militant Labor Forum here Aug. 29.

He said the unions need to break from supporting Ottawa in this conflict between Canada and Washington and instead turn to defending working people against the Canadian capitalist rulers' deepening attacks on workers, the unions and our political rights.

Washington is seeking to shore up U.S. imperialism's weakening global economic and political dominance. The U.S. rulers' overwhelming military might stands behind their demands on the capitalists not only in Canada, but in Germany, France, Japan, China and elsewhere. “The U.S. rulers are above all driving to dominate and exploit what they have proclaimed is ‘their’ hemisphere — the Americas,” Penner said.

U.S. President Donald Trump, speaking for the bosses and bankers, has proclaimed that the U.S. must “own” Greenland, annex all or some of Canada as its 51st state and take

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Locked-out BP refinery workers win deep support at Indiana Labor Day



Militant/Naomi Craine

Steelworkers in Local 7-1, locked out by BP at its Whiting, Indiana, refinery since March 19, join Lowell, Indiana, Labor Day Parade Sept. 7. Solidarity is building for the union's battle.

BY NAOMI CRAINE

LOWELL, Ind. — Some 200 oil workers locked out by BP, their family members and supporters made up a lively United Steelworkers Local 7-1 contingent in the Labor Day Parade here Sept. 7. They got an enthusiastic reception — as they have for months from working people all over the region — from those gathered along the

route, including people raising their fists and yelling “BP sucks!”

There is broad support for the 800 members of the local, who have been locked out by bosses at BP's sprawling Whiting, Indiana, refinery since March 19. The company is demanding union-weakening concessions from the operators, maintenance and other

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Tehran's repression fails to deter rise in protests by workers, the oppressed

BY SETH GALINSKY

The Iranian regime's stepped-up use of the death penalty and arrests of union and political activists has not silenced its opponents. In fact, more protests against the brutal dictatorship are taking place. Meanwhile, the U.S.

imperialist rulers are stepping up air-strikes and tightening their economic blockade of Iran, worsening the crisis confronting working people.

Hundreds of residents of Babol, in Mazdaran province, gathered Sept. 2 in front of the prison in an attempt to halt the execution of Ali Mirrezaei, a musician who sang in the region's Tabari language. Mirrezaei was found guilty in connection with a death during a brawl at a café there, northeast of Tehran.

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Atlanta: Book on independence war gets serious interest at Cape Verde picnic

BY SUSAN LAMONT

ATLANTA — “I want to get that book!” people told us many times Sept. 5, as participants at the annual Cape Verdeans of Atlanta picnic stopped by the Socialist Workers Party literature table to browse the display of titles by revolutionary leaders of the working

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Tehran attacks fail to stop protests

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Though the execution was carried out, “this gathering of the people of Babol to save a human life is of great importance,” the Retirees’ Union Group said. “The tradition of protesting and gathering against the death penalty is spreading from city to city and is becoming a movement that increases the cost of execution for the Islamic Republic.

“Execution is an organized state crime and must be abolished for any reason or excuse,” it said.

Dozens of demonstrations by retirees, from the telecommunications and steel industries and schools, have taken place across the country over the last month.

Retirees protesting in Gilan Sept. 6 called for the abolition of the death penalty and the “unconditional release of imprisoned workers,” along with demands for increased pensions and healthcare. They also called for solidarity between “workers, teachers, and soldiers.”

Workers at the Pouya Nakh textile factory in Ilam province protested Sept. 6 outside the provincial governor’s office to demand the factory be reopened. They said that the factory owners announced a “temporary” shutdown in mid-2025, but never reopened, leaving 180 workers without an income.

Workers battered by sanctions, war

Even before the U.S. rulers began their war and imposed an oil blockade on Iran’s ports, working people were paying the price of the capitalist economic crisis, exacerbated by years of U.S. sanctions.

A U.S. airstrike on a telecommunications tower in Kuhestak, on the coast near the Strait of Hormuz, also hit a wedding party at a nearby home of a Baluch fisherman, killing four people and wounding 60. The mostly Sunni Muslim Baluch are one of Iran’s oppressed nationalities and a base of deep opposition to the ruling Shiite-based capitalist regime.

On Sept. 5 the U.S. military destroyed three Iranian oil tankers near the Strait of Hormuz in retaliation for Tehran’s failed ballistic missile attack on two U.S. Navy vessels. The U.S. military can be heard warning one of the ships on a video, “You have three minutes to clear the crew.”

On Sept. 8 U.S. forces blew up another five Iranian tankers, in retaliation for another failed attack on a U.S. Navy ship.

“No Iranian crude has crossed the blockade” since mid-July, reports the *Wall Street Journal*. Before the war Iran exported 2 million barrels a day, its main source of hard currency.

Working people are paying the price. Wages are often paid months late. For many workers the monthly income is barely enough to cover just a week’s expenses.

Fight for jobs

Young people demanding jobs for local residents, who demonstrated outside the new Lishtar Refinery in Gachsaran and in front of Debal Khozaie Agro-Industry in Ahvaz, were beaten and fired on by the regime’s thugs Aug. 31.

In Gachsaran youth were protesting discrimination against local applicants, who are mostly from the Luri ethnic group. In Ahvaz the mostly Arab youth chanted, “Employment is our undeniable right,” and “We are

hungry and have nothing left to live on.” Arabs are a majority in Khuzestan province, and like the Baluchs and Kurds, an oppressed nationality.

The government-funded Iranian Labour News Agency reported Sept. 7 that “indigenous” youth — a euphemism for “Arabs” — from nearby villages have continued protesting for more than a week. It reported that a high-ranking company official and the governor of Khuzestan met with representatives of the youth on Sept. 6, underscoring the impact their actions are having.

Division in regime over war moves

The increase in protests takes place as opposition to the regime’s provocative war moves grows among working people. Its threats to attack maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz are giving the U.S. rulers a pretext to carry out further airstrikes and to tighten their brutal sanctions.

Opposition to the war is widening factional divisions in the reactionary regime. Former President Hassan Rouhani called for a referendum to allow the people to decide if the war should continue. Let them vote on whether the regime’s “plan is to fight the world’s big power for another 20 years,” he said. If they accept, “good, let’s continue.” If not, he called for ending the war “honorably” in accordance with “the overwhelming majority of the people.”

Rouhani was immediately denounced by members of the regime who oppose any deal with Washington. “The real meaning of Mr. Rouhani’s position is abandoning the defense and surrendering the country to the United States and Israel,” wrote Hossein Shariatmadari, editor-in-chief of *Kayhan* newspaper, which is funded



Coordinating Council of Nurses’ Protests
Nurses and other healthcare workers in Fasa, in Iran’s Fars province, who are owed eight months of unpaid wages, protest Sept. 5 demanding payment. Signs say, “Give us our rights,” “Where are the wages we’re owed?” Every day new protests take place across Iran.

by the office of Iran’s supreme leader.

In contrast, a coalition of eight organizations issued a statement Sept. 6 saying, “While protesting people in the streets are shouting, ‘enough warmongering; our tables are empty,’ the authorities, instead of responding to the people’s legitimate demands, have chosen to intensify the wartime atmosphere and warmongering.” The statement’s signers included the Organizing Council of Oil Contract Workers’ Protests, the Coordinating Council of Nurses’ Protests, the Council of Retirees of Iran and the Voice of Iranian Women.

The statement notes that the fourth anniversary of the death of Zhina Amini takes place Sept. 16. The death of the young Kurdish woman while she visited Tehran in 2022 followed her arrest by the hated “morality” police. It sparked a nationwide movement against the re-

gime’s mandatory dress code for women, its assaults on political freedoms and its expansionist course abroad.

‘A historic turning point’

“With this historic turning point, nothing ever returned to the way it had been,” the statement notes. For 12 days in December 2025 and January 2026 there was a new substantial eruption of protests. The regime unleashed vicious attacks leaving “thousands dead, displaying utter brutality and ruthlessness.”

“Instead of being intimidated, the mourning dances and acts of defiance by grieving families and by angry people seeking justice” shows that “mourning also became an area of confrontation and resistance.”

The statement calls on all “honorable people” and on organizations to commemorate the anniversary of Amini’s death “as magnificently as possible.”

Book on independence war gets interest at Cape Verde picnic

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class in the U.S. and around the world published by Pathfinder Press.

Of special interest to many was *Cuba and the Independence War in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde: The Fall of the Last Colonial Empire in Africa* by Cuban revolutionary leader Víctor Dreke. In 1967-68, Dreke headed Cuba’s military mission collaborating with combatants fighting for independence from Portuguese rule in Guinea-Bissau.

Seventeen copies of Dreke’s book were purchased by picnicgoers, along with five copies of other Pathfinder titles: *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* and *Red Zone: Cuba and the Battle Against Ebola in West Africa*. Six who bought the Dreke book also decided to subscribe to the *Militant*.

Several hundred people of all generations attended the picnic, enjoying the delicious Cape Verdean food, music and dancing, visiting with friends and family, and checking out vendors

offering shirts, hats, jewelry and other Cape Verdean-themed items, as well as our literature.

The pride in how well Cape Verde’s soccer team, the Blue Sharks, performed in the World Cup this summer was also still in the air, with many at the picnic wearing their country’s team jerseys.

Many people were happy to see the photo on the book’s cover of Amílcar Cabral, central leader of the liberation movement in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, meeting with Cuban revolutionary leader Fidel Castro. The detailed history of the independence struggle described in the book — including both how Cabral led the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde to involve broad layers of toilers in fighting for their liberation, as well as the decisive role played by Cuba’s revolutionary leadership and its combatants — was new to some.

Cuba’s role in independence war

“I’m not sure there would have been independence without the Cubans,” said Al Vicente, president of Cape Verdeans of Atlanta and honorary consul for Cape Verde in the Southeast. He spoke with this *Militant* correspondent; Sam Manuel, the SWP candidate for U.S. Senate from Georgia; and Lisa Potash.

Born in Brava, the smallest inhabited island of Cape Verde, like many other Cape Verdeans Vicente emigrated to New England with his family. He was 7 years old. For many years he worked as a manager of radio stations in differ-

ent parts of the country, ending up in Georgia, where he retired in 2023. He now helps organize tours to Cape Verde. Vicente also introduced us to several founders of Cape Verdeans of Atlanta, two of whom bought Dreke’s book.

“I have been to Cabo Verde many times,” said Antonio Gomes, a physician assistant in emergency medicine in Atlanta, who grew up in New Bedford, Massachusetts. “I started going there six years ago with others from our group to help provide medical care for those in need in Cabo Verde. We now have chapters around the country and go several times a year.” Like many others we spoke with, Gomes is opposed to Washington’s economic and political blockade against Cuba, which has dealt crippling blows to Cuba’s medical system and the working people it serves.

We learned that many people in Georgia’s Cape Verdean community had come here from New England, where a large Cape Verdean community has existed since the early 1800s.

“I think Amílcar Cabral was the greatest leader who ever lived,” Benvinda Timas said when she saw the new book. Her family left Cape Verde in 1975, first going to Portugal, then to New Bedford. After 30 years as an elementary school teacher in the Boston area, she came to Atlanta two years ago.

A number of the people we met had visited the Cape Verdean Museum in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, which sponsored a successful meeting on Pathfinder’s new book by Dreke on June 28.

‘Militant’ Prisoners Fund

The fund makes it possible to send prisoners reduced-rate subscriptions. To donate, send a check or money order payable to the Militant, earmarked “Prisoners Fund,” to 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018. Or donate online at www.themilitant.com

Cincinnati meeting celebrates Ned Measel’s 48 years building the SWP

BY ILONA GERSH

CINCINNATI — Nearly 40 comrades and friends came to the American Postal Workers Union hall Aug. 23 to join in celebrating the life and political contributions of Ned Measel, a cadre of the Socialist Workers Party for 48 years. Measel died Aug. 4. He was 71 years old.

“Over his decades of party membership, Ned could always be counted on. He acted on his confidence in the working class and in the capacities of the Socialist Workers Party to help lead a socialist revolution in the U.S.,” said John Hawkins, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate and organizer of the Cincinnati branch of the party.

“As a young person, Ned looked around until he found an organization that championed the fight to defend constitutional rights and the need to build a revolutionary party to fight for workers power — the Socialist Workers Party,” Hawkins said. “He joined it, never looked back, and spent the rest of his life building it.”

“A lot was happening in the world in the late 1970s when Ned joined the communist movement,” said Paul Mailhot, speaking on behalf of the SWP Political Committee. “Mass revolutionary struggles had brought workers and farmers governments to power in Nicaragua and Grenada and workers, farmers and soldiers in Iran were mobilizing to topple the dictatorial shah’s regime there. Cuba’s internationalist missions in Africa had joined the liberation struggle against Portugal, the last colonial empire on the continent — a story vividly told in *The Cuban Revolution and the Independence Struggle in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde: The Fall of the Last Colonial Empire in Africa* by Cuban revolutionary leader Víctor Dreke. He led Cuban combatants fighting alongside toilers in Guinea-Bissau led by Amílcar Cabral.

“A movement for union democracy and a more militant leadership was taking hold in the United Mine Workers in the lead-up to the 1977-78 coal miners strike,” said Mailhot. “There were struggles for women’s emancipation, and battles to desegregate the schools in Boston, Louisville and other cities.

“All of these struggles and world-shaking political developments were posing far-reaching questions about the capitalist system. And more workers and young people like Ned were looking for answers that went beyond reform of the capitalist system. That

led him to the Socialist Workers Party, and a life devoted to the fights of the working class,” he said.

An attractive display in the front of the room showed photos, many donated by those who worked with Measel, illustrating these struggles. Over time, he had been a member of 11 branches of the Socialist Workers Party.

When Measel joined the SWP it was beginning to expand fractions of its members in key industrial unions, the most powerful sections of the working class.

“Ned fought, together with others, to make the Pittsburgh branch a coal branch. This was a central part of the fight to make the Socialist Workers Party a proletarian party, rooted in the industrial unions,” said Hawkins, who worked with Measel both in Pittsburgh in the 1980s and in more recent years in Cincinnati.

Helping to recruit

“One of the first things I remember about Ned was when I was coming out of my first socialist conference in 2011,” said Sergio Zambrana, a member of the Pittsburgh branch of the SWP and its candidate for U.S. Congress in Pennsylvania’s 12th District. “At the conference many of us signed up to join door-to-door teams introducing the party and its program to working people in rural southwestern Pennsylvania, and we talked a lot of politics during those trips. It had a deep impact on me.

“Up to that point I never would have thought of visiting small rural coal towns, much less talking and having political discussions with working people there. But I came out of it with a much clearer idea of who the working class is. And convinced this was the class with a future I wanted to stick with.

“I joined the SWP in 2014 in Washington, D.C.,” Zambrana said. “Comrades there, including Ned, were very patient. They organized classes with thought and consideration to what reading would be good for a new member.

“A big challenge we faced was getting jobs in industry,” he said. “I’m sure he was very happy to hear when I got my first job in rail four years ago and was able to start building the union and promoting solidarity with working-class struggles there.”

“Ned was a member of the Washington, D.C., branch for 13 years,” said Glova Scott, a member of that branch.

“We both got hired at Walmart in 2014 and participated in the OurWalmart



Militant/Betsy Farley

Ned Measel, right, joins hundreds of people July 1, 2025, outside Butler County Jail in Hamilton, Ohio, protesting detention of immigrant workers slated for deportation.

campaign, fighting for a union. Our-Walmart was part of a broader movement of workers who had moved past fighting for individual solutions to acting politically,” said Scott. “We fought to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, involving many retail workers.

“As we built actions advocating a union on Black Friday, Ned and I introduced the *Militant* newspaper and Pathfinder books to our fellow workers. We were able to bring them to Militant Labor Forums. We gave forums too, which helped attract more co-workers.

“When we went in solidarity to other workers’ picket lines, they took note that Walmart workers were fighting for a union themselves.

“The United Food and Commercial Workers union, which was a big part of the OurWalmart campaign, eventually decided to withdraw from the fight,” Scott said. “But in the course of it, many workers, Ned and I included, gained a lot more confidence in ourselves, our class, and the future in front of us.

“In honoring Ned here, I want to encourage folks to seriously consider joining the only revolutionary Marxist party in this country, the Socialist Workers Party.”

Margaret Trowe, SWP candidate for governor in California and a member of the Oakland branch of the party, traced Measel’s party-building activity in a number of branches.

She and Betsy Farley, the chair of the event, read several messages of support that had been sent to the meeting. Among them was a message from Glenda Sumner, a stalwart of the 2023 strike of the Bakery Workers union against International Flavors and Fragrances in Memphis, Tennessee. Measel and other SWP members got to know her while making several solidarity trips to the picket line. She described him as a “good friend and a soldier,” and promised a contribution for the collection taken at the meeting.

Education of cadre

“Ned helped lead efforts of the Socialist Workers Party to reach out broadly to the working class and small producers and to take part in labor resistance, like the Black Jewel coal miners railroad blockade, which drew national attention in 2019,” Trowe said. “Events like this signaled the low point of labor resistance was behind us.

“In the course of long road trips, I learned about Ned’s childhood, growing up in Pennsylvania. He told me about his admiration for his mother, who raised two sons mostly on her own and imbued him with a hatred of racism, a love of learning and a deep respect for women.”

“Ned was a hard-working cadre and party patriot,” she said. “He valued study and encouraged others to do the same. He was a respected worker and unionist. He was a professional revolutionary, a professional agitator, organizer, propagandist and literature distributor, who organized his life and energies to build the revolutionary party and educate its members. It was a pleasure working with him.”

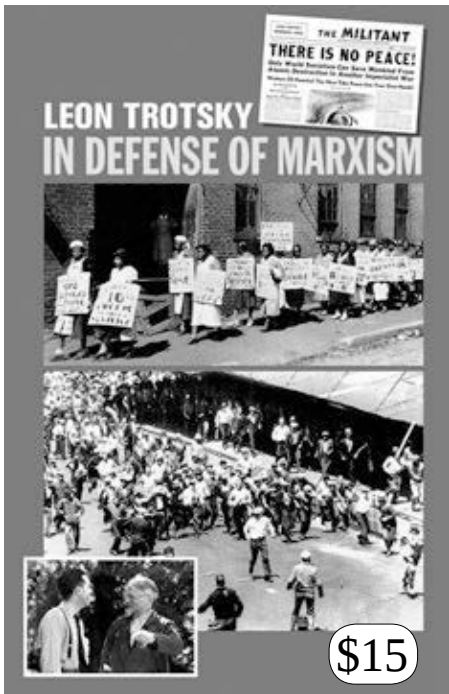
Mailhot described the classes that every party branch is organizing today on Leon Trotsky’s *In Defense of Marxism* with a new introduction by Steve Clark. “We are strengthening our understanding of how necessary it is to build the revolutionary party to lead the working class as the imperialist war drive deepens,” Mailhot said. “How only a party with the steadying influence of immersion in the working class can stand up to the violence and pressure of the rulers. The continuity and leadership of the Socialist Workers Party has made it such a party. Ned spent his life building that party. His is a life to celebrate!”

Participants at the meeting included union members in the area who Measel worked with in solidarity actions. Dave Perry came with his co-worker Ana Hamons, both members of the Teamsters union and the National Federation of the Blind.

Some two dozen messages honoring Measel’s life were sent to the meeting, including from the Communist Leagues in Australia and Canada. Several former Walmart co-workers also sent messages in memory of their fight for a union.

A collection to honor Measel and to advance the work of building the Socialist Workers Party topped \$2,700.

Recommended reading



pathfinderpress.com



Militant/Mary Martin

Nearly 40 people joined to celebrate the life and political contributions of Ned Measel Aug. 23. Speaking is Sergio Zambrana, SWP candidate for U.S. Congress from Pennsylvania.

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

Chicago hotel workers march, rally in fight for contract

CHICAGO — Hundreds of hotel workers, members of UNITE HERE Local 1, marched here Sept. 1 to press demands for a substantial wage raise, improved benefits and safer workloads, and to prepare for possible strike action. After most of their contracts expired at midnight, some 7,000 workers at more than 40 unionized hotels are working without a contract.

A number of union members “have had to take out payday loans. They’ve been struggling with food and housing insecurity,” Local 1 President Karen Kent told the rally. “We’re preparing to do whatever it takes to win.”

“If we don’t stand up, they’ll take everything from us, our healthcare and pensions,” Lucy Zapata, who’s worked staffing banquets for 28 years, said.

Zapata and many other marchers had been through the last major hotel strike in Chicago in 2018. “We started by striking and picketing one hotel at a time,” she said. “Then we began marching from one hotel to another, all together. That was much stronger.”

“We need raises across the board, and we need to phase out the tipped positions,” said Roger Moore, who works as a doorman at The Wade hotel. “People don’t carry cash anymore, so the tips have declined.” Workers in “tipped” jobs are often paid about \$10 per hour less than the base rate for other jobs.

Paula Fernández, a housekeeper at a DoubleTree hotel here, said the workload was just too much. She has to clean 16 rooms per shift, and “that’s a lot!” she said. “The union is very important. During the pandemic, the company looked for excuses to fire a lot of people. The union defended them.”

— Naomi Craine

Massachusetts: 1,300 workers in casino strike over wages, benefits

EVERETT, Mass. — Chanting “25, on strike! 26, on strike!” over 200 workers picketed Sept. 5 at the entrance to the Encore Boston Harbor, a hotel and casino here. The chant referred to the two unions — UNITE HERE Local 26 and Teamsters Local 25 — that organize 1,300 employees at Encore, who

walked out the day before. They include slot attendants, servers, cooks, limo drivers, housekeepers, groundskeepers and more. The spirited picket line drew honks of support from passing cars.

Keenan Green, a picket captain and Local 26 shop steward, told the *Militant* workers are seeking parity with the wages and benefits of other unionized hotel workers in Boston.

To catch up and deal with the ravages of inflation, the casino workers are seeking a \$10-an-hour increase for nontipped workers and \$5 an hour for tipped workers over three years. And they’re seeking to protect health benefits won in the last contract. “I feel very optimistic about this fight,” Green said.

A vocal contingent of Encore strikers got a good response from the thousands of fellow workers marching in Boston’s Labor Day action Sept. 7.

— Emily Fitzsimmons

Nurses strike Prime Healthcare over contract, better staffing

CHICAGO — More than 400 members of the National Nurses United union carried out a one-day strike Sept. 3 at the St. Mary of Nazareth hospital here and three other hospitals owned by Prime Healthcare in California and Nevada. Nurses also held a rally outside Prime Healthcare’s Olympia Fields hospital in the south suburbs the same day.

Registered nurses at St. Mary of Nazareth voted by 96% to join the union in June. Since then, they say, the company has stalled on negotiating a contract. One of the central issues they are fighting for is better staffing.

“It’s becoming standard now to have three patients at a time,” Anna Bilanicz, an intensive care nurse who has worked at the hospital for decades, told the *Militant*. “It used to be two. I used to feel fulfilled going to work, now I leave discouraged. We want to save lives.”

Prime Healthcare, a for-profit company, bought St. Mary and seven other hospitals in Illinois last year. “Prime has a history of acquiring hospitals and then cutting services after it promised to maintain them,” the union said in a press statement. The company just announced it is suspending less profitable obstetric care at three hospitals in



Militant/Naomi Craine

Hundreds of hotel workers, members of UNITE HERE Local 1, marched in Chicago Sept. 1 after their contract expired. They’re fighting for a wage raise, better benefits and a safer workload.

the greater Chicago area.

At the Olympia Fields Hospital rally, nurses and supporters demanded reinstatement of six nurses who the union says “were suspended for speaking up for their patients.” Nurses there will vote on union representation Sept. 23.

The union has announced a one-day strike at Olympia Fields Sept. 15, as well as sympathy strikes and protests at other Prime hospitals nationwide. Details are available on the union website, nursesunited.org.

— Naomi Craine

Teamsters at Cargill Salt reject company bribe, continue strike

NEWARK, Calif. — After a month on strike, picket lines at Cargill Salt are still up 24/7 in a hard-fought fight over wages and medical coverage. A key issue is the draconian monthly payments of \$1,200 that workers have taken out of their paycheck to cover family health care. This comes to about \$7 an hour.

On Sept. 3 the strikers rejected a company attempt to bribe them into giving up the fight over medical coverage by offering a signing bonus of \$3,000. The vote was overwhelming, 95 to 4. “We are still saying they should not take the \$7 out,” striker Ricardo Salcido told the *Militant*. “Otherwise, we won’t be making any significant wage gain in the contract.”

“On top of the \$1,200, we have to pay deductibles for things like having

your blood drawn,” Ernie Ramirez, who has worked in the plant for eight years, said. Many drive long distances to get to work and have been hit hard by the rising price of gas. “Don’t take our labor with a grain of salt,” their signs say.

Salcido, who is the third generation in his family to work at the plant, pointed to where the salt evaporation ponds are, where the 120 workers harvest the sea salt, then refine it for use in food, water softeners, swimming pools and for deicing roads and sidewalks.

The strikers said that managers and scabs they brought in are working in the plant, but production is far below normal. Solidarity is needed! Make donations and join the pickets at 7220 Central Ave. in Newark.

— Betsey Stone

Seattle teachers rally in fight for new contract

SEATTLE — Hundreds of teachers, members of the Seattle Education Association, rallied here Sept. 1, the day before school reopened, to press their fight for a new contract.

Parents, students, unionists and others gathered on the front lawn of Seattle Public Schools headquarters. Unionists from City Light and other electrical workers; Service Employees International Union; Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers at the Safeway bakery; United Food and Commercial Workers; Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation union; and from UNITE HERE participated.

Christian Gutierrez, a member of UNITE HERE Local 8 and a housekeeper on strike at the Hilton-owned Embassy Suites Hotel, spoke. “Teachers are fighting for a better future and we want them to know they are not alone,” he said. “As workers who have been on strike for 75 days, we know you need to be strong and support each other.”

The hotel workers union has been organizing expanded pickets before sporting events to get support, as well as daily pickets between 7 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Teachers union President Ibijoke Idowu said teachers had voted by over 91% to strike. The main issues in the fight are class size and proposed changes to special-needs education, as well as higher wages. The school district has demanded the consolidation of paraeducator positions.

“There’s always a demand for us to do more and more,” Idowu said. “Higher class sizes are adding to our workload.”

A tentative agreement was announced shortly after the rally, which will be voted on Sept. 11.

— Rebecca Williamson

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO

THE MILITANT
A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

September 17, 2001

There is a fighting, working-class alternative to the big-business parties in the upcoming elections — the Socialist Workers Party candidates. These candidates have been getting an excellent response, particularly from working people and youth.

This is a period of heightened resistance by workers and farmers who are confronting the capitalist economic crisis and the assault on our wages, working conditions, social rights and human dignity. More and more are becoming open to consider new ideas about the root causes of these problems.

Through struggle, more working people are shattering our biggest obstacle: the tendency, fostered by exploiters, to underestimate our own capacities as a class. To build a movement that can confront the most ruthless ruling class in the world, we need to be part of a revolutionary party of workers.

THE MILITANT
A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

September 17, 1976

The SWP has opened a political fight against the government’s use of undercover informers. The socialists are taking legal steps to compel the FBI to turn over the names and complete, uncensored files of nineteen present and past informers.

In a statement released with the FBI files received so far, Jack Barnes, SWP national secretary, declared: “The FBI’s informer program is an intolerable violation of the Bill of Rights and of the civil liberties of everyone in this country.”

The informers are the primary source of political and personal raw data that the FBI’s uses to devise schemes to foment dissension, get people fired, break up marriages and fuel personality conflicts. Government attorneys have stated that they will rely on the so-called doctrine of informer’s privilege in keeping secret the names of and facts about its informers.

THE MILITANT
PUBLISHED WEEKLY IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

September 17, 1951

WASHINGTON, D.C., Sept. 7 — The government’s loyalty program was challenged as unconstitutional in a suit filed today by the legless veteran James Kutcher in the U.S. Court of Appeals here, appealing a court decision upholding Kutcher’s discharge from his clerk’s job in the Newark Veterans Administration. Kutcher, who lost both legs in battle in 1943, lost his job under Truman’s loyalty purge solely because of membership in the Socialist Workers Party.

Kutcher’s appeal contended that he was wrongfully discharged and deprived of his constitutional rights. The SWP was arbitrarily placed by the Attorney General on his political blacklist of “subversive organizations,” without notice or charges to the SWP, without any hearing or evidence, and denied repeated requests by the SWP for a public hearing to refute the charges.

Freedom Rider vs. the Kennedys

Continued from front page
in New Orleans, part of the ongoing movement nationwide to bring down Jim Crow. Then he decided to participate in Freedom Rides organized by the Congress of Racial Equality to desegregate interstate transportation.

In 1963 Smith was in New York receiving medical treatment for serious injuries suffered two years earlier, when he was assaulted by racist thugs with brass knuckles during a Freedom Ride he had joined in McComb, Mississippi.

In New York, he was invited by writer James Baldwin to a meeting with Robert F. Kennedy, the younger brother of President John F. Kennedy, who was trying to line up Black figures to back Kennedy's reelection campaign in 1964. Several prominent Black artists took part, including playwright Lorraine Hansberry, musicians Harry Belafonte and Lena Horne, and psychologist Kenneth Clark.

Robert Kennedy began by presenting a self-serving list of the administration's "accomplishments" in standing up to segregation, before getting down to his main goal. He said that Southern Dixiecrats were "in revolt and we have to be somewhat considerate about how we keep them on board, if the Democratic Party is going to prevail in the next elections." In trying to achieve this, he asked those at the meeting to explain why so many African Americans were becoming attracted to Malcolm X.

Smith became increasingly agitated. "I want you to understand I don't care anything about you and your brother," he told Robert Kennedy. "I don't know what I'm doing here, listening to all this cocktail-party patter." Pointing to the role of Kennedy's Justice Department during the Freedom Rides, he said, "I've seen you guys stand around and take notes while we're being beaten."

Smith told the attorney general that he had been pledged to nonviolence, but was "close to the moment where I'm ready to take up a gun."

Kennedy was "shocked," biographer Larry Tye says in *Bobby Kennedy: The Making of a Liberal Icon*. "But Smith wasn't through," Tye writes, "Not only would young blacks like him fight to protect their rights at home, he said, but they would refuse to fight for America in Cuba, Vietnam, or any of the other places the Kennedys saw threats."

"You will not fight for your country?" Kennedy exclaimed in horror, "How can you say that?"

Smith didn't back down, saying that being in a room with Kennedy, "makes me nauseous."

Kennedy grew increasingly angry, turning away from Smith to appeal for support to those at the meeting.

Instead, Hansberry told Kennedy, "You've got a great many very, very accomplished people in this room, Mr. Attorney General. But the only man who should be listened to is that man over there," she said, pointing to Smith.

Hansberry recounted the exchange



Associated Press
Four Freedom Riders at New Orleans airport, May 27, 1961, after posting bond in Jackson, Mississippi, where they were arrested at interstate bus station. From left, David Dennis, Doris Jean Castle, Julia Aaron and Jerome Smith, speaking to a reporter on their struggle.

later, saying, "What we are interested in, is in making perfectly clear" that "we are represented by the Negroes in the streets of Birmingham." The meeting was taking place as Birmingham Commissioner of Public Safety Eugene "Bull" Connor was turning dogs and fire hoses on youth fighting to desegregate the city in Alabama. The fight there, the broadest yet against Jim Crow, inspired working people around the country.

As the meeting broke up, Robert Kennedy turned to Belafonte and said, "Well, why didn't you say something?" Kennedy later recalled Belafonte, who shared his concern about the Democrats' reelection in 1964, replied, "If I

sided with you on these matters, then I would have become suspect."

"We left convinced that we had made no dent or impact on Bobby," Clark said.

By the time the 1964 elections took place, a layer of vanguard fighters for Black freedom had begun organizing independently of the Democratic and Republican parties. The Oct. 26, 1964, *Militant* featured an article about the candidates that the Freedom Now Party was running in Michigan and elsewhere, as well as growing support for the Socialist Workers Party, including Clifton DeBerry for president and Ed Shaw for vice president.

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Locked-out BP workers win support at Labor Day

Continued from front page
workers, which the refinery workers voted down overwhelmingly.

Corporations "are flexing their muscles, and it's not just BP," Elisa Levy, an operator with 12 years at the refinery, told the *Militant*. "They want to get rid of the union."

"I'm here supporting my brothers and sisters," said Jim Espinoza. He retired from BP in 2018 after working 40 years in the refinery. "I was part of the safety department, and they're always trying to do things fast, circumvent the process. We need the union."

Espinoza said he helps out wherever he can, "at the picket line, the union hall, fundraisers. The community is supporting us. People come and drop things off. It helps keep morale up."

"A lot of our members did disaster relief" after massive storms tore through northwest Indiana Aug. 11, Luke Hoffman, a power house operator and member of the union board, said.

Response to storm damage

The storms killed seven people, flooded homes and caused hundreds of thousands to lose power for up to two weeks, including at the union hall. The union temporarily suspended picketing and many members joined in helping clear trees and debris. "We volunteered in Highland, Portage, Hobart," Hoffman said, "helping both our members and other people in need. And we're still doing some of that."

"I'm very happy to be picketing again. And I'm grateful we got the time needed to recover" from the storm, Keisha Barajas told this *Militant* correspondent on the picket line Aug. 27. She showed a video on her phone of union members who came over to help chop up trees that were down all over her driveway and yard. "There were a lot of people helping each other," she said.

The national media has taken note of the lockout and its cause. Reuters ran an article Sept. 3 noting that Exxon used a similar lockout in 2021 to force through massive concessions at its Beaumont, Texas, facility, and that Marathon "has weathered two prolonged strikes at its plants since 2024," including the current strike in Martinez, California.

Reuters reports that BP and other energy giants are raking in massive profits from the spike in oil prices, at the same time they're driving against

labor. The news service quotes Robert Bruno, director of the Labor Studies Program at the University of Illinois, who puts his finger on the heart of the matter when he says the fight is over "what share of the profits is going to be distributed to the workforce."

What Reuters editors studiously avoid is any mention of the locked-out workers' fighting spirit and solidarity and the support they are winning.

"The longer this goes on, the stronger bond we create," Hoffman said. "We're in good spirits." The union's slogan has become "one day longer, one day stronger."

You can help! Bring donations of food and household items to the union hall at 2045 Schrage Ave. in Whiting. To join the picket lines at BP gates, just stop by the union hall to get a ride. Call (219) 659-1181 for more information.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

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New York
Real Wages Down, Bosses' Profits Up, No End in Sight to Capitalist Crisis: Today's Union Struggles and the Road to Workers Power. Speaker: Brian Williams, Socialist Workers Party, Sat., Sept. 19, 6:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 307 W. 36th St., 13th floor. Tel.: (646) 434-8117.

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Lessons of the Fight to Overturn Jim Crow Segregation. Speaker: Hilda Cuzco, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., Sept. 19, 5:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 6815 Manhattan Blvd., Suite 201C. Tel.: (817) 899-6720.

Teamster Rebellion
by Farrell Dobbs

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6 The Militant September 21, 2026

Cuban workers take steps to make their conditions more livable

Continued from front page
of electric tricycles, many of them solar-powered, on Havana's streets.

Drivers transport passengers and deliver food and other goods. In a popular initiative in one neighborhood, some are now being organized to collect trash, beginning to reduce piles of garbage that have been mounting in residential areas for the past couple of years.

These efforts are part of the Cuban people's response to the near-total oil blockade Washington has imposed on their country, which sharply escalated its decadeslong economic war against Cuba's socialist revolution.

Even before the oil ban, the U.S. economic chokehold has for the past several years made it extremely difficult for Cuba to import fuel, food, fertilizer, medicine, spare parts and other essentials, leading to frequent blackouts and a severe disruption of agricultural and industrial production. Bus transportation, trash collection, and other public

Reporter's Notebook from Havana

services have been virtually paralyzed.

In response, the Cuban government has begun to implement a series of measures to encourage foreign investment and loosen restrictions on private businesses. The new measures authorize private firms, among other things, to sell gasoline, build vehicles and import and export directly without going through state intermediaries.

While the oil blockade has left state-run gas stations virtually dry, Washington has allowed private businesses on the island to buy fuel directly from U.S. companies. In the first half of 2026, \$96 million in gasoline and diesel was shipped to Cuba from Miami and Houston.

Some of the fuel is being purchased by private gasoline stations now operating in Cuba. One gas station visited by *Militant* reporters caters to foreigners renting cars and charges \$5 a liter.

Black-market prices are even higher. We met a self-employed refrigeration mechanic who uses his motorbike for work. "I pay for what must be the most expensive gas in the world — \$7 a liter," he said.

Electric tricycles everywhere

The fuel shortage has led to a proliferation of electric tricycles, many imported from China. Some are assembled in Cuba, including in a Havana factory, VEDCA, a joint venture with a Chinese company.

The drivers recharge their vehicles whenever electric power is available. A growing number are rigging a solar panel onto the roof of their tricycle.

Some three-wheelers transport merchandise for small businesses. Others have installed seats and pick up passengers, often along established routes. The \$2,000 to \$4,000 price to purchase an electric tricycle — plus \$800 or more to install a solar panel — is out of reach for most Cubans, unless they get help from relatives abroad or earn enough as business owners. Nonetheless, the tricycles have already made a difference in daily life.

Many Havana residents told us they can't afford to pay for a tricycle ride all the time, but whenever they're able to, it's much better than having



Militant/Jonathan Silberman

Hundreds of electric tricycles, many powered by solar panels, are now for hire for transportation, food delivery, garbage collection — part of Cuban people's response to U.S. oil blockade.

to walk long distances under the sun.

Driver Ángel Bisset told us he rents a six-passenger tricycle from a company that has acquired several electric vehicles. His new job transporting passengers gives him a source of income and the satisfaction of meeting a pressing social need. Bisset wanted us to know that "I'm a revolutionary, and I'll always defend the legacy of the revolution," despite the material limitations Cubans face today.

Bisset's expression of pride underscored an observation more than one person made to us during our visit — that the idling of thousands of Cuban workers by the U.S.-driven economic dislocation has a dampening impact on morale. And every step to organize working people into productive activity increases their self-confidence.

Initiative to clean up neighborhood

In several cities across the island, solar-powered charging stations are being set up, allowing residents to charge electric vehicles and household devices. They are known as "solineras" — a play on the Spanish words for sun (sol) and gas station (gasolinera).

To facilitate the development of renewable energy sources, the Cuban government recently adopted tax exemptions on imports of solar panels, batteries and other equipment for electric vehicles.

In one initiative in Havana launched

July 1, electric tricycles are being used to collect garbage in a section of the Vedado neighborhood. The drivers charge their vehicles at a solinera on a central street known as La Rampa, hence the project's name, El Rampeño. It operates as a private business with some financial and logistical support from the local government in Havana's Plaza municipality.

The electric tricycles — currently 10, to be expanded to 30 — are each operated by a driver and a helper, who are members of the Central Organization of Cuban Workers (CTC), the country's trade union federation. Residents set their trash bags on the curb according to an established pickup schedule, and the drivers take it to a city garbage dump.

"We work two shifts — starting at 7 a.m. and at 8 p.m., each for a couple of hours," driver Alexis Rodríguez said. "We can also work hours in between, to get additional pay.

"Even with 10 tricycles, we've already made a difference," Rodríguez said, as drivers gathered at the solinera for the morning shift of Aug. 17.

"It's certainly an improvement," said Karina González, a resident in the area covered by El Rampeño.

Militant reporters saw noticeable progress in clearing away the piles of garbage in Vedado just during the two weeks of August we were here. The accumulation of unsightly, unsanitary piles of trash has been an ongoing concern, and a frequent piece of

propaganda in the U.S. press, so advances on this front have boosted the morale of working people.

As the service becomes regularized, households will be charged 100 pesos a month, a relatively modest amount for most, and businesses will pay more. "Vulnerable" households, such as retirees on government pensions and mothers of children with severe disabilities, will be exempt. For decades the public trash removal has been free of charge, but given the severe shortage of working garbage trucks, González said, most residents are glad to pay the monthly fee to keep their streets clean.

The new project does pose challenges, González said. Residents have largely been informed about the new program through WhatsApp and other internet-based messaging services. "It would be good if our mass organizations — like the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution and Federation of Cuban Women — got involved." That would keep the community better informed and organized, she said.

The solinera already has the photovoltaic panels, but not yet the equipment to convert solar energy into power for the vehicles' batteries. In the meantime, they are charged up through the city's electricity grid.

For now, El Rampeño is used only to power the trash removal vehicles. Eventually, however, it will be made available to residents to recharge their cellphones, appliances, electric bikes and other equipment.

In addition, the government is seeking to make progress on clearing accumulated debris that is too big for the three-wheelers. One day, we witnessed members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces working together with city sanitation workers to load fallen tree branches and other bulky trash onto garbage trucks.

Solar charging projects are also being launched in other parts of the country, Herminio Fernández told us. The Cuban press has reported on plans to set up solineras in Santa Clara, Matanzas and Holguín.

El Rampeño is still in its infancy. "But we know more solar charging stations are coming, and our contribution will increase," said driver Heriberto García.

Jonathan Silberman contributed to this article.

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In face of US rulers’ assaults, Cuba adopts measures to advance agricultural, industrial production

Continued from front page
erty relations, centralized economic planning and the state monopoly of foreign trade.

An Extraordinary Session of the National Assembly the following day adopted a report by Prime Minister Manuel Marrero initiating the legislative work to implement each of these measures. Underscoring its importance, Marrero’s report was published in full in the June 21 issue of *Granma*, the daily paper of the Central Committee of the party.

The far-reaching steps now being implemented by the Cuban leadership are aimed above all at reviving agricultural and industrial production. Output by workers and rural toilers has been decimated by the cumulative effects of Washington’s decades-long economic

AS WE SEE IT

strangulation. The U.S. rulers have acted with increasing brutality and effectiveness to deprive the Cuban government of access to the international banking system; to obstruct trade to secure raw materials, equipment and energy resources otherwise unavailable in Cuba; and to deny access to every possible source of hard currency.

As a result, according to Cuban government statistics, the rough equivalent of what capitalist economists call the gross domestic product shrank by 11% between 2019 and 2025. Manufacturing output fell by 23%, while agriculture, livestock and mining have plunged even more drastically by 53%.

The island’s population has declined by nearly 2 million since 2022, as a disproportionately youthful, well-educated cross-section of Cubans have migrated, mostly to Spain and countries throughout the Americas. They’ve left in search of jobs, better conditions of daily life and an income level that allows them to send cash to help relatives facing rampant ongoing inflation.

Since the beginning of 2026, the already serious crisis has been qualitatively sharpened by Washington’s naval blockade, which has prevented any ship not approved by the U.S. government from docking in or sailing from Cuba. That imperial act is designed by Washington to prevent even a drop of oil reaching the Cuban government. It has resulted in the near total countrywide collapse of the electrical grid, leading to rolling blackouts reaching 20 hours a day or more across most of Cuba. Without electricity, running water is unavailable. Phones go silent, factories close, life-saving surgeries become too risky



Cuban workers install solar panels powering pumps to irrigate crops, offsetting blackouts.

to perform and infant mortality climbs. The naval blockade — Cubans rightly call it an act of war, a “silent” war — has heightened shortages of vital medicines and medical supplies, toiletries and other household basics, even bread, meat and countless other products. It has led to a near total paralysis of all transport vehicles — buses, trains, cars and trucks, including those that bring food from the countryside to cities where the majority of Cubans live.

The severity of the crisis gripping Cuban working people today has nothing to do with mistakes or miscalculations that may have been made in the past by the Cuban leadership. If that were the source of the crisis, the U.S. rulers would feel no need for a naval blockade and economic strangulation of the island’s working people. Washington could simply have walked away and let the crisis run its course. But the U.S. propertied families of both imperialist parties know from their brutal, nearly 70-year-long economic, commercial and banking sanctions that such measures alone have been to no avail.

In reality, the crisis is the creation of the U.S. ruling class, to achieve its goal — to reestablish U.S. imperialist domination of the island and to resume the plunder of its considerable natural resources and, first and foremost, the profit-squeezing exploitation of working people’s labor. In short, to recreate the servile relationship so rudely interrupted by the revolutionary actions of Cuban workers and farmers in 1959, under the leadership of Fidel Castro.

Above all, the goal of the U.S. capitalist ruling class is to extinguish the example of Cuba’s socialist revolution for the exploited and oppressed peoples of the world.

To resist and overcome

The measures being rolled out by the Cuban government today are designed to enable the Cuban people not only to resist but to survive and overcome this savage new stage of Washington’s decades-long crusade.

The task — primarily *political* in character, if economic in many of its concrete forms — is to buy time to regroup and rearm Cuban working people with the revolutionary confidence that has been eroded. While knowing the limits of what can be conquered and consolidated under the cumulative impact of today’s blockade conditions, the aim is to salvage the class values, solidarity and concrete social gains of the revolution in order to resume the construction of socialism as conditions permit.

There are voices, both inside and out-



Above, Militant/Jonathan Silberman; inset, fidelcastro.cu
President Fidel Castro, inset, explained to an international solidarity conference in Havana, above, Nov. 25, 1994, Cuba’s course to defend its sovereignty after Soviet Union collapsed and U.S. rulers intensified economic war on the island.

side Cuba, who proclaim that the measures now being implemented mark the death of the socialist revolution in Cuba. They and others argue that Fidel Castro, the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, would never have agreed to the course decided on today.

The answer to such accusations, however, was effectively given by Fidel himself in the darkest hours of what is known in Cuba as the Special Period in a Time of Peace, or simply, the Special Period — the economic, social and political crisis of the early 1990s that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union.

That is when Castro, addressing a Cuban and international audience of several thousand in Havana in 1994, explained and defended the necessary economic changes, including efforts to attract foreign capital, that were being carried out at that time.

“Under the conditions in Cuba today — without capital, without technology and without markets — we could not develop; hence, all the measures, changes and reforms we are implementing in one way or another are aimed at safeguarding our independence, safeguarding the revolution — because the revolution is the source of everything,” Castro said.

Because safeguarding achievements of the revolution, Castro continued, “means preserving socialism or the right to continue building socialism when circumstances permit.” (See excerpts from 1994 talk, page 9.)

The economic steps being taken today in Cuba are more sweeping than those that were necessary to recover from the “collapse of the meringue,” as Castro called the fall of the Soviet Union and other deformed workers states in Central and Eastern Europe at that time. But these special measures are neither newly invented nor taken against the will of the big majority of Cuban working people.

Major elements of the steps were introduced and broadly discussed across the country on three different occasions: in 2011 in preparations for the Sixth Congress of the Cuban Communist Party, in 2015 when those measures were revised and again in 2019. The latter was when a new constitution, incorporating the foundations for steps along these lines, was adopted by majority vote in a nationwide referendum that

followed months of debate in neighborhood and factory assemblies, farm cooperatives and gatherings organized by the Federation of Cuban Women, the Union of Young Communists and other mass organizations.

The need to open the Cuban economy to investment from abroad in order to upgrade vital electrical, rail and other basic infrastructure in transportation and industry has been recognized, and discussed, for years. Decisive steps in that direction were never taken, however. In part, that was reportedly due to the absence of a consensus within the Cuban leadership that the measures were necessary.

More important, deals came apart due to demands by potential capitalist partners to be able to act like capitalists, demanding legally binding agreements that went beyond what the majority of the Cuban leadership was prepared to accept.

Such demands included the right to repatriate profits instead of investing them in Cuba; the right to hold more than 50% ownership of enterprises developed jointly with Cuban state partners; and ownership of the land on which infrastructure and real estate was to be built.

Most important of all, potential capitalist investors insisted on the unpimped “right” to hire and fire labor and to negotiate the wages, hours, intensity and other conditions of employment directly with “their” workers.

The policy changes being implement-

ed today go beyond anything around which there has been leadership consensus up to now. The groundwork for many of them, however, was laid during the Special Period, as Castro explained in his 1994 talk.

The 176 measures beginning to be implemented affect every aspect of the production of industrial goods and farm output, the transport and sale of products and services and the social conditions of working people and members of their families, young and old.

In order to encourage investment of needed capital in virtually every sector of the economy — healthcare and education are excluded — the new measures offer very substantial incentives to non-Cuban capitalist businesses, as well as to Cubans both living abroad and on the island.

Attracting needed capital

The measures:

- Remove the longstanding requirement that the Cuban state be the majority owner in joint ventures with foreign companies.
 - Permit the direct import and export of products, supplies, and equipment by provincial and municipal government bodies, state enterprises, agricultural cooperatives and private businesses — reducing the state monopoly of foreign trade to certain exports of products of Cuban origin.
 - Allow state-owned enterprises to sell ownership stakes to domestic and foreign investors, as well as to sell unused assets.
 - Enable foreign investors to repatriate hard-currency earnings, set prices for their products, and hire employees directly. Until now employees of joint ventures were hired through a state agency, and non-Cuban owners had no direct input in the hiring and firing of workers. These regulations were to protect employees and the Cuban working class as a whole from the unfettered operations of capitalist corporations that — like all capitalist relations — prioritize profits over job conditions and the natural environment.
- Other reforms allow for the expansion of private-sector activities, including:
- Private businesses will be allowed to hire more than the previous limit of 100 employees.
 - Individuals will be permitted to own more than a single business.
 - State enterprises will each determine their own wage structures and workforce size.

- Wage levels negotiated with workers, with union participation, will depend solely on the companies’ economic and financial capacity and the organized strength of their employees.

The authorized expansion of privately owned and operated businesses in Cuba extends back some 20 years. The government has permitted and even encouraged them as a way to reduce bloated payrolls in state enterprises and government departments, as well as to meet the need for certain goods and services that the state was not able to provide in sufficient amounts.

As a result, there are currently some 13,000 micro, small and medium-size privately owned businesses in Cuba offering a wide variety of products and services, including food, haircuts, childcare, small-scale construction, cellphone and laptop repairs, foreign-language classes and more. Some 1.6 million Cubans out of a workforce of 4 million today are self-employed or work for a privately owned business.

While minimum-wage laws and other labor protections are reaffirmed within the framework of the new measures, changes in the state-owned, privately owned, and joint state and privately owned enterprises pose new challenges to the trade unions in defending wages, working conditions and social protections for active workers and retirees.

These were all central issues dis-



Above, July 10 meeting between members of agricultural cooperatives in Havana Province, local leaders of National Association of Small Farmers and Ministry of Agriculture officials. “The problems of land tenure” are best solved from below, said Gaspar Palermo, inset, president of Roberto Negrin Cooperative in La Lisa municipality, Cuba.

cussed at the congress of the Central Organization of Cuban Workers (CTC), the national trade union federation, in June, as well as in discussions leading to the approval of a new labor code in July. That new code formally recognizes the new sources of employment in private businesses and the rights of workers in all enterprises.

‘Solutions from below’

The crisis in domestic agriculture — the primary source of food for the Cuban people — has been cruelly intensified by Washington’s oil blockade.

Lack of fuel needed to operate farm equipment, carry produce to markets and control temperature in warehouses has left crops rotting in the fields and

Fidel Castro: ‘We must defend our sovereignty and right to build socialism when the conditions exist’

Below are excerpts from a Nov. 25, 1994, speech by Cuban President Fidel Castro at the closing session of an international solidarity conference in Havana held during the darkest days of economic crisis that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. Translation is by the Militant.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, our country lost 70% of its imports, and I wonder if any other country in the world could have withstood such a blow, and I wonder how many days it could have held out — a week, 15 days or a month.

How could we have done it without the people’s support for the revolution? How could we have truly resisted without our political system, without our democratic system, without the direct participation of the people in all fundamental issues — which is what true democracy is all about? ...

This situation led us to the Special Period.

We had been carrying out excellent plans before the socialist catastrophe struck — excellent plans in every sense; we were carrying out a Process of Rectification of Errors and Negative Tendencies — of both old and new mistakes, of both old and new trends — and while we were working extremely hard, that whole debacle began to unfold, leading us to what we might call a double blockade.

Because as soon as the disintegration of the socialist camp and the USSR occurred, and even before the collapse of the USSR, the United States was exerting strong pressure to halt trade between those countries and Cuba. And when the

USSR finally collapsed, the U.S. exerted immense pressure — with considerable success — to cut off trade and economic relations between the former socialist bloc countries and the USSR, and Cuba.

So our country found itself caught in a double blockade, and yet the homeland had to be saved, the revolution had to be saved, and socialism had to be saved. We call it saving the achievements of socialism, because we cannot say at this time that we are building socialism, but rather we are defending what we have done; we are defending the gains we have made — a fundamental objective in a world that had changed radically. ...

And under these conditions — which are more difficult than they have ever been — we must save the homeland, save the revolution, and save the achievements of socialism. What measures should be taken in this world as it exists today — a world that, of course, will not exist forever? ...

This is the world we have; it is the world with which we must trade and exchange our products, and in which we must survive; that is why we must adapt to this world and take the measures we deem essential, with a very clear goal in mind.

This does not mean that everything we are doing is solely the result of the new situation; we had already been making changes, and even the idea of introducing foreign capital predated the Special Period: we had realized that certain areas, certain sectors, could not be developed because we didn’t have available either the capital or the technology to do so, since the

transport depots. This is on top of the longer-term economic sanctions imposed by Washington, which for decades have paralyzed the purchase of vital fertilizer, seeds, equipment and other inputs. A sharp decline of the rural population is a source of vital concern to the Cuban leadership.

At a July 10 meeting with members of agricultural cooperatives in Havana Province and local leaders of the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP), Ministry of Agriculture officials discussed the proposed measures aimed at increasing food production.

Central to these efforts is the elimination of regulations and bureaucratic obstacles that have delayed the alloca-

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Ukraine: 35 years of independence, resistance to Moscow’s domination

BY ROY LANDERSEN

On Aug. 24 Ukrainians around the world celebrated the 35th anniversary of the winning of their independence, following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Today, arms in hand, they’re defending the country’s sovereignty and defying Russian President Vladimir Putin, who seeks to crush an independent Ukraine and reimpose Moscow’s domination.

The fight for Ukrainian independence was precipitated by a huge strike movement in 1989-91 by miners in the Donbas coal basin. The disintegration of the Soviet Union came on top of decades of opposition to the repressive Stalinist regime in Moscow, protests over its responsibility for the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and widespread anti-government sentiment fueled by the disastrous Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Waves of protests by working people toppled Stalinist regimes across Eastern Europe. The door was opened for the working class to enter politics in its own right for the first time in decades.

A protest movement in mid-1989 by Russian miners in Kuzbass, Siberia, spread to miners in Ukraine. As it grew strikers forced many mine directors and Soviet Ukraine officials to resign and began demanding Kyiv be free to determine its own future. The miners organized themselves in strike committees, bypassing Moscow’s state-controlled unions. From this, the Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine (NPGU) and the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine (KVPU) arose.

In Moscow an abortive coup was launched by a layer of the Stalinist rulers in August 1991, aiming to stem the tide of popular protests. But this only hastened declarations of independence by different Soviet republics. Days later, the Ukrainian parliament voted for the country’s independence from the Soviet Union. This was approved overwhelmingly by a referendum later that year, with majorities in every province — including Donetsk, Luhansk and Crimea.

Pro-independence protests 2004-2014

In 2004, working people in Ukraine mobilized to block a Moscow-backed attempt to rig the presidential election, occupying Kyiv’s central square, the Maidan. They forced the country’s Supreme Court to schedule another.

Fresh rallies began in 2013 as Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, backed by Moscow, dropped a planned trade deal with the European Union. Initial student protests spread to broader layers after demonstrators “were met with truncheons and bullets,” Mykhailo Volynets, president of the KVPU, told a *Militant* reporting team that toured parts of the country in 2014 to help get out the truth about the uprising.

“The unions and the workers joined,” he said, with millions across the country backing the occupation. Workers fought pitched street battles with regime thugs, forcing Yanukovich to capitulate and flee to Moscow.

“Workers are beginning to see that they are actors in history,” Alexei Oleksyevych, a leader of the Independent Trade Union of Miners, told the *Militant* reporting team. He helped organize workers’ rallies in Dnipropetrovsk in solidarity with the Maidan. This is in the largely Russian-speak-

ing eastern Ukraine.

“We brought down the Yanukovich regime and are making gains against bosses in our plants and mines because of the power of the Maidan, and Maidans across the country,” he said.

The success of the uprising strengthened working people for the battles to come, including the fight to push back against Moscow’s 2022 invasion.

Ukraine unions call for solidarity

The KVPU issued a call Sept. 3 to unions worldwide for solidarity as the Putin regime escalated its air war.

A Russian airstrike on a railway depot in Kyiv Sept. 1 killed seven people, including six rail workers. The union statement said “48 workers were killed and 158 injured at their workplaces” from “Russian aggression” in August alone.

It called for Moscow to “immediately and unconditionally end its aggression and withdraw its troops from Ukraine.”

The Nuclear Energy and Industry Workers’ Union of Ukraine has ap-



Independent Trade Union of Miners/Dnipropetrovsk

Miners join 2014 demonstration in Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine, against brutal pro-Moscow Yanukovich regime in Kyiv. Front banner reads, “All Power to the Maidan” mass protests.

pealed for international support in its fight to free 15 of its members, who worked at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant. They were among Ukrainians in the region imprisoned on frame-up charges by Moscow’s occupying forces after they seized the region in 2022.

The union “demands the unconditional release of 15 illegally imprisoned

workers of the occupied ZNPP and all residents of Enerhodar who are in the dungeons of Russian prisons,” the union’s president Valerii Matov said.

Days after Putin’s 2022 invasion, several thousand Ukrainians in Enerhodar mobilized in the streets leading to the city to try to block Moscow from seizing the country’s largest nuclear plant.

Cuba adopts measures to revive production

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tion of idle land belonging to state enterprises to individuals who want to start farming, and to farmers and cooperatives wanting to expand their operations.

All land in Cuba is state-owned. It was nationalized in the opening years of Cuba’s socialist revolution in the 1960s in order to prevent the landlords of Cuba’s huge estates from exploiting and evicting tenant farmers burdened by unpayable rent or back debt.

No private farmer in Cuba can lose their land as long as they or an heir is engaged in farming. It is one of the fundamental conquests of the revolution, which today seals the worker-farmer alliance on which the Cuban Revolution rests.

New applications for land to farm, however, have faced major delays due to endless paperwork to win approval at multiple levels — from the ministry of agriculture to local officials, as well as strict limitations on how the land can be used and which crops can be grown. Some of the land granted to individuals was never cultivated by the recipients, or ended up being used for other purposes.

Under the new measures, land will be granted for an indefinite period, and can be passed on to an heir who wants to continue farming. The measures also increase the area of land allowed for construction of housing, storage facilities and other infrastructure on the land. Under previous regulations, where land allocations were granted for periods of 10-25 years, those seeking plots to cultivate had little incentive to improve the land and were not permitted to build permanent structures, including dwellings.

“The solution to the problems with land tenure — the legality and use of the land — did not lie with the ministry of agriculture or any state enterprises,” Gaspar Palermo, president of the Roberto Negrín Cooperative in the La Lisa municipality, told Cuban officials at the July 10 meeting. The solution lies in “a force that can control this from below,” he said.

“By giving us decision-making

powers to grant the land to the best choice, it would help get rid of a lot of problems,” said Palermo. “The cooperatives know who is the best farmer. They know who land should be taken away from because they are not using it in accordance with the law or agreements for its use,” he said.

To alleviate the devastating conditions caused by Washington’s oil blockade and other sanctions, individual farmers and cooperatives will now be allowed to import fuel, fertilizer and other inputs directly, without going through state agencies.

These and other steps to increase food production are essential in face of sharply rising prices and U.S. sanctions that block access to hard currency used by the government in the past to subsidize a few basic food products.

In their totality, the 176 measures are broadly understood by most Cubans as necessary under today’s circumstances, as is awareness that the main source of the country’s difficulties is U.S. imperialism. Many welcome the steps being taken as an opportunity to draw more broadly on initiatives by workers and farmers to confront the brutal consequences of Washington’s punishing measures.

At the same time, there is a broad recognition and apprehension that the wider introduction of market relations will inevitably increase class differentiation and inequalities, undermining social solidarity.

The road forward

The source of Cuba’s extreme hardships and its main obstacle to economic and social development is the U.S. rulers’ drive — with the support of other imperialist governments — to overthrow Cuba’s socialist revolution.

Washington’s response to the recent steps being taken by the Cuban people to defend the independence and sovereignty of their state is, predictably, more and more sanctions and secondary sanctions on any bank, country or entity — *anywhere in the world* — doing business with Cuba.

With their well-known sense of humor, Cuban working people treat Secretary of State Marco Rubio’s near weekly announcements of additions to Washington’s growing list of sanctioned individuals and entities — “to help the Cuban people” — as a cynical joke.

At the same time, one thing is well understood both by working people in Cuba and by class-conscious and revolutionary-minded workers in the U.S. and the world. We know that only when the imperialist siege of the Cuban people is defeated can they return to focus on the building of socialism.

The biggest obstacle facing the Cuban toilers and their socialist revolution today is not the economic and military might of U.S. imperialism. It is the historical reality that Cuba, despite its standing among millions of toilers worldwide, remains alone as a workers state surrounded by capitalist states in an imperialist world. There have been no victorious socialist revolutions in almost seven decades. No new example of what the working class and its allies are capable of when they have the leadership they deserve.

The illusion that a patchwork of capitalist ruling classes across the “Global South” somehow can offer protection from the assaults of the main imperialist powers is being brutally exposed on a daily basis.

As Lenin and other leaders of the October 1917 Russian Revolution knew all too well, “socialism in one country,” even one as large and rich in resources as Russia, is an oxymoron. An isolated socialist beachhead in a capitalist world must be reinforced by other revolutionary victories, or retreat is inevitable.

As Fidel explained, that’s why defense of the independence and sovereignty of the only workers state in the world — and emulation of the proletarian internationalist example its working people have set — is and has been, for the last seven decades, our paramount task.

We don’t ask where or when the battle will end.

We take our place together in the trenches.