

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

**Rail bosses slash jobs, safety in drive to maximize profits**  
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 84/NO. 4 FEBRUARY 3, 2020

## SWP: Back workers' fight to win control over job safety

BY SETH GALINSKY

The Socialist Workers Party 2020 presidential ticket will be announced shortly and a slate of candidates across the country is advancing a program for working people to defend their jobs, income and safety and fight in the interests of all the oppressed. They are campaigning on workers' doorsteps in cities, towns and rural areas, on workers' picket lines, at protest actions and other political events presenting a program to unite working people to fight attempts by the bosses to make us pay for the crisis of their capitalist system.

By advancing working-class struggle, the party's platform explains workers can take steps to build class consciousness and see the need to replace the rule of the capitalist class with a workers and farmers government. And the party's candidates explain what can be done to advance that way forward today. They point to

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## Coal miners in Kentucky block tracks, win back pay

BY MAGGIE TROWE

META, Ky. — For the second time in six months, coal miners in eastern Kentucky took action to protest working without pay by blocking a coal train, winning broad community support and forcing the bosses to pay what was owed them.

A dozen Quest Energy coal miners and their families began blocking the rail tracks near Kimper Jan. 13 to protest the fact they hadn't been paid since Dec. 27.

Two miners started it when they learned Quest planned to haul coal from one of its mines in Pike County. They stood on the tracks, blocking the 120-car CSX train carrying coal they had mined.

"I got texts that Kenny Collins and Brandon Blackburn were down there," roof bolter Dylan Davidson told this *Militant* worker-correspondent by phone Jan. 17. "I live two seconds from there so I drove over and joined them."

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## Solidarity with protests by workers, students in Iran!

Actions hit Tehran's lies, wars across region



Demonstration at Sharif University of Technology in Tehran Jan. 13, part of growing protests over recent years against government's wars, economic crisis and attacks on political rights.

BY TERRY EVANS

Thousands of working people and youth have taken part in protests against the Iranian Revolutionary Guard shooting down a Ukrainian passenger aircraft Jan. 8 — killing all 176 passengers — after the government sought to cover it up and then confessed the truth.

The depth of the anti-government sentiment has forced the reactionary clerical regime to withhold the kind of brutal repression it used to quell widespread protests last November. Those actions also targeted the capitalist rulers' military interventions abroad and the toll they have taken on working people. So far the cops have only arrested some 30 people from these demonstrations.

The Iranian rulers fear the new round of protests will grow. Similar demonstrations in both Iraq and Lebanon are also demanding the fall of their govern-

ments and protesting against Tehran's interference there.

These actions deserve the support of working people worldwide.

Protests against the Iranian rulers' cover-up spread to at least a dozen cities and towns over four days through

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## Asarco strikers in 'fight against corporate greed, social injustice'



Militant/Bernie Senter

Contingent of copper workers on strike against Asarco in Arizona and Texas and their supporters were welcomed at Martin Luther King Day parade and rally in Tucson Jan. 20, the 100th day of their strike against the copper giant bosses' union-busting assault.

BY BERNIE SENTER  
AND DEBORAH LIATOS

TUCSON, Ariz. — "We stand before you 100 days into our strike fighting against corporate greed and social injustice," Alex Terrazas, a worker at Asarco's Mission copper mine and president of United Steelworkers Local 937, told the crowd at the Martin Luther King Day rally here Jan. 20.

More than 70 strikers and their supporters joined the King Day events that commemorate the fight for Black

rights. They were welcomed at the 1,000-strong march, winning broader support for the strike. About 1,700 copper workers went on strike Oct. 13 against Asarco bosses' union-busting attack at four mine complexes in Arizona and its Amarillo, Texas, refinery.

At the end of the march, strikers and supporters were invited to line up in front of the rally stage when Terrazas was introduced to the crowd.

"We stand in front of you in support

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## Desperation grows in Democrats' drive to oust Trump, limit workers right to vote

BY TERRY EVANS

President Donald Trump is campaigning hard for reelection, saying his administration has created more jobs and higher wages and that his trade policy and moves to grow the military — and his willingness to use it — mean U.S. workers have "peace and prosperity."

Speaking at the Davos conference in Switzerland Jan. 21 — the same day the Democrats' drive to oust him from office went on trial in the Senate — Trump claimed the U.S. is in an unprecedented "blue collar boom" that has especially benefited workers

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## Join effort to get Indiana prison officials to end ban on 'Militant'

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

As word has gotten out about the *Militant's* appeal filed against prison authorities at Indiana's Pendleton Correctional Facility banning subscriber Kevin "Rashid" Johnson from getting several issues of the paper, letters of protest have been sent to the Indiana Department of Correction urging this attack on the rights of both Johnson and the paper be reversed.

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—On the picket line, p. 5—

Walmart bosses hire plumber, fix toxic Tire and Lube center

Quebec aircraft refuelers strike over pay and safety



# Capitalist profit drive fuels Australia bushfire disaster

BY BOB AIKEN

BALMORAL VILLAGE, Australia — Supporters of the *Militant* arrived here, 60 miles southwest of Sydney, to discuss the impact of large-scale fires in December and to offer solidarity.

We found a hub of activity at the local Rural Fire Service station. Voluntary brigades have been central in fighting the massive blazes across eastern and southern Australia for months. Some 72,000 people are organized in more than 2,000 local brigades in New South Wales alone.

The fires have ranged from southeast Queensland down the east coast of New South Wales to Victoria and the island of Tasmania, and from South Australia to Perth in Western Australia.

“We were hit by fire 10 times over three days,” Brendan O’Connor, captain of the Balmoral brigade, told *Militant* correspondents. Worried that text warnings sent to residents from Sydney Rural Fire Service head office didn’t give enough warning, O’Connor said he “went around and told everyone to get out by tomorrow. If I hadn’t done that there would have been fatalities.”

Volunteers from working people in the district played a key role in both saving lives and people’s homes. O’Connor said the Balmoral brigade has 21 members. Most work outside the district and some travel daily to Sydney. Many had taken weeks off work to fight the fires.

After organizing the evacuation, the brigade fought to save houses, he said, with their station the main refuge as the firestorm surrounded the township. While 21 homes burned down, over 100 were saved. We saw handwritten signs

saying, “Thank you RFS” dotting the roadside into the village.

Two volunteer firefighters, Geoffrey Keaton and Andre O’Dwyer from the Horsley Park brigade, in the west of Sydney, were killed fighting the same fire on the road to Buxton, near Balmoral. At least 28 people have died in fires across the country, with more than 2,000 homes destroyed and some 42,000 square miles burned.

For weeks on end, hazardous smoke blanketed Sydney, Melbourne and other cities and towns, as well as rural districts. Farmers have lost an estimated 100,000 sheep and cattle. Hundreds of millions of wild animals have been killed and their habitat destroyed.

### Canberra’s obstruction

O’Connor said volunteers had done some hazard reduction burns and helped others with permits to light similar fires on their property. Not enough preventative burns were done in national parks or state forests, which is “most of the land around here,” he said.

He was angry that the Rural Fire Service head office ignored local experience on what was needed to protect people and limit the destructive effect of the fires. The only hazard reduction in a nearby national park was 2½ miles away, he said. With no wildfires or burnoff since 2001, it meant “18 years of fuel” built up. “It was a time bomb waiting to go off,” O’Connor said.

In some districts “some of the country hasn’t been burnt for 60 years, other areas for 25 years, so there is a lot of fuel,” Peter Grieve, a 76-year-old cattle farmer and deputy captain of volunteer



Australia Department of Defence/Helen Frank

After deadly wildfires, Australian government belatedly organized evacuation of stranded people trapped on Mallacoota Beach Dec. 31. Inset, volunteer firefighter battles bushfire. Authorities allowed huge buildup of forest and brush, “a time bomb waiting to go off.”

firefighters in the Bylong Valley, near the giant Gospers Mountain fire, told the *Militant* by phone.

He said, “Successive governments [Labor and Liberal] have cut funding over the years” for forestry control and for firefighting resources. The “blocking off of trails” in the forests is a problem, Grieve said. “By the time they got vehicles in there it was too late” to contain what became a monster fire.

A “lot of problems came together,” Grieve said, made worse by an ongoing three-year drought. “You can’t stop the fires, but you can reduce their intensity.”

While we were in Balmoral, a Greek community group from the Earlwood neighborhood in Sydney visited the fire station to show support, bringing meals and children’s Christmas presents for the village. People from nearby brought water and food.

The capitalist rulers’ funding priorities, and their indifference to what working-class and farming communities are experiencing and the social catastrophe they now face, point to the real source of the disaster. There will always be storms, earthquakes and wildfires, but it’s the for-profit dog-eat-dog capitalist system than makes them into a social crisis.

*Militant* supporters went door-to-door speaking with workers in Tahmoor. “We were told to evacuate,” Janine Hilder, a temp disability care worker, told us. Some stayed to try and save their homes,

dousing spot fires from flying embers.

If you don’t have a car to evacuate, or if you’re elderly or disabled, Hilder said, “I don’t know what you’re supposed to do.” Residents were left to fend for themselves. The unplanned evacuation caused a big traffic jam on the road out.

### Prime minister heckled

Prime Minister Scott Morrison was heckled by angry residents when he visited Cobargo on the NSW South Coast Jan. 2 for a photo-op soon after the town had been devastated by a fire.


As weeks went by and the social crisis deepened, his government began to scramble to announce new federal measures. Some 3,000 army reservists were belatedly mobilized, and a little financial assistance was announced for the volunteer firefighters. More fire-fighting aircraft were ordered. After thousands of people had been stranded on the beach at Mallacoota by a ring of fires, Morrison finally deployed the navy to evacuate them.

These belated actions just highlighted what hadn’t been done earlier in preparation. The government had known for months that conditions meant fires were likely to be much more intense this summer. Its response, and even the Rural Fire Service state leadership, was “very poor,” Balmoral firefighter O’Connor said. “No one came here for two weeks. These little communities, they don’t care about us.”

# THE MILITANT

***Demand US gov’t aid for Puerto Rico quake victims!***

***The ‘Militant’ covers the social disaster resulting from U.S. colonial rule in Puerto Rico and the local capitalist government in wake of January earthquake. Damage has never been repaired from Hurricane Maria that devastated the island in 2017.***



Earthquake victims in Puerto Rico sleeping outdoors without any real government help.

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# SWP: Back fight for job safety

Continued from front page

the need for workers control of conditions on the job and for a labor party, based on the unions, to lead a political fight to defend workers' wages and living conditions.

"We're getting a real hearing," Maggie Trowe, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate from Kentucky, told the *Militant* by phone Jan. 21. Trowe, who works at Walmart, noted that campaign supporters in Kentucky have been getting back to people they met over the last year. During the strike at General Motors, campaign supporters met a Ford worker who had joined a solidarity caravan. "We ran into her again when we were campaigning for the SWP ticket on workers' doorsteps," Trowe said. "Last week she came to a Militant Labor Forum in Louisville."

SWP member Ellen Brickley spoke at the forum, explaining the campaign platform's call for a "fight for workers control over production and safety in the factories, mines, railroads and all energy monopolies to protect those on the job and in nearby communities."

## No worker should die on the job

Some 5,250 workers died on the job in the U.S. in 2018 — the latest year figures are available — because of the capitalists' drive for profits and their disregard for the life and limb of workers.

"No worker should die on the job because of capitalist greed," Brickley said. Socialist Workers Party campaigners across the country explain that workers and their unions must have the right to stop production if conditions are not safe

"The Ford worker told us she loved the forum," Trowe reported.

In Texas, the SWP is running Gerardo Sánchez, a worker at Walmart, for U.S. Senate. "We've been explaining working people need to build our own party," he said. "A lot of people respond positively to that. But especially in the big cities like Dallas some who are bombarded by the liberals' media argue we need to get rid of Donald Trump first.

"We explain the anti-Trump hysteria is no road forward. The rule of the capitalist class and the lesser-evil politics of their two main parties is the problem we face," Sánchez said.

"We explain that the impeachment of Trump is really aimed at the working class. If they can violate the president's constitutional rights, they can do it to you, too."

Rail worker Henry Dennison is the SWP candidate for governor of Washington state. Dennison and a campaign supporter went door to door in Mountlake Terrace, a working-class town north of Seattle, in early January around the time a U.S. drone strike killed Iranian Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani in a combat operation in Iraq.

"Most of the people we talked to were opposed to the U.S. intervention there," Dennison said. "We sold a *Militant* subscription to a guy from Libya. Our party calls for U.S. troops to get entirely out of the Mideast. I asked him if anything that Washington has done in Libya had made life better there. He laughed and said 'no.'"

The *Militant* also reports on the struggles waged by working people in Iran against the government, as well as protests for political rights in Iraq and

Lebanon that workers have a stake in.

We need a political party that will point a road forward for the entire working class, Dennison said, that explains the class side of every question, from U.S. war moves abroad to the fight for Black rights and for women's right to contraception and to choose abortion.

Dennison walked the picket lines of striking copper workers at Asarco mine complexes in Arizona and is building solidarity with them.

## 'Free Gerald Reed'

The communist candidates and the party's platform take up other questions of importance to the working classes.

Naomi Craine, a railroad worker and the party's candidate for U.S. Senate in Illinois, joined in and spoke at a Jan. 10 rally in Chicago to demand freedom for Gerald Reed and all other victims of torture at the hands of the Chicago police. Reed's conviction was overturned in December 2018 but he is still in jail, as prosecutors are pushing for a new trial.

"It's an outrage that Reed is in jail a year after his conviction was vacated," Craine told the protesters. "This is part of what is an injustice system that comes down against working people,

# Socialist Workers Party 2020 campaign platform

*As the Socialist Workers Party prepares to launch its 2020 campaign for president and vice president, the party has begun announcing a series of candidates for federal and state offices across the country (see below).*

*This is the SWP's fighting campaign platform to confront the economic, social and moral crisis caused by capitalism:*

**UNIONS/FOR A LABOR PARTY** Support workers' struggles to organize to defend themselves, to use union power on behalf of ourselves and all working people. Workers need their own party, a labor party. *One* union for *all* drivers — taxi, Uber, Lyft, other app-based and car service drivers! Support farmworkers in their fight to organize unions and for safe working conditions.

**AMNESTY FOR ALL UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS** in the US, a life-and-death question for the unions to unite workers and cut across divisions the bosses use to drive down wages. For access to driver's licenses for all.

**JOBS** Fight for a federal government-financed public works program to put millions to work at union-scale wages building roads, bridges, hospitals, child care centers, mass transportation and quality affordable housing workers need. Set the minimum wage to allow workers to have a home and support a family.

**OPPOSE WASHINGTON'S WARS** US hands off Iran, Venezuela and Cuba. US troops out of Afghanistan, Korea, the Middle East. End US colonial rule in Puerto Rico.

**CUBA'S REVOLUTION — AN EXAMPLE** End the US rulers' economic war against Cuba; US out of Guantánamo. The Cuban Revolution in 1959 showed it is possible for workers and farmers to transform themselves in struggle, to take political power and uproot capitalist exploitation.

**HEALTH CARE FOR ALL** Fight for universal, government-guaranteed cradle-to-grave health care, and re-



Militant/Ilona Gersh

Naomi Craine, right, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate in Illinois, speaks at Jan. 10 rally in Chicago to demand freedom for Gerald Reed and other victims of cop torture. "It's an outrage that Reed is still in jail a year after his conviction was overturned," Craine told fellow protesters.

disproportionately against those who are Black or Latino."

Craine and other SWP candidates encourage people they meet to read "*It's the Poor Who Face the Savagery of the US 'Justice' System*": *The Cuban Five Talk About Their Lives Within the US Working Class* along with other books by party leaders. SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters in her introduction

tiement income for all.

**ABORTION** Defend women's right to unrestricted access to family planning services, including the right to safe, secure abortions.

**ISRAEL & PALESTINE** For the recognition of Israel and of a contiguous Palestinian state. For the right of Jews to return to Israel as a refuge in the face of capitalist crisis, Jew-hatred and murderous violence.

**WORKERS CONTROL OVER PRODUCTION & SAFETY** Capitalism's profit drive is the despoiler of nature and cause of unsafe working conditions. Workers and our unions must fight for workers control over production and safety in the factories, mines, railroads and all energy monopolies to protect those on the job and in nearby communities, and to control emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases to prevent the poisoning of the air, water and soil. Workers control over production to prevent disasters like the Boeing 737 MAX.

**"JUSTICE" SYSTEM** Fight against police brutality, racist discrimination and the entire capitalist injustice system with its frame-ups, "plea bargains," onerous bail and outrageous prison sentences, all of which disproportionately hit workers who are Black. For the right to vote for ex-prisoners and all workers behind bars.

notes that prisons are a "grotesquely magnified reproduction of the social relations, values, and 'business practices' of the dog-eat-dog capitalist world."

Between now and November SWP candidates are urging other workers to join them in action against the many injustices that capitalism breeds and are presenting a course of working-class struggle to overturn capitalist rule.

**POLITICAL RIGHTS** Defend democratic rights — the right to vote, to free speech and assembly and to bear arms, under attack from Democrats and Republicans alike. Stop FBI and other government spying, harassment and disruption.

**PRISONER RIGHTS** End solitary confinement. End suppression of the *Militant*, books and newspapers by prison authorities. Abolish the death penalty, an anti-working-class weapon in the hands of the rulers.

**FARMERS — WORKERS ALLIES ON THE LAND** To put a halt to farm foreclosures, bankruptcies and skyrocketing rural debt, we demand nationalization of the land. This puts the soil at the service of the farmers who till it, as opposed to control by the banks and landlords. We demand the government guarantee farmers their costs of production, including their living expenses.

*Working people must organize and act independent of the ruling capitalists and break from their political parties — the Democrats and Republicans. For a labor party and a movement of millions to fight for these demands along a course to replace the rule of the exploitative capitalist class with a workers and farmers government.*

*Join the Socialist Workers Party campaign!*

## Campaign with the Socialist Workers Party candidates!

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**Pennsylvania**  
Dave Ferguson, U.S. Congress, 18th Dist.  
Ruth Robinett, U.S. Congress, 14th Dist.

**Texas**  
Gerardo Sánchez, U.S. Senate

**Washington, D.C.**  
James Harris, Delegate to U.S. Congress

**Washington state**  
Henry Dennison, Governor

See directory on page 8 to contact party campaign office nearest you.



# Democrats' desperation grows

**Continued from front page**  
who are African American, Hispanic, women, veterans and youth.

The Democrats have spent over three years — since the day Trump was elected — trying to remove him from office. Today, increasingly lacking confidence they can field a candidate who can defeat him, they are stepping up efforts to find another way to bring his administration down before November.

Neither side provides a road forward for working people. There is a working-class alternative — the 2020 campaign of the Socialist Workers Party.

The liberals insist the real problem is the working class. Charles Blow argues in the *New York Times* Jan. 15 that Trump's presidency rests on "white nationalists in the Rust Belt." He describes what he calls the "white working class," saying they lack "integrity and honor" for still supporting the president despite all the accusations liberals have heaped on him.

In a similar vein, MSNBC's Noah Berlatsky says that the workers who elected and back Trump clearly engaged in "racist voting," which he insists is barred by the U.S. Constitution. The question, he says, is "can they be stopped?" He argues what's needed is to "dismantle some of the features of the electoral system," including proposals to establish special Senate electoral districts that he hopes would dilute workers' exercise of the franchise and boost meritocratic-minded liberals in the Senate. Others promote

different schemes, like eliminating the Electoral College to weaken the influence of working-class votes in more rural states.

### Defeat looms for impeachment

While the Democrats are frantic to find a way to take down the president and hogtie his working-class "base," they admit they don't have much chance with impeachment. The don't have the votes.

So they're demanding the Senate "trial" throw open the door to calling new witnesses and demand thousands of pages of administration documents in hopes of finding more dirt to throw. But when they decided to go for impeachment last fall and engineered a 100% partisan set of hearings in the House, they concluded by claiming they had amassed way more than enough "evidence" to have Trump removed from office. They say they may open new hearings and look for new propaganda grist and new charges.

This has been the game plan since Trump won the election, mounting "investigations" against him by ex-FBI bosses James Comey and Robert Mueller into alleged collusion between Trump's 2016 campaign and Moscow. When this all came up a cropper, they searched for something new and came up with claims Trump committed "high crimes and misdemeanors" by pressing for investigations into corruption in Ukraine.

Regardless of what they think of Trump's personality or policies, millions of working people know the Democrats' witch hunt is an attempt to overturn the 2016 election.

The methods used in going after Trump — who after all is just a politician like all the others seeking to shore up capitalist rule — are dangerous for the working class. They strengthen the capitalist rulers' political police and criminal "justice" system's use of frame-up charges; grand jury fishing expeditions; denial of the presumption of innocence and other constitutional protections against government intrusion; and to unleash their FBI on working-class fighters as they have in the past. For decades the FBI spied and carried out disruption operations against the Socialist Workers Party and others fighting for Black rights, the labor movement and



Militant photos: Above, Tony Lane; inset, Dan Fein  
**Alyson Kennedy, above, Socialist Workers Party candidate for president in 2016, at rally of striking Verizon workers in Trenton, New Jersey, during campaign. SWP's 2020 campaign offers road of uncompromising working-class struggle as political crisis grips the bosses' two parties. Inset, Kennedy talks with Bojka Milanovich at her home in Elmhurst, Illinois, in 2016.**

against imperialist wars.

Desperately looking to find a way to prevent Trump from winning a second term, the editors of the *New York Times* have endorsed not one but two Democrats for president, Amy Klobuchar, and if she can't win the party's nomination, then fall back on Elizabeth Warren.

The *Times* editors claim Klobuchar, the most conservative of the Democrats' candidates, might have a chance to chase down the president. If not, voting for Warren would at least be a "progressive" statement.

They throw Bernie Sanders, Joe Biden and all the others under the bus as certain losers.

### Socialist Workers Party alternative

There is an alternative to both the Trump administration and the Democrats of every stripe who each in their own way fights to preserve the dog-eat-dog capitalist system.

The Socialist Workers Party national campaign presents the one optimistic road for working people, a road of un-

compromising class struggle that leads towards ending the exploitation we face at the hands of the bosses and the government that serves them.

The SWP puts forward a fighting platform that advances the unity and self-confidence workers need to be effective defending our interests amid the crisis conditions most of us face today. And they point to workers' need to prepare for bigger struggles to come, when the working class will have the opportunity to lead all those battered by capitalist exploitation and oppression to take political power out of the rulers' hands and establish our own government.

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**What Can Workers Learn from Cuba's Socialist Revolution?** Speaker: Jeff Powers, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., Feb. 1, 7:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 675 Hegenberger Road, Suite 250. Tel.: (510) 686-1351.

### GEORGIA

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**Solidarity with Workers and Youth Protesting in Iran!** Speaker: Sam Manuel, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Jan 31, 7:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 777 Cleveland Ave. SW, Suite 103. Tel.: (678) 528-7828.

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The Militant February 3, 2020



# —ON THE PICKET LINE—

Are you involved in a union organizing drive or strike? Brought solidarity to fellow workers on the picket line? Let us know! Send articles, photos and letters to [themilitant@mac.com](mailto:themilitant@mac.com) or through our website, or mail them to 306 W. 37th St., 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.

## Walmart bosses hire plumber, fix up toxic Tire and Lube center

CHICAGO — An area plumber's red van has been a common sight for the last few weeks outside of the Walmart Tire and Lube center at a Chicago area store. Walmart bosses hired a plumber to fix the pipes, pumps and a vent that sits in the lower bay area of the auto shop, where workers carry out oil changes daily. Why is this of interest to *Militant* readers, you ask?

A clogged pipe resulted in several sewage spills in the tire and lube lower bay recently. Workers refused to work in the hazardous waste that covered the floor, despite bosses insisting that we do so. Our stand won support from other workers in the store and forced the company to fix the pipes and to hire professional cleaners to remove the sewage and sanitize the floor.

After one spill, sewage sat for over a week in the corner of the lower bay. Several workers refused to clean it, saying it wasn't safe or sanitary, and insisted the company hire professional cleaners with proper training and safety equipment.

Last month, a larger spill flooded the entire floor of the bay with over an inch of raw sewage. Several of us reported to management that sewage was spilling into the work area. The company wanted us to continue doing oil changes, and bosses asked us to clean the area despite Walmart's own safety policy that employees without training and personal protective equipment are not allowed to clean potentially hazardous spills bigger than one square foot.

For several days some workers refused to go down into the contaminated area. Workers in the shop discussed how to respond to this situation and decided to start doing oil changes on the lifts in the shop instead of the lower bay until the sewage was removed and the floor disinfected.

Management responded to our action, hiring professional cleaners to disinfect the spill by the end of the workday. A plumber was also eventually called to fix the problems with the pipes.

Co-workers throughout the store were outraged that workers were told to work in sewage, and were picked up by the outcome of the action. "This is a matter of safety. There are some things that

untrained employees are not allowed to properly handle," Ronnie Maddocks, a shelf stocker, told the *Militant*. "At that point it's the company's responsibility to take care of the issue."

"Several employees confronted managers one on one and nothing changed," Alex Ziomeck, a tire and lube worker, told the *Militant*. "The only way that we were able to see real change in the situation is when we came together. To other Walmart workers, if you feel like you can relate to this story, talk to your co-workers and get organized."

—Samantha Hamlin, works in Walmart's Tire and Lube department

## Quebec aircraft refuelers strike over pay and safety

MONTREAL — "Our main concerns are safety and wages," Tony Digenova, International Association of Machinists Local 2301 chief steward, told the *Militant* on the picket line at the Montréal-Trudeau International airport Jan. 9. He is one of 108 aircraft supply workers, dispatchers, fuel storage maintenance workers and mechanics on strike against Swissport Canada Inc. here and at the nearby Mirabel cargo airport.

Swissport is a highly profitable multinational conglomerate with



Militant/John Steele

Aircraft refuelers in Quebec, on strike against Swissport Canada, and other unionists rally at company offices in Montreal Jan. 15 demanding higher pay and adequate on-the-job training.

some 70,000 workers worldwide.

They went on strike Dec. 31 after rejecting the bosses' contract offer by a vote of 90%. They've been without a contract since August 2019.

The union explained that the low pay — 16 Canadian dollars an hour (\$12.25) — and insufficient training are designed to cut costs and boost profits.

The union has condemned the bosses' decision to run fueling services using unskilled management strike-breakers. Three days after the strike began, a scab tanker truck driver hit a cement pillar, spilling fuel.

The strikers are up against not only Swissport bosses, but also the federal government's Industrial Relations Board, the Montreal airport authorities and the airport cops, who have restricted their picketing to an isolated coned-off perimeter outside the main passenger terminal.

Some 250 workers attended a solidarity rally Jan. 15 at the Swissport offices in St.-Laurent, Montreal. Joining the action were Machinists from the Bombardier aircraft plant, United Steelworkers, UNIFOR and other unions.

—John Steele

# Delaware protest hits Planned Parenthood firebombing

BY BARBARA GREENWAY

NEWARK, Del. — "Our doors stay open," Ruth Lytle-Barnaby, president of Planned Parenthood of Delaware, told some 150 people who filled the New Ark United Church of Christ here Jan. 11 at a solidarity rally against an arson assault against the Newark Planned Parenthood Clinic.

The clinic, which provides abortion and family planning services, was firebombed Jan. 3 at around 2:15 a.m. Clinic surveillance video shows Samuel James Gulick, 18, throwing a Molotov cocktail through the clinic's front window, shattering the glass. The device exploded,

starting a fire that fortunately burned itself out and did limited damage.

Gulick was also taped spray-painting the phrase "Deus Vult," Latin for "God wills it," in large red letters on the front of the building. The FBI said they found that phrase, along with threats against abortion providers and ultra-right images on Gulick's Instagram page. One of his postings compares those who support access to abortion to Nazis.

Gulick was arrested by the FBI Jan. 4 and charged with arson and vandalism.

At the solidarity protest meeting, Jane Coulter, a teacher from Wilmington, told the *Militant*, "A friend called me

and told me about the event, so I hopped in the car to get here. We have to stand up and answer attacks like this." Several students from the University of Delaware, which is adjacent to the clinic, also attended. Speakers included Jerry Clifton, the city's mayor.

"We've been here for 85 years. We've weathered other storms," Lytle-Barnaby told CNN, but arson "is a new level for us."

"We will not let this or any other acts keep us from providing reproductive health care," she said. "I think everybody should be able to access health care without fear, shame or stigma."

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



February 6, 1995

PARKES AND MUDGE, Australia — Hundreds of family farmers and supporters across drought-stricken south and central parts of this state lined major country roads January 11 to publicize their demands for an extension of assistance payments and relief from recent government-imposed interest rate hikes. The farmers set up roadside "information stops" to explain their demands.

Called "Operation Dust Storm," the actions were organized by activists in the New South Wales Farmers' Association and the Rural Action Movement.

Although 98 percent of the state is officially "drought declared," only 6.5 percent of the state's farmers qualify for even the basic aid promised by Canberra. To be eligible, farms have to suffer under drought conditions for 24 out of 36 months.



February 6, 1970

YELLOW SPRINGS, Ohio — The Student Mobilization Committee at Antioch College has launched a petition campaign to force the college to boycott GE products in conjunction with the GE strike. More than 300 out of some 1,100 students have already signed.

Support for the strike became an important issue on campus after GE's Evandale plant asked for student help in maintaining picket lines. The request came as a result of an injunction restraining striking GE workers from picketing plant gates in the morning hours when most of the non-union white-collar employees come to work.

At a mass meeting on the Antioch campus Jan. 18, more than 100 students expressed a willingness to picket. However, picketing was called off at the request of union officials pending decision on the constitutionality of the injunction.



February 3, 1945

The International Executive Board of the CIO United Automobile Workers adopted a resolution calling on the CIO to withdraw its support from Roosevelt's War Labor Board.

In its three years of existence the WLB has earned among workers the title of "Graveyard of Grievances." Major wage cases have been stalled as much as two years. The steel wage case was "settled" with major wage demands denied.

The hostility to the WLB is expressed most sharply in the autoworkers union, where opposition to compulsory arbitration and the no-strike surrender policy have forced the holding of a national referendum on the no-strike pledge.

Today, almost every worker recognizes that the WLB was designed to shackle the workers to compulsory arbitration, impose the wage-freeze, curb independent militant labor action.

## Teamster Rebellion

by Farrell Dobbs

The story of the strikes and organizing drive the men and women of Teamsters Local 574 carried out in Minnesota in 1934, paving the way for the rise of the Congress of Industrial Organizations as a fighting social movement.

TEAMSTER REBELLION



\$16

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# Eastern Kentucky miners block tracks, win back pay

Continued from front page

Davidson, who now works at Quest's Carnegie mine, got to know Collins and Blackburn when he worked at Quest no. 15 mine.

"We're not just co-workers, we're like brothers," Davidson said. "We spend more time with each other than with our family. And I wanted my payday — three weeks without getting pay!"

Other miners and their families soon joined them, and many other workers came by with both moral and material support. "Monday night we had 14, including some of our wives," Davidson said. "My wife Katie came up a couple of times. People brought us pop, water, firewood, pizza, cornbread, sleeping bags, sheets, covers and chairs. The whole community was behind us 100%." Donations included a tent for shelter and a port-a-potty.

Miners whose pay was stolen by bosses at Blackjewel mine in Cumberland blocked a coal train for two months last summer, until they had won what they were owed. Their victory, and the support they received, has been absorbed by miners here and other workers. "I have friends that worked over there," Davidson said.

On Jan. 14, Quest paid miners the straight pay they were owed, but not vacation and overtime pay. "When they paid the two weeks some left, but five of us stayed," Davidson said, determined to get every penny.

The next day a representative of Quest Energy as well as some other company workers came to the protest site and tried to get the protesters to leave the tracks. Davidson and the others said that they'd leave when they got all the pay owed them. Later that day, they all got their full pay and declared victory, taking down the blockade.

Eastern Kentucky was once a United Mine Workers of America union stronghold, but there are no union mines here today. Many retired union



Coal miners in eastern Kentucky Jan. 13 block Quest Energy bosses from moving coal they mined in fight over pay. The miners won widespread solidarity and all their back wages.

miners live here, and the legacy of UMWA militancy reverberates broadly in the working class.

"They won," Lisa Scalf, mother of Davidson's wife Katie, told us when we knocked on her door in a small hollow here and were invited in for refreshments. "They got what they wanted. I told Katie, this is no different from when my daddy was a union miner for 30 years. You stay out for

what you want. Unions are solidarity."

And what the Quest miners did — act together in solidarity to resist the bosses' attacks — is the heart of what unionism is.

We had just visited down the hill with Scalf's mother, Barbara Hale, a retired grocery worker, and her husband Harold, a retired union miner and veteran of many strikes, who has black lung and is fighting for benefits.

## Asarco strikers win solidarity at King Day march

Continued from front page

of racial justice and economic equality," Terrazas said. "Dr. King knew deep in his heart that when unions, community and civil rights groups all come together we are an unstoppable force for serving the people and changing the world."

The copper workers — mostly Mexican Americans, as well as Native American, Caucasian and Black workers — went on strike after Asarco refused to

budge on its "last, best and final" offer that freezes wages and pensions for two-thirds of the workers, doubles and triples health care costs, and curtails union rights on the job.

Beverly Hughes and three other workers from the Amarillo refinery drove 700 miles to participate in the contingent and to join the picket lines in Arizona. "Everyone is trying to stay positive, stay strong and fill the picket shifts," she told the *Militant*. "People are dropping donations off at the picket shack. They have been very generous."

"I love to see the solidarity," Liza Tarango, a tank house operator at the Amarillo refinery, said, "and it makes me proud to be a union member."

Eight strikers from the Ray Mine and Hayden complex 80 miles north of here marched in the contingent. "Pipefitters from Mesa and Tempe have been by the line," said Johnny Archuleta, a worker at the Ray Mine. "A United Auto Workers union member brought \$250 and GM workers came from Detroit. Area businesses are supporting us."

Asarco is owned by Grupo Mexico, one of the world's largest mining conglomerates. Since a brief meeting Nov. 14, where bosses wouldn't discuss anything of substance, the company has refused to negotiate with the unions. Asarco has kept up some production with supervisors, some workers who crossed the line and newly hired scabs. The Hayden smelter and Amarillo refinery have been shut down since the beginning of the strike.

"We had no choice but to be on strike," Jesus Alvarado, who works at the Mission Mine, told the *Militant*. "After 12 years I'm making \$18.75 and they want to offer me a 25-cent hourly increase. That's totally unacceptable. We allowed the company to freeze our wages since 2010 in order that they could expand.

"We're 100 percent union," Barbara Hale told us. Her father was a UMWA union organizer. "It's a shame when a man goes out there and mines coal and doesn't get his money."

When Quest bosses said those blocking the tracks were holding the coal "ransom," the miners and many others protested. "They weren't asking for something that wasn't theirs," Scalf said. "They were just demanding what they had earned!"

Satisfaction with the miners' victory is widespread. "I thought what they did was honorable," disabled mine mechanic Danny Coleman told us at his doorstep in Pikeville, the largest town in the region. "If you miss a payday you're behind, it's hard to catch up."

Winning in just three days surprised Davidson. "I didn't expect to win it as quick as we did," he said.

This victory, like the hard-fought Blackjewel protest last summer, will inspire others. Co-workers at the Walmart store in Louisville where this worker-correspondent works had asked me to convey their messages of solidarity. When produce worker Cindy Poindexter heard about the victory, she wrote me, "That's great! They deserve it."

*Tony Lane, a former coal miner from Pittsburgh, contributed to this article.*

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See distributors page 4 or visit [pathfinderpress.com](http://pathfinderpress.com)



# Rail bosses slash jobs, safety in drive to maximize profits

BY NAOMI CRAINE

CHICAGO — Rail bosses in North America have slashed thousands of jobs — from engineers and conductors to track maintenance and equipment repair workers — in recent months, with more cuts in the works. At the same time they brag they're raking in soaring profits, despite a decline in freight volume. They're imposing more stringent schedules on shippers and putting engines and other equipment out of service.

For rail workers, this means speedup, intensified work and increasingly unsafe conditions for those still on the job, while others confront the uncertainty of indefinite furloughs.

According to U.S. Labor Department figures, more than 20,000 rail jobs have been cut in the last year, nearly 10 percent of the workforce. Norfolk Southern has furloughed over 3,500 train crew, maintenance and other workers. BNSF Railway also has a growing number of workers on furlough. Union Pacific has closed several rail yards and says it plans to continue cuts through 2020.

"How do you expect to move the same freight with less people," Travis Williams, a conductor with 18 years' experience in Chicago, told the *Militant*. "They have to cut corners somewhere. We know it is going to affect safety in an industry that's already dangerous."

The biggest cuts have been in maintenance of equipment and stores, down 15% from a year earlier, and in train and engine crews, down 13.7%. The seven largest railroads in North America have idled nearly 30% of their locomotives over the last year, the *Washington Post* reported Jan. 3. It described how hundreds of mothballed engines are now parked in Norfolk Southern's once-bustling hub in Roanoke, Virginia.

Overall, freight traffic is down compared to a year ago, but the job cuts go much deeper than the decline in trade, because of what the *Post* calls "an aggressive push across the railroad industry to slash costs." Norfolk Southern chief marketing officer Alan Shaw boasted to investors in November they were able to cut "crew costs" by 13%. He said the company was "accelerating" cuts heading into the new year.

In July Union Pacific bosses announced that while it had transported 4% fewer rail carloads than a year earlier, its "operating ratio" — that is, expenses relative to net sales — fell to an all-time low and earnings per share rose 12%. In other words, they squeezed more profits out of fewer workers' labor.

The same news release notes in pass-

ing that the "first half reportable injury rate" rose 14% over 2018.

Union Pacific is one of the latest carriers to begin implementing "precision scheduled railroading," or PSR, a profit-boosting scheme initiated by bosses at Canadian National Railway a decade ago. Under this banner, the rail bosses are reducing the number of conductors, engineers and track and maintenance workers as a way to reduce operating costs. They're running less trains, pressing manufacturers and other shippers to have loads ready when they're scheduled or face high late fees, aiming to move cars faster with fewer crews. And train crews are increasingly tasked with more work than before.

On top of all this, rail bosses are pushing hard for the one-person "crew," eliminating the conductor position. They're getting help from the pro-boss Federal Railroad Administration in Washington, which scuttled earlier support for two-person crews.

New technology does "virtually all of the work that a conductor does," Union Pacific CEO Lance Fritz insists.

## 'I'm tired of being tired'

The effects on workers of this profit drive led 3,200 conductors, members of the Teamsters union, to strike for eight days at Canadian National last November, halting 90% of freight on Canada's largest railroad. "On strike for safety" and "I'm tired of being tired" were popular slogans.

"Mass layoffs have been a disturbing and central component of PSR operations," the Transportation Trades Department of the AFL-CIO said Oct. 29. "In just the first two years after CSX implemented this model, the carrier fired 22% of its equipment maintenance workers, 16% of its train crews and 11%



Militant/Philippe Tessier

Canadian National Railway Teamsters picket in Quebec City, Nov. 24, 2019, during eight-day "strike for safety" last fall fighting for rail workers and surrounding communities.

of its maintenance-of-way employees."

"A carman wrote that at his yard, management now demands brake inspections be performed at the extraordinary and unsafe pace of just 60 seconds per car," the labor group reported.

Lance Anton, 42, a conductor and SMART-TD union member, told the *Militant* that where he works in Lincoln, Nebraska, 30% of the yard switcher engines and remote pack jobs have been cut back. "The company is pushing workers to do the same amount of work as the winter weather conditions are getting harsher," he said.

Some 170 union members picketed in Kansas City, Missouri, Nov. 5 to protest Union Pacific's closure of its Neff Yard there. Workers were given just two days' notice of the closure. "What would have been two guys inspecting both sides of a train and doing a thorough job, taking however much time it takes," Matt Sweeney, a laid-off Neff Yard carman, told a TV crew that asked him about company claims the cuts don't affect safety. "Now they've got one guy doing it, and he's doing one side."

While rail bosses are running fewer trains, the ones they schedule get longer and longer. The average train length has

increased 25% since 2008. "We're seeing trains that are 2½ miles long on a daily basis," Jeremy Ferguson, president of the SMART-TD union, which organizes rail conductors, told the *Post*.

"It's a huge issue," Ferguson said. "It's very difficult for the operating crews and the towns and cities we operate through."

Derailments and workers' deaths on the job are reported to be up. There were close to 50 Class One railroad derailments in 2019, with at least four rail workers killed. Over 20 rail workers overall died on the job last year.

The Socialist Workers Party raises the need for a fight to cut the trains down to a maximum length of 50 cars, and to return to a crew of four — two on the front and two on the rear. That would make freight transportation safer for workers and for those who live near the tracks, as well as address the layoffs hitting thousands of rail workers today.

Naomi Craine is a furloughed member of SMART-TD and the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate in Illinois. Joe Swanson, a retired member of SMART-TD in Lincoln, Nebraska, contributed to this article.

## Join 2020 International May Day Brigade to Cuba!

BY ROY LANDERSEN

"It's important to learn about our revolution firsthand. I encourage you to go" on the 2020 International May Day Brigade to Cuba, Daniel Menocal, third secretary of Cuba's embassy in the U.S., told more than 60 people at a D.C. Metro Coalition in Solidarity with the Cuban Revolution event Jan. 11. You will see "there is nothing like the May Day march of over 1 million Cubans" in Havana to understand their strength and determination to defend their revolution.

This will be a central highlight of this year's April 26 to May 10 May Day

Brigade. The Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) has issued an invitation for people in the U.S. and around the world to join the brigade.

"Over the next two months building the May Day International Brigade of Volunteer Work and Solidarity with Cuba will be one of our main activities," Omari Musa said, for the D.C. coalition.

Brigadistas will meet and work with Cuban working people while discussing the impact of their revolution. Their 1959 triumph in a popular uprising against the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista led to the opening of the socialist revolution in the Americas.

Last year 65 people from across the U.S. made up the largest contingent among 320 participants from 21 countries. The brigade gives participants the chance to share experiences about the class struggle in the U.S. and activities of supporters of the Cuban Revolution.

ICAP says the brigade will visit the provinces of Havana, Artemisa and Pinar del Río, in western Cuba. This will include 10 days based at the Julio Antonio Mella International Camp outside Havana, working in the fields with Cuban farmers and meeting with Cuban workers, farmers and representatives from the country's mass organizations.

Brigadistas will take part in exchanges on the Cuban economy, the legacy of Che Guevara and the truth about political rights in Cuba. They will visit factories and farm cooperatives, universities and health care centers, museums and cultural venues to learn more about what Cuban workers and farmers have accomplished through their revolution.

Brigade members' firsthand experiences on the trip will put them in a stronger position to explain the revolution and to build broader opposition to the U.S. rulers' decadeslong economic war. This embargo has been carried out, Menocal said, by Democrats and Republicans alike, from John F. Kennedy to Donald Trump, for over 60 years.

The National Network on Cuba, a coalition of groups in solidarity with the Cuban people, is organizing the U.S. delegation. Despite new U.S. government restrictions, this trip meets all legal guidelines. Travel arrangements are being handled by Marazul Tours.

Total cost, not including airfare to Cuba, is \$725, which covers all room, board and travel in Cuba. Applications are due by March 27. For an application and more information, contact [www.nnoc.info](http://www.nnoc.info) or email [ICanGoToCuba@nnoc.info](mailto:ICanGoToCuba@nnoc.info).

**"Just as the Cuban combatants in Angola set an example that can never be erased, the heroic actions of Cuba's army of white coats will occupy a place of honor."**

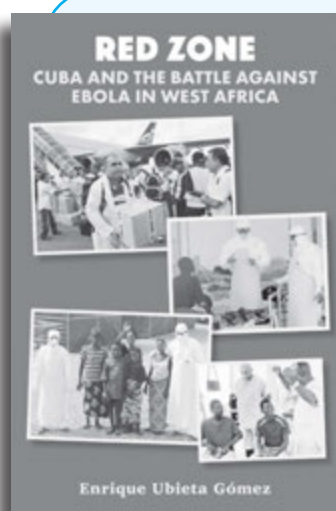
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# Join Socialist Workers Party campaign!

Socialist Workers Party candidates around the country present a course of working-class struggle against the employing class — the necessity of fighting to defend and improve our wages, social rights and working conditions. These struggles — and solidarity with others like the copper miners fighting Asarco bosses’ union-busting assault — are central to building a fighting labor movement that can draw into the struggle all those who face exploitation and oppression by the capitalist rulers. It’s the road to build workers’ self confidence and class consciousness.

Key to this is the need to use union power to fight for workers control over conditions of work and safety on the job. Only control by the working class over all aspects of production can enforce healthy and safe working conditions. As long as bosses exert *their* control over our jobs, their relentless drive for profits will ensure they organize and speed up work with no concern for the consequences to our lives and limbs.

As we fight the bosses over wages, working conditions and attacks on our rights here at home, working people also need to fight the government’s assaults on working people abroad, from Afghanistan to the Middle East, to their economic war against the people of Cuba and their revolution, and elsewhere in the world.

The fight to extend workers control over production is a step towards reorganizing all society, placing the direction and planning of the economy in the hands of working people, whose labor produces all wealth.

The exploiters will not relinquish their grip on power willingly — that will have to be taken from them by a revolutionary movement led by the working class.

Such a movement can only be built if workers see the need to make a clear political break with the bosses and the parties that serve their interests, and set out to organize independently of them.

SWP candidates urge working people to build their own party, a labor party. A party that organizes to strengthen working-class unity in the face of the bosses’ attempts to use each and every division — race, immigration status, sex and more — to weaken our class’s fighting capacities, a party that clarifies the class issues involved in every political question.

As struggles between capital and labor intensify, more workers will be won to act on the need to overthrow the dictatorship of capital we live under. And in the course of that struggle we will become transformed as we change our conditions of life and work. Join the SWP candidates around the country to present a revolutionary working-class course in 2020.

# End Indiana prison officials’ ban on ‘Militant’

Continued from front page

“Those behind bars are protected by the Bill of Rights,” wrote Dorothy Webster, a Walmart worker in Louisville, Kentucky. “They have the same right to read newspapers and books and exchange ideas that we outside the prisons enjoy. Please overturn the Pendleton Correctional Facility’s denial of Kevin Johnson’s rights.”

The *Militant* learned about these impoundments from Johnson, who sent a letter reporting prison authorities withheld four issues from him at the end of last year, claiming they were “Prohibited Property” and a “Security Risk.” He said he had followed the *Militant’s* successful fight against prison suppression in Florida and asked that the paper join him in fighting for his right to get the *Militant* and other literature denied him.

Pendleton officials never informed the *Militant* of the ban, nor, in violation of their own rules, have they given any explanation of what they find objectionable.

Johnson became a political activist and a leader of the New Afrikan Black Panther Party in prison. Incarcerated in Virginia, he has faced repeated transfers as authorities seek to isolate him — to Oregon, Texas, Florida, back to Virginia, now to Indiana. He had been receiving the *Militant* in Pendleton since

November 2018, until prison officials banned it.

*Militant* attorney David Goldstein filed the paper’s appeal Jan. 15 requesting the Indiana Department of Correction reverse the ban or, if they decline to do so, to provide “specific reasons” why these issues are banned and allow the *Militant* to appeal.

Censoring reading materials “strikes at the heart of fundamental rights of U.S. citizens and at rights that should be enjoyed by all human beings, whether at large or incarcerated,” Bruce Levine, professor emeritus of history at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, wrote to Indiana prison authorities Jan. 18. “I urge you in the strongest possible terms to reverse your decision to impound these materials.”

From Sellersburg, Indiana, James Horn called for lifting the ban, writing, “The *Militant* is a highly respected worldwide weekly socialist newspaper. While you may not like its political goals you will not find another publication more accurate in its analysis of local, national and international events.”

Send letters urging prison authorities to overturn the suppression of the *Militant* to Chief Counsel Jon Ferguson, Indiana Department of Correction, 302 W. Washington St., Room E-334, Indianapolis, IN 46204, earmarked “Appeal of literature impoundment.” Send a copy to the *Militant* at themilitant@mac.com.

# LETTERS

## Mildred Solem

Mildred Solem, a member of the Socialist Workers Party in the 1940s and ’50s, died this month in Minneapolis. She was 105 years old.

As a young woman Millie moved from Hallock, Minnesota, a small town near Canada, to Flint, Michigan, where autoworkers were fighting for a union, and then to Minneapolis where she got a job as an office worker downtown. Her first contact with the communist movement came when a protest by unemployed workers passed by her workplace and she came out to join them.

She soon met her husband, Chester Johnson, an electrician who was a founding member of the SWP and had helped lead a sympathy strike in the building trades for Teamsters during the historic 1934 strikes that made Minneapolis a union town.

Millie maintained her membership in the SWP until a stroke incapacitated Chester and left her to

care for him and their three small children. Over the years Millie contributed money to the SWP and opened her house to party members who needed a place to stay.

In 2015 a plaque was placed in the old warehouse district of Minneapolis commemorating the 1934 Teamster strikes. A photo captures Millie, then 100 years old, at the event with her fist raised in the air. *Bill Scheer*  
*Minneapolis, Minnesota*

## Marta de Leon

Marta de Leon, a supporter of the Socialist Workers Party and partisan and contributor to the *Militant* for decades, died in San Diego

in December. Marta, who was in her early 80s, had lived and collaborated with SWP branches in San Antonio, Texas; Tucson and Phoenix, Arizona; Oregon; Los Angeles; and San Diego. As a politically conscious artist, she did many paintings depicting the struggles of Native Americans, women, immigrants and protests against the U.S. rulers’ wars abroad. She also helped design leaflets, posters and banners for participants in those struggles.

In the 1990s Marta would set up tables with party member Betsy McDonald on the University of Arizona campus and circulate party books and the *Militant*, helping to win youth to the communist movement.

Though her health wasn’t the best as she got older, she stayed active until the end, joining in protests against Washington’s attacks on immigrant workers seeking refuge in the U.S.

*Pedro Vasquez*  
*Los Angeles, California*

The letters column is a forum for subjects of interest to working people. If necessary letters will be abridged. Indicate if you want your initials to be used instead of your full name.

# Support Iran protests

Continued from front page

Jan. 14. When the mother of one of those killed in the plane went to collect her child’s body, she insisted the Iranian national flag be taken off the coffin, outraged at the government’s lies.

Protesters across the country have made a point of leaving their faces uncovered, ready to stand up and be counted. Prominent performers, athletes and a number of opposition politicians in parliament have condemned the officials’ deceit, saying it robbed the government of any moral standing.

Students at Amir Kabir University in Tehran, where protests began, issued a statement Jan. 19 condemning “the ruling order” whose “sole response to every crisis is repression.”

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei responded by trying to shore up support for the regime, calling for “national unity,” praising the Revolutionary Guard and claiming the Quds Force, which spearheads the rulers’ military interventions abroad, was simply “a humanitarian organization.”

The Iranian rulers have recruited and organized militias to fight alongside the Quds Force and extend the counterrevolutionary regime’s reach in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and elsewhere. These units turned the tide of Syria’s civil war in favor of the dictatorial Bashar al-Assad regime; dealt blows to the Iraqi Kurds’ struggle for national rights; and are unleashing murderous assaults on anti-government protests in predominantly Shiite southern Iraq today.

Under the banner of defending Shiite Islam, Tehran’s military interventions are aimed at expanding its sway and dealing blows to rival capitalist powers in the region. These extend abroad the counterrevolution carried out at home in the 1980s to push back gains by working people during the 1979 Iranian Revolution.

That uprising was not a religious jihad, as it is painted by both the U.S. rulers and Tehran, but a struggle of millions who fought tenaciously to oust the U.S.-backed shah, setting up workers councils in the factories and fields as they fought to advance their interests.

The new bourgeois government successfully pushed working people back and stabilized their rule, but were never able to crush the working class.

## Protests continue in Iraq, Lebanon

Tehran has worked relentlessly to expand its influence over the government in Iraq — the only predominantly Arab country with a Shiite majority — organizing tens of thousands into Iranian-led militias there.

Since October hundreds of thousands of working people have joined street protests for an end to Tehran’s intervention, for direct elections, jobs, and an end to constant shortages of water and electricity.

Five anti-government demonstrators were killed by security forces in three cities Jan. 20, when protest organizers increased actions days after parliament rejected the adoption of a new electoral law. Many of the killings have been carried out by militia members.

After the parliament passed a nonbinding resolution calling for U.S. troops to leave, Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr called for demonstrations Jan. 24 to press the government to act on the motion. Kurdish news agency Rudaw interviewed a number of anti-government protesters, who said they would not join Sadr’s action. Abdul-Rahman in Karbala said he would participate, but only in order to call for both “the expulsion of U.S. troops and the Iranian-backed militias.”

Hezbollah, an armed group allied with the Iranian rulers, has used the sectarian political system imposed on the people of Lebanon by imperialist powers in 1990 to gain influence and backing for its military operations. Mass protests over the last few months have opposed Tehran’s interference and called for the fall of the government. Prime Minister Saad Hariri resigned last October, but rival capitalist forces, including Hezbollah, can’t agree on a new government.

“We realized the ones who destroyed the country can’t fix it,” laid-off truck driver Raed al-Arja told the *New York Times* at an anti-government protest in Beirut Jan. 18. Conditions for working people continue to deteriorate with prices on some goods rising by as much as 40% in recent months.

More than 300 people were injured when riot cops fired rubber bullets and tear gas at the demonstrators.

“The more they step up their violence, the more people’s strength and determination grows,” housewife Rezzan Barraj, at a Jan. 19 protest, told Reuters.