STRIKETOBER!

By Martha Grevatt

Before the month is half over, October 2021 already has a nickname: #Striketober!

On Oct. 5, 1,400 workers at four Kellogg’s cereal plants went on strike to block the company’s concessionary demands. They are members of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers (BCTGM), which recently struck Frito Lay and Nabisco. That adds up to strikes at three Fortune 500 companies, involving thousands of workers, by a union with under 65,000 members.

Kellogg’s wants to cut health care benefits, pensions, holiday and vacation pay, cost of living raises and union jobs — and, adding insult to injury, take the union label off cereal boxes. The company wants a two-tier system whereby future workers will pay more for health care and will not collect a pension when they retire.

As the union explains, “A two-tier system is a devious way for employers to slowly, but surely, take power from union members, their contract and their union. The company is trying to divide the workforce by asking the current workforce to sell out the next generation of Kellogg workers.” (bctgm.org) These workers have put in long hours of hard work throughout the pandemic.

More than two dozen California hospitals have experienced strikes and 24,000 members of United Nurses Associations of California/Union of Health Care Professionals have overwhelmingly approved a statewide strike against Kaiser Permanente. Nurses in Worcester, Mass. — on strike at St. Vincent Hospital — have been out since March 8. In Buffalo, N.Y., 2,000 health care workers followed suit at Mercy Hospital on Oct. 1.

Alabama coal miners have been on strike since April 1 against Warrior Met — and, indirectly, against major Wall Street stockholder BlackRock, the world’s largest investment firm. Metalworkers struck two factories in Cabell County, West Virginia; over 400 are still out at Special Metals.

Workers tell John Deere: ‘No more tiers!’

Another 10,000 workers began a strike Oct. 14 against John Deere, hitting 14 plants in Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Colorado and Georgia. This strike is the first in 35 years against the agricultural and construction equipment company. Over 90 percent of United Auto Workers members at Deere rejected the first contract presented to them.

The media emphasize the company’s offer of 5 to 6 percent raises. But in a six-year contract, this amounts to 1 percent or less per year, while annual inflation is running at 5 percent. The two-tier pay scheme in place since 1997 — still paying “post-1997” workers substantially less — remains intact. Now Deere wants a third

Continued on page 5

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PHOTO: BCTGM

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Workers World Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a multinational, multigenerational and multigendered organization that not only aims to abolish capitalism, but to build a socialist society because it’s the only way forward!

Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on Im/migrants, misogyny, Homophobia, Biphobia, Transphobia. It produces all wealth in society, and this wealth should be socially produced, not to produce super-rich and super-rich people, but to produce a world and the planet itself in the never-ending quest for socialism!

Workers World Party has been out in the streets defending the workers and oppressed here and worldwide. If you’re interested in Marxism, socialism and trans people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis.

The ruthless ruling class today seeks to wipe out decades of gains and benefits won by hard-fought struggles by people’s movements. The super-rich and their political representatives have intensified their attacks on the multinational, multigender and multigenerational working class. It is time to point the blame at—and challenge—the capitalist system.

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By Gloria Rubac

Protests demand Luma out!

Activists protesting the privatization of Puerto Rico's electric utility company and the devastating power outages affecting the island's most vulnerable communities rallied at Fairhill Square Park in Philadelphia's Puerto Rican community Oct. 15. The event was called by Philly Boricua.

The protest was in solidarity with thousands of workers demonstrating at the same time in Puerto Rico to demand the ouster of Luma Energy, which privatized the energy system June 1. The company was given a 15-year contract to manage power distribution by Puerto Rico's Electric Power Authority, PREPA.

Since Luma took over services, island residents have witnessed widespread blackouts for extended periods. While the outages are due in part to the breakdown of generation units lacking maintenance and repairs, Luma has exacerbated the problem by using selective blackouts that last for hours. The lack of reliable electricity is crippling people's health, work, and education.

The recurring blackouts leave people sweltering in the heat without fans for prolonged periods. Luma's deferrals are now due entirely from lack of refrigeration. Voltage fluctuations are damaging computers and appliances. The protesters called for an end to pay for their losses.

In Puerto Rico's capital, San Juan, 4,000 protesters marching onto Las Americas Highway shut it down Oct. 15. This same main highway was blocked by large demonstrations in 2019 that forced the resignation of the corrupt governor.

Puerto Rico's power grid was severely damaged when Category 4 storm Hurricane Maria pummeled the island September 2017. Repairs to the system have been slow, leaving many people in the dark and causing dust and noisy pollution generators.

In addition to the privatization of the power grid, federal funds to repair the system have been delayed. The first disbursement of $7.1 million in federal funds for the reconstruction work was only made Oct. 14. The money is part of the $9.5 billion obligated by the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to rebuild the grid.

Fight for sustainable energy

Currently, more than 97% of electricity in Puerto Rico comes from expensive imported fossil fuels that negatively impact the environment. Puerto Rico passed laws to progressively increase the amount of its electricity generated from renewable sources to 40% by 2025, and 100% by 2050. However, FEMA, which controls the money to repair the power system, wants to fund two new fossil-fueled power plants.

Under the National Environmental Policy Act, FEMA was required to prepare a programmatic environmental assessment that looks at alternatives and invites public input. FEMA's narrow study closely tied to the convet leasing program that killed thousands in Texas.

The Marshall Project also cites the Eastham Unit, as it is named after the landowners who bought Goree's family plantation about 20 miles north of Huntsville and then used it for convict leasing. Depending on the source, there are between five and six state prison systems that still do not pay one cent for the work prisoners do. So changing prison names is a tiny drop in the bucket for change.

Texas prisoner Shredrick Roberson, fighting for clemency from his unjustly long prison sentence of 85 years for a robbery where no one was killed, told Workers World, “Changing names will not change conditions in Texas prisons. If you put a wig on a pig and apply lipstick, it is still a pig.”
Do wage increases impact the unemployed?

By G. Dunkel

Why has David Card been co-awarded the 2021 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences? Card, who teaches at UC Berkeley, did his research in the 1990s. The Committee obviously feels his research had major policy implications. (The research of the other two winners is more technical.) Hundreds of newspapers, websites and other media reported on this award.

The world economy is today in a major, pandemic-linked recession. Back in the 1930s, after five years of deep recession, workers in the United States, under the 1935 Wagner Act, won an undoubted right to organize unions and bargain collectively. That same year, Social Security was established, which included unemployment compensation programs, run by the states. Three years later, a nationwide minimum wage was created.

In 1981, President Ronald Reagan’s smashing of the union representing air-traffic controllers (PATCO) marked a nationwide decision by the U.S. ruling class to adopt a harsher, more confrontational approach to unions and the needs of working people. Union membership dropped sharply during Reagan’s eight years. It is now barely 10 percent of the private labor force.

While politicians don’t need professional economists to agree with their attacks on unions and the workers they represent, their assertion that raising the minimum wage reduces employment provides a lot of cover for refusing to raise wages. A survey of academic economists in 1979 found that 90 percent agreed, generally, that “A minimum wage increases unemployment among young and unskilled workers.” But by 2015, only 26 percent of professional economists agreed.

David Card wrote a series of papers in the 1990s with Alan Krueger, now deceased, that compared New Jersey, which had raised its minimum wage, with Pennsylvania, which hadn’t. They used Pennsylvania as a control group (like the group which receives a placebo in a test of a new vaccine) for New Jersey (the group which got the real vaccine). The increased minimum wage had very little if any negative effect on the number of jobs.

The Institute on Labor and Employment at Berkeley extended this research to multiple states over the years between 1990 and 2006. These days some economists believe raising the minimum wage actually increases jobs. It is clear, looking at David Card’s research, that the Nobel Committee agreed that disregarding it and continuing to restrict unemployment compensation would harm the world’s economic recovery.

Of course, what would really cause the world’s economy to blossom would be doing away with the whole hierarchy of wages and rewards, along with the capitalist system on which it’s built.
The current uptick in strike activity and workplace resistance reflects the sharpening of class antagonisms. The big question is, how can workers tip the scales in their favor?

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Tip of a rotten iceberg

The National Football League is the oldest professional sports league in the U.S. Its owners are among the most reactionary. Founded in 1920, the NFL did not draft its first African-American player, George Taliaferro, until 1949. The singling of the national anthem before every NFL game, which was accompanied by pro-military displays, became a tradition starting in 1941 during World War II.

Now, even though over 57 percent of NFL players are Black, there has never been a Black NFL owner. There are currently only three Black head coaches in the NFL. Black quarterback to play three Black head coaches in Super Bowl. Black quarterback to play in the Super Bowl.

There are currently only 57 percent of NFL players that are Black. The NFL is a league of millionaire owners and corporate CEOs who are demanding that the hundreds of thousands of emails from the past decade be made public next week. Those emails were made public Oct. 11. Those emails. He was forced to resign after the first woman CEO of an NFL team. Briscoe in 1968. And in 1997, Amy Trask became the first woman CEO of an NFL team.

Given the white male patriotism-dominated culture of the NFL for over a century, there has been no better time. For declaring the second Monday in October to henceforth be Indigenous Peoples Day. Janey (Brownstone) is Boston’s first woman and first Black Mayor. She signed an Executive Order declaring the second Monday of October every year for Indigenous Peoples Day. Janey stated: “Indigenous Peoples Day is being declared in cities and towns all across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts follow Boston’s example and replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day.” The demonstrators rallied outside of Faneuil Hall, one of Boston’s most famous landmarks.

Since the early 1990s, it has supported workers. Present at the signing and press conference were members of the Massachusetts Tribe at Ponkapog, whose traditional territory is the City of Boston, as well as Indigenous activists and leaders from the North American Indian Center of Boston, the United American Indians of New England (UAINE). Raquel Halsey, member of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation and United American Indians of New England (UAINE).

Negotiating the terms of the executive order, Halsey said of the Executive Order: “As a service to our many migrant and refugee relatives who live in Boston and elsewhere, today we are saying, ‘Break down the borders! ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] and the Border Patrol need to stop harassing and detaining Indigenous, Haitian and other refugees!’” After rallying at the State House, demonstrators joined Kevin Peterson, founder of the New Democracy Coalition, and other Black community activists to demand that Faneuil Hall, one of Boston’s busiest shopping areas, be renamed. Jean-Luc Pierite from NACOB and other speakers emphasized the need for Black and Indigenous action and liberation.

The crowd finally made their way to the so-called Christopher Columbus Waterfront Park, which once housed a Christopher Columbus statue, since beheaded and removed. Rally organizers demanded that the park’s name be changed and a statue be erected to commemorate Boston’s vibrant Indigenous community.

Columbus Day topped in Boston

By K. James Boston

In a major victory for Indigenous people everywhere, Boston Mayor Kim Janey signed an Executive Order on Oct. 6 declaring the second Monday in October to henceforth be Indigenous Peoples Day. Janey (Brownstone) is Boston’s first woman and first Black Mayor. She signed the order Oct. 6 inside Boston City Hall, the administrative hub of one of the birthplaces of the European settler-colonial project in the Americas.

Present at the signing and press conference were members of the Massachusetts Tribe at Ponkapog, whose traditional territory is the City of Boston, as well as Indigenous activists and leaders from the North American Indian Center of Boston, the United American Indians of New England (UAINE). Raquel Halsey, member of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation and United American Indians of New England (UAINE). Raquel Halsey, member of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation and United American Indians of New England (UAINE).

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Bolstered by that victory, an energized crowd of several hundred Indigenous people and allies gathered Oct. 9 for a rally and march to demand that Indigenous students. And we call upon the federal government to Indigenous Peoples Day bill. Muñoz continued: “In solidarity with our many migrant and refugee relatives who live in Boston and elsewhere, today we are also saying, ‘Break down the borders! ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] and the Border Patrol need to stop harassing and detaining Indigenous, Haitian and other refugees!’”

After rallying at the State House, demonstrators joined Kevin Peterson, founder of the New Democracy Coalition, and other Black community activists to demand that Faneuil Hall, one of Boston’s busiest shopping areas, be renamed. Jean-Luc Pierite from NACOB and other speakers emphasized the need for Black and Indigenous action and liberation.

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Indigenous Peoples Day

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Nicaragua challenges U.S. domination

By Sara Flounders
Managua, Nicaragua

The writer was a member of a U.S. delegation that visited Nicaragua Oct. 3-10.

The reason Nicaragua is labeled an "unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security of the U.S."—a military corporate superpower—became abundantly clear to a delegation visiting the country Oct. 3 to 10. The delegation was organized by the Alliance for Global Justice/Nica Network.

Nicaragua, a small developing country of 6.6 million people, lives in sharp contrast to its neighboring countries—Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. U.S. power dominates them, and over half a million people have fled the extreme violence, chaos and desperate economic conditions of these homelands. At the U.S. border, those migrants meet racist raids, round-ups and deportation, all part of U.S. policies that forced them to flee.

By contrast, comparatively few people have left Nicaragua.

Nicaragua’s stability challenges U.S. domination

The recent delegation met with Nicaraguan doctors, medical staff, community organizers, teachers, discharge specialists and financial planners to learn about Nicaragua’s exemplary Health Development Plan, which supports its stability.

In stark contrast to other Central American countries which have privatized health care for profit, Nicaragua has established community-based, free public health care, as well as free education for all. Unlike its neighbors, Nicaragua has instituted a major focus on disaster planning—essential in a region prone to hurricanes, volcanoes, earthquakes and tsunamis.

The AFGJ delegation was able to measure the difference between Nicaragua today and the state of the country in 2007, when 16 years of U.S.-backed neo-liberal policies left every social program sold off to private investors.

Retaking Nicaragua for the people

Back in 1979, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional) had defeated the U.S.-backed Somoza dictatorship. When the FSLN came into governmental power, the U.S. sent aid to mercenary wars to wage a relentless war in Nicaragua. The FSLN government was defeated when a U.S.-backed recalcitrant cadre of candidates was elected in 1990.

In 2007, the Sandinista FSLN Coalition returned to political office in a general election under a sharply different approach. They have attempted to revitalize the programs of the Sandinista Revolution and the years of struggle against U.S. domination.

Since the Sandinistas’ return there have been stunning gains in maternal and infant health, education and the years of struggle against U.S. domination. Since the Sandinistas’ return there have been stunning gains in maternal and infant health, education and the years of struggle against U.S. domination. Since the Sandinistas’ return there have been stunning gains in maternal and infant health, education and the years of struggle against U.S. domination. Since the Sandinistas’ return there have been stunning gains in maternal and infant health, education and the years of struggle against U.S. domination. Since the Sandinistas’ return there have been stunning gains in maternal and infant health, education and the years of struggle against U.S. domination.

Volunteer health brigades

One effective innovation is the Health Brigade Volunteers—community health advocates mostly chosen originally from small farmers, small producers, craftpeople, local markets and community-based economic development. Some 43 percent of the labor force is in rural areas, and 31 percent of the labor force is employed in agriculture.

Instead of a shutdown, health professionals and Brigadistas went house-to-house, educating families on how to protect themselves from the virus. There was an emphasis on testing and isolation.

The impact of community education was seen in the AFGJ delegation wherever it traveled. Everywhere they went Nicaraguans were wearing masks—in restaurants, streets, government buildings, schools, hospitals and homes. As people entered buildings or met in groups, everyone sprayed their hands with sanitizer.

Nicaragua was hit by a slow COVID vaccine rollout, due to the unequal distribution of vaccines globally. In mid-September, larger donations of vaccines began to arrive through the international COVAX system. A fully vaccinated population before January 2022 is the goal.

But vaccines were not delivered earlier: the U.S. donated vaccines to every country in Central America except Nicaragua. By early September, the U.S. had thrown away more doses of COVID vaccines—more than enough to have vaccinated every Nicaraguan twice. The use of punitive economic measures and the U.S. denial of humanitarian aid policies by the vaccine distribution was met with the intention of flooding the market and over-the-counter pharmacy to give personalized attention and health education.

Organized years before the COVID pandemic hit, the Brigadista network was used to support extensive vaccine distribution for flu, pneumonia, measles and other children’s diseases; to combat dengue, Zika and malaria; to conduct nutritional surveys, health censuses and health education; and to help people get to appointments, receive medications and get follow-up care.

Health care and COVID

When COVID hit, the Brigadista social infrastructure gave instant health support to a population already vaccinated for many diseases and well educated on basic health and sanitation measures.

Nicaragua had an intense discussion on the difficulty of completely shutting down an economic system based on small farmers, small producers, craftpeople, local markets and community-based economic development. Some 43 percent of the labor force is in rural areas, and 31 percent of the labor force is employed in agriculture.

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El cambio de pocas palabras es posible. En el periodo de 2006 a 2014, el porcentaje de colombianos que se beneficiaron de energía de fuentes renovables se triplicó. Después de 14 años de neoliberalismo, gobiernos pro- derecha, los nicaragüenses eligieron abrumadoramente a los mafiosos por una economía mixta y una democracia.

La delegación de EE.UU. demanda defender a Nicaragua

La delegación de EE.UU. se reúne con Ministros y vocales de residencias de relaciones internacionales en Managua.

La delegación de EE.UU. ha estado trabajando con movimientos que quieren un cambio real en los Estados Unidos para contarse lo que realmente está sucediendo en este increíble país. Y también para que la gente de los Estados Unidos sepa cómo el gobierno de los Estados Unidos ha estado tratando de destruir lo que ella llama la “amenaza de un buen ejemplo”.

Ahora la Red Nicaragüa está organizando delegaciones de líderes del movimiento estudiantil para que vengan y vean por qué deben defender a Nicaragua y la Revolución Sandinista. Y hoy escucharán a cuatro miembros de una delegación que actualmente están visitando el país. Es un momento importante para estar aquí.

Monica Moorehead

Fui miembro de una delegación pacifista que viajó a Nicaragua para honrar al Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. y su legado de compromiso con la igualdad, la paz y la justicia. Trinta y siete años después de todo lo que nuestra delegación ha presenciado de primera mano, esta revolución continua progresando como una democracia real, al utilizar sus limitados recursos para compro- meterse con el bienestar de todo su pueblo. La acusación hecha por Estados Unidos de etiquetar las próximas elecciones del 7 de noviembre en Nicaragua como “anti-democráticas e injustas” es un ultimátum y un absurdo total.

¡Cómo puede alguien que piensa raciona- lmente aceptar la palabra de un gobi- erno que priva del derecho al voto a los negros, los migrantes, etc., después de las elecciones de 2020 en Estados Unidos? ¡Cómo puede alguien creer en la palabra de un gobierno que dice apoyar a los “presos políticos” en Nicaragua pero que ha tenido como rehenes en prisiones estadounidenses durante los últimos 30, 40 e incluso 50 años o más a personas como Mumia Abu-Jamal, Leonard Peltier, Mumia Abu-Jamal, Amilcar Cabral, Bobby Seale y muchos más? Es más que un absurdo. Ha tenido que intervenir en los asuntos internos de otro país, especialmente en sus elecciones.

Joe Elvin

Encuentro que Nicaragua es un país con un clima hervido y bendecido con ter- rafértil debido a la gran cantidad de volcanes aquí. Por eso Nicaragua es 80% independiente de sus alimentos. Encuentro que Nicaragua es como una casa con unas puertas abiertas, con gente callada y amigable. Personas trabajadoras, creativas y orgullosas.

De esto hablas... Fui miembro de una delegación pacifista que viajó a Nicaragua para honrar al Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. y su legado de compromiso con la igualdad, la paz y la justicia. Trinta y siete años después de todo lo que nuestra delegación ha presenciado de primera mano, esta revolución continúa progresando como una democracia real, al utilizar sus limitados recursos para compro- meterse con el bienestar de todo su pueblo. La acusación hecha por Estados Unidos de etiquetar las próximas elecciones del 7 de noviembre en Nicaragua como “anti-democráticas e injustas” es un ultimátum y un absurdo total.

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