WORKERS VANGUARD

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RECEIVED APR 27 2007 PERIODICALS EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!

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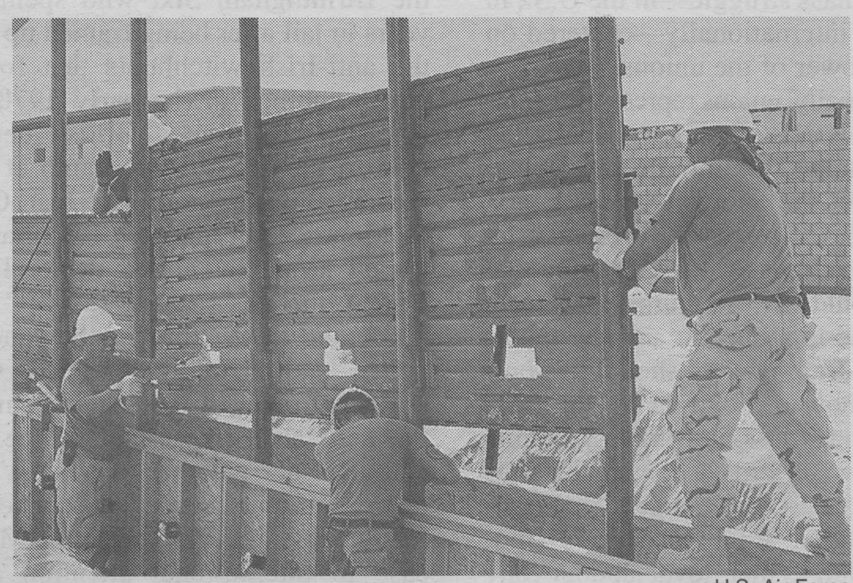

U.S. Air Force

Break with the Democrats! For a Workers Party That Fights for a Workers Government!

Left: Workers at Smithfield meatpacking plant in North Carolina walk off job last November to protest firings of immigrants. Right: Air National Guard personnel in Arizona install section of fence along Mexican border, October 2006.

APRIL 24—On May Day last year, hundreds of thousands of immigrants, overwhelmingly Latino, took to the streets in cities across the U.S. in protest against the proposed "Border Protection, Antiterrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act," under which merely being in this country without papers would have meant being a felon.

It took no small amount of courage for these workers and their families, many of them already branded as "illegals," to come out in the teeth of escalating attacks on immigrants. But while many saw the demonstrations and walkouts as part of a continuing struggle in defense of their rights, protest leaders ensured that they served the political shell game that is a pillar of capitalist rule in America—the notion that the Democratic Party is the "friend" of labor, blacks and immigrants.

Chants of "Today we march, tomorrow we vote!" were the chorus orchestrated by the Latino organizations, Democratic politicians and their allies in the trade-union bureaucracy. This paid off handsomely for the Democrats in the November midterm elections, where they captured 70 percent of the Latino vote. Meanwhile, the vicious government crackdown on immigrants continues, resulting last year alone in the deportation of some 190,000 people. Agents of the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) have been unleashed in raids on workplaces, neighborhoods and homes around the country. Today some 150 people were detained when rifle-toting federal agents raided a mall in a predominantly Latino Chicago neighborhood. We demand that all detainees be released now! No deportations!

With their eyes on next year's presidential elections, Rudolph Giuliani and other Republican politicians are increasingly playing the anti-immigrant card. But such nativist chauvinism is hardly just the Republicans' domain. A number of Democratic Congressional candidates, particularly in the South and Midwest, attacked their Republican opponents as "soft on illegal immigration." Even today's liberal darling, Barack Obama, voted for the "Secure Fence Act" mandating the construction of a 700-mile wall on the U.S./Mexico border, as did Hillary Clinton. The crackdown on immigrants has been greatly intensified by the "war on terror," through which the capitalist rulers have augmented an already vast machinery of state repression, with bipartisan support.

At bottom, divisions over immigration between and inside the Republican and Democratic parties reflect competing needs in the capitalist ruling class, part of which is dependent on low-cost immigrant labor. As other sectors of the economy absorb immigrant farm labor, agribusiness has howled about produce rotting for lack of pickers. Now the Colorado Corrections Department has begun a "pilot program" to provide farms with prison labor—a 21st-century version of the chain gang, at the cost of 60 cents per day per prisoner.

As a supposed "compromise," a new anti-immigrant bill has been cooked up by Illinois Democrat Luis Gutierrez and Arizona Republican Jeff Flake which offers a tortuous process of legalization for some while everyone else is considered a criminal. Latino politicos, mainstream immigrant rights organizations and union bureaucrats from Andy Stern's SEIU service workers union and the United Farm Workers have scandalously given their support to this vicious legislation. For their part, other immigrant rights groups as well as a variety of reformist left organizations are trying to resuscitate the "Great American Boycott" May Day protests of 2006. An article in *Workers World* (15 April) by Javier Rodriguez, described as a "co-founder of the May 1st National Movement," argues that "the country's progressive forces and allies are moving from traditional lobbying towards mass mobilization in an attempt to gain the upper hand and influence the national debate for a more inclusive pro-worker immigration reform." Besides *Workers World*, backing this endeavor are the International Socialist Organization (ISO), the Revolutionary Communist Party and others.

But as Rodriguez himself makes clear, this is just the out-in-the-streets face of the lobby-the-Democrats game. Saluting the "historic" accomplishments of the 2006 protests, he numbers first among these "energizing the electorate and along with the anti-war sentiment changing the correlation of forces in Congress." The reformists' expectations in this new correlation of forces were put most baldly by the ISO, which in the aftermath of the

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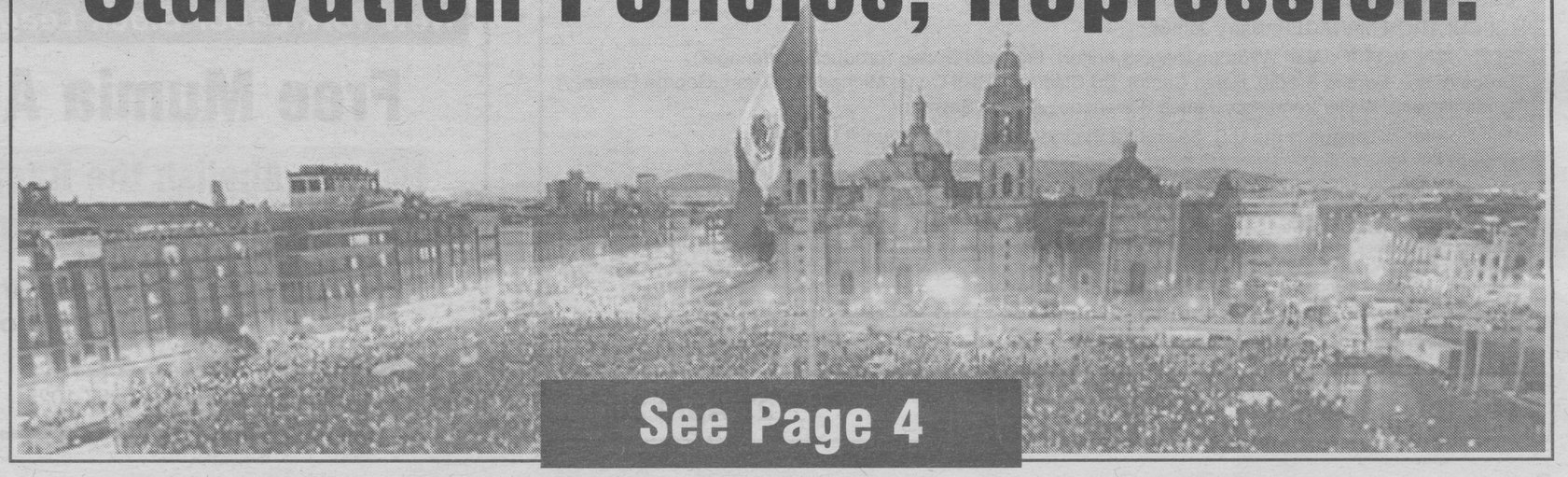
Mexico

For Labor Mobilizations Against Starvation Policies, Repression!



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