Report from Puerto Rico

Pro-Independence Youth Hold Parade

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — The Third National Conference of the Puerto Rican Independence Movement here, attended by almost 600 delegates and observers, evidenced a rising mood of determination and organization.

Equally significant was the adoption of a resolution calling for the independence and liberation of Puerto Rico and a pledge of support for the world-wide colonial revolution and for the "Specialist Cuban Revolution" in particular.

The conference paid tribute to Pedro Albizu Campos, the aged and imprisoned hero of the Puerto Rican independence struggle, several times with standing ovations. It was also decided to cover the island with posters celebrating his forthcoming 70th birthday.

Foreign visitors to the conference included representatives of the Dominican Republic. They represented several youth organizations and secondary schools. U.S. officials at the airport had conferred almost all their belongings, even poems intended to be read at a cultural session of the conference.

There were two invited guests from the U.S. — Ciriaco Jerome, representative of the Progressive Movement, and Peter Canejo, national secretary of the Young Socialists. Jerome told the conference that the U.S. was using military forces occupying it, were the same forces they were fighting the North American workers.

Canejo thanked the MPI youth for coming to the meeting to come to the defense of the Three Year Strike of the rubber workers at Indiana University who face six years in prison.

He also spoke on the struggle of the Negro people and youth in the U.S., as the conference first-hand report on the March on Washington.

A highlight of the conference was the presence of Professor Jose Maria Luisa of the University of Puerto Rico. He had traveled with the student group which visited Cuba this summer. Upon his return, he said that he was a Marxist-Leninist. Since then all the leaders of the Students of Puerto Rico, including the thousands of CUBAN students," are in the process of organizing a movement of solidarity with the Cuban people, who, he said, have been demanding his dismissal from the university faculty.

They have formed picket lines all around the university dormitories and have set the tone for student demonstrations. But there have been always counter-demonstrations, and picket lines defending him and his free- dom of speech.

When Luisa was introduced the conference rose and applauded. To challenge clapping, he reaffirmed that he was a Marxist-Leninist, and that he would continue to say anywhere in the world, even in Cuba, in the U.S., and Puerto Rico.

The conference closed with a speech by the President of the Movimiento Pro-Independencia.

Weekly Calendar

DETROIT
The Nuclear Family's Tragedy — What It Is and What It Means for World Peace
by Rev. Francis J. Kolavsky, M.D., head of the newly formed Southeast Michigan Committee for Peace, Socialist Workers Party Forum, Fri., Sept. 7, 8 p.m. 337 Woodward Ave., Thursday Night Socialist Forum, 8th St. Bridge.

NEW YORK
Michael Maul, staff writer for the Nation, in conversation with John F. Kennedy, Jr., Sept. 27, 8:30 p.m. Adler Hall, 540 E. 50th St., Manhattan.

CUBAN REPORT by three students who will travel to Cuba for the Sixth National Conference of the Movimiento Pro-Independencia Youth. 8 p.m. Militant Labor Forum, 533 Sth.

The NATIONAL PULP LINE

Hauling migrant workers in trucks enclosed, dangerous conditions for the Sept. 17 accident in Salinas, Calif. Thirty Mexican cane workers were killed and more than 30 injured when the Southern Pacific train struck the makeshift "bunk" in which the workers were traveling from a celery field to the labor camp a few miles away. At least 15 of the injured were reported

in critical condition.

The workers, who were carrying more than 60 workers, was actu-

ally a one-man job. On several

bunches on it. It stopped at the rail crossing and when stopped up a

side of the train, half way across the track when the train rammed into it, scattering bodies for half a mile.

The driver of the truck, who survived, said he stopped at the crossing and looked down the track, but his view was obscured by a fellow worker and he neither saw the train nor heard the approaching train.

Unemployment compensation benefits have been reduced in 12 states by new anti-labor laws passed during 1962. Despite a 15% increase in long-term unemployment during the past five years, several state legislators have reduced benefits as well as the amount of weekly payments.

What do you when your plant moves away and you lose your jobs, including you, unemployed? John Howard, assistant manager of the stewart at Sterling Aluminum Products, charges that the company is hell-bent "to filch" the National Association of Machinists, clipping the benefits and expense of the new plant, depriving him and the others of the jobs. "The people who lost their jobs, he is saying them jointly for $18,603.

The Central Conference of Teamsters, which met in Chicago, has ratified the agreement of Teamster President James Hoffa’s "no-strike" policy and the agreements. National and multistate agreements are necessary to the union’s survival.

To get into a dispute in a small town, you’d have to start by fighting a multi-million-dollar corporation. "You may have to put plackets across the United States. So both labor and the companies and contracts have to be the same, they hope to establish national agreements of 450,000 workers in inter-city and local carriages.

After repeated demands for the removal of an officer who drew 

members said, was racially pre-

judiced and had consistently mistreated them with their own hands and struck the line American. The Negro, first assistant engineer, allegedly refused to have Negroes and Puerto Ricans on his watch. It was further alleged that he had been told to them going through a passage-

way with them and even had a weapon. He claimed he was preventing the use of it. This climaxed eight months of controversy, when the U.S. Lines had refused to remedy it by removing him.

NMU President Joseph Curran, arriving less than two hours before sailing, met with a national group of representatives and, failing to get an agreement, broke the settlement. The dispute, called a ship’s meeting of more than 500 persons, took place on the pier. A unanimous vote made the removal of the officer the precondition for sailing.

The company argues that since Negroes and Puerto Ricans consti-

tute 40 per cent of the crew, it is free of racial prejudice.

Two courses of mediation were offered by an arbitrator: 1) that the ship be seized by the company and a union representative would have to sail and sit in the crew; 2) that the ship sail, but the ship’s committee — composed of six union delegates — and the officer in question remain aboard and join the ship by plane after the investigation, if the charges were not upheld.

Both officers were refused. The NMU objected to the first because it left the accused engineer aboard the ship. The Marine Engineers Beneficial Association refused the second because the engineer had already signed the ship’s articles (contract) to make the trip. The entire situation was complicated by existing hostility between the NMU and the MEBA. The company contended it was in the mid-

dle because the engineers — 29 in number — would not sail if one of their number was missing.

The company’s failure to settle this grievance, says Curran, might "tie up the entire fleet" of the U.S. Lines.

With definite cancellation of the American Liberty, the U.S. 494 pas-

sengers aboard were forced to find other means of getting to Europe. They, too, got a taste of the company’s high-handedness and ar-

bitrary conduct of business, allowed to say as much that because they couldn’t afford or couldn’t get hotel accommodations were curiously rejected. Many passen-

gers left in high dudgeon, tell-

ing TV interviewers what they thought of the company in no un-

certain terms.

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Curran

Negro Journalist Describes Impact of Visiting New Cuba

NEW YORK — On a recent tour of Cuba, Charles P. Howard noticed a woman outside a peasant house and asked his companion: "Why do you think she would fix her house so carefully and be so nicely dressed way out here in the sticks?"

In his conversations, a young Negro woman from New York who is a writer and author, answered the question because someone cares about her, she is concerned about you, you want to look your best. It doesn’t have to be a boy friend in Cuba, the people know the govern-

ment and the country care about them.

Howard is editor-in-chief of the Howard News Service and foreign correspondent of the Afro-Americans and Masquevado Speaks. He spoke to the Militant Labor Forum Sept. 13 about his trip to Cuba with a number of American writers and newspaper invited to attend the July 26 cele-

brations.

Howard was clearly over-

whelmed with emotion in describ-

ing the reality of the gift, lib-

erating revolution in Cuba, espe-

cially to respect to the Negro people. An articulate man, he felt himself inadequate to convey suf-

ficiently the wonderful atmosphere of freedom so unfamiliar to an American Negro.

Traveling through Cuba he was struck time and again by the total absence of discrimination against Negroes. His Atlantic P. H. deplor-

ated a woman about discrimination there and she answered, "We are all Cubans here. Howard is im-

pressed also by the fact that he discovered black people in positions of authority and in all kinds of jobs and there to be seen because no supercilious attitudes among light-

skinned Cubans. One explanation for this, he felt, was that "Cubans were not stingy about recognizing the achievements of their black
citizens." He cited the fact that black participants in the war against Spain and in the Revolu-

tion are national heroes — Gen. Antonio Maceo, for example. Howard, who recently published an interview with the head of the Cuban army, Juan Almeida, de-

scribed the meetings as "brilliant."

In the question-and-answer period, Howard said that he had heard about the struggle of the African states and knew their leaders and nowhere in the world, where a new government was evolving, they have chosen democracy, as we like to talk about it. These leaders find out you can’t build lousy countries on a capitalist basis. There’s no one to provide the capital.

He said that Americans have been propagated so much as opposed to socialism and communism that anyone who gets up and speaks for it is in trouble. "But as a Negro I’m in trouble already," he said, "and I’m not interested in any system that’ll take me and

other 100 years to enjoy any of it."

Charles P. Howard, Sr.

The Militant, Monday, September 23, 1943