

## This week in history: June 8-14

This column profiles important historical events which took place during this week, 25 years ago, 50 years ago, 75 years ago and 100 years ago

**7 June 2026**

**25 years ago: Workers rally for framed-up South Carolina longshoremen**

On June 9, 2001, over 4,000 workers and supporters held a solidarity rally at the South Carolina state courthouse, one of the largest labor demonstrations in decades in the state. Protesters demanded the release of the “Charleston Five”—Kenneth Jefferson, Rick Simmons, Peter Washington, Elijah Ford, and Jason Edgert—who were framed up on felony rioting charges that carried potential sentences of five to ten years. All were rank-and-file members of the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) Locals 1422 and 1771.

Converging on the courthouse from across America, protesters shouted, “Free the Charleston Five” and carried signs saying, “Justice for the Charleston Five.” Rallying cries calling to “shut the port down” echoed through the crowd.

Republican state attorney general Condon defended the police-company conspiracy against the indicted workers. He said the state government would not be “bullied or intimidated” and the trial would continue in the fall. Smearing the working-class gathering as a rowdy “mob,” Condon framed the dispute in the language of protecting “the right to work,” a right-wing euphemism for corporate exploitation.

The frame-up at Charleston, the one of the largest East Coast ports, originated during a strike against scab labor, whose use reflected intensifying pressure from corporations to cut labor costs in an environment of globalized production. On January 20, 2000, around 600 ILA dockworkers in Charleston clashed with a large phalanx of heavily armed police, who were protecting 20 scabs unloading a Nordana Lines freighter. Local 1422 President Ken Riley was clubbed in the head while trying to defuse the situation, requiring 12 stitches. Police charged the picket line unleashing violence with attack dogs, armored vehicles, smoke grenades, and batons, injuring ten people.

Following the confrontation, the unions reached a concession agreement with Nordana that reduced manning of work gangs and guaranteed only four hours per workday instead of eight. At the same time, a nonunion stevedore company filed a \$1.5 million lawsuit against Riley and 26 other union members.

In November 2001, the charges were dropped after some defendants entered no-contest misdemeanor pleas.

**50 years ago: Jimmy Carter emerges as Democratic Party nominee for president**

On June 8, 1976, the final major primary elections of the US presidential cycle took place in the key states of Ohio, New Jersey and California. On the Democratic Party side, while California Governor Jerry Brown won his home state in a landslide, former Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter’s decisive victory in Ohio removed the last remaining barrier to his nomination. This outcome marked a critical transition point in American politics, preparing a fundamental right-wing realignment of the political establishment.

The primaries unfolded amidst a ruling class crisis of legitimacy following the Watergate scandal, the military defeat in Vietnam, and a severe economic recession. Carter faced a highly fractured field of contenders that included liberal Representative Morris Udall, the warmongering senator from Washington state, Henry Jackson, and Idaho Senator Frank Church.

His main opponents among Democratic Party power brokers, who had earlier organized a “Stop Carter” campaign, immediately lined up behind him as soon as the June 8 results confirmed his victory, now portraying him as the ideal candidate to stabilize the affairs of the ruling class. The shift in support was signaled by Chicago Democratic Party machine leader Mayor Richard J. Daley.

Carter’s elevation from political obscurity was engineered by key sections of the financial oligarchy and state apparatus. He was groomed by the Trilateral Commission, an elite planning group financed by David Rockefeller and directed by the fanatically anti-communist strategist Zbigniew Brzezinski. The commission designed Carter’s moralistic campaign to divert growing class tensions into electoral politics while preparing an aggressive foreign policy and austerity at home.

The primary campaign marked the effective end of the Democratic Party’s support for social reform programs associated with the New Deal and Great Society. Carter’s platform exposed a deeply conservative social and economic agenda that appealed directly to reactionary interests. He defended the segregation of urban neighborhoods under the guise of “neighborhood preservation” and opposed federal intervention in local housing integration. His economic program aligned directly with the demands of the banks and corporations, backing fiscal austerity, deregulation of key industries like transportation and energy, right-to-work laws and wage controls.

On the Republican side, the primary campaign ended in an unprecedented deadlock between incumbent president Gerald Ford and challenger, Ronald Reagan, the former California governor and B-movie actor. Following Reagan's landslide victory in California, neither candidate held enough delegates to secure the nomination outright, ensuring the contest would not be settled until the August convention.

### **75 years ago: “Trenton Six” frame-up trial concludes; four defendants acquitted, two convicted**

On June 14, 1951, the third trial of the framed-up “Trenton Six” concluded in New Jersey with four of the defendants acquitted of murder, but two others receiving guilty verdicts.

The “Trenton Six” referred to a group of six young African-American men fraudulently accused of murdering a shopkeeper in Trenton, New Jersey. The crime occurred in January 1948, when William Horner and his wife Elizabeth were attacked in their furniture store, with the former dying from his injuries in the hospital.

In the subsequent days, Trenton police officers patrolled black neighborhoods, detaining and questioning dozens of black men at random. Among those arrested were the men who would become known as the “Trenton Six”: Ralph Cooper, Collis English, McKinley Forrest, John McKenzie, James Henry Thorpe Jr., and Horace Wilson.

The Trenton Six, framed up for a murder they did not commit

The six were held and questioned without attorneys for days, denied sleep and threatened with violence if they did not confess. All but one signed “confessions” under these conditions.

This was the beginning of a years-long legal frame-up. Though witnesses described seeing black teenagers at the scene of the crime, all six defendants were in their 20s and 30s. Elizabeth Horner herself was not able to identify any of the Trenton Six as the men who assaulted her and her husband. At least four of the six had well-corroborated alibis, and there was no forensic evidence presented to substantiate their convictions.

The initial trial of the Trenton Six concluded in August 1948, with a guilty verdict for all defendants, who were also sentenced to death. But the New Jersey Supreme Court would later order a retrial, citing improprieties in the trial court's actions. The medical examiner for the initial trial was also later found guilty of perjury. A second trial ended in early 1951 in a mistrial.

During the third trial, the defense for the accused pointed out that throughout the course of the case, nine different versions of the crime had been presented to the jury, with the prosecution unable to decide on any single version.

The jury deliberated for 20 hours, and handed down acquittals for four of the defendants. However, English and Cooper were once again convicted of murder, though this time with a recommendation of clemency that reduced their sentences from execution to life imprisonment.

The convictions of English and Cooper were appealed, and the New Jersey Supreme Court once again ruled that the case should go to a fourth trial. However, Cooper would later accept a life sentence in exchange for a guilty plea, while English died in prison from a heart attack in 1952.

### **100 years: Students protest in Korea against Japanese colonialism**

On June 10, 1926, several hundred students in Seoul (then Keijō) protested Japanese imperialism—Japan had annexed Korea in 1910—at the funeral of the Emperor Sunjong, the last ruler of the Joseon Dynasty, who had died on April 26.

Anticipating unrest, the Japanese military stationed thousands of troops in the capital. Despite heavy surveillance, independent student groups clandestinely printed 10,000 independence declarations. As the emperor's funeral procession began, high school and college students distributed flyers and shouted, “Long live Korean independence!” Thousands of spectators took up the chant and joined the protesters.

Students in other cities also demonstrated, and together these nationwide protests came to be known as the June Tenth Movement. It marked a crucial turning point in Korea's struggle against Japanese imperial rule. The Japanese authorities arrested about 1,000 people across the country.

Before these events the Korean independence movement had hit a relative lull. The organizations spawned by the mass movement of the 1919 March First Movement had been largely suppressed by Japan's pivoting colonial tactics.

Initially, the Japanese response in 1919 was exceptionally violent, resulting in thousands of deaths, mass arrests, and the burning of entire villages. But fearful of mass popular opposition, the Japanese occupiers soon backtracked, relaxing the ban on free speech, allowing newspapers and the formation of social organizations, while at the same time subjecting Koreans to intense, behind-the-scenes censorship. The Japanese regime also offered economic incentives, jobs and minor political access to wealthy and educated Koreans, successfully creating a layer of collaborators.

The June Tenth Movement began to break this accommodation apart. It prepared the way for closer collaboration between anti-Japanese political groups that would result in the much larger 1929 Gwangju Student Independence Movement, a massive nationwide uprising against Japanese colonial rule.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**