

ISSE holds rally in San Diego in defense of public education

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The International Students for Social Equality at San Diego State University (SDSU) held a public rally on Thursday to defend public education against massive budget cuts throughout the state.

The rally was called in conjunction with a series of walkouts and demonstrations throughout the University of California system, which does not include SDSU. (See “California students and faculty denounce education cuts”)

The rally at SDSU was the only event held outside the UC system. It was attended by approximately 40 students and a several faculty members.

In contrast to the other demonstrations, the ISSE based its call for the rally on a clear political perspective in opposition to the Democratic and Republican Parties and the Obama administration. It urged students and faculty members fight for a socialist movement of the working class.

Among the demands raised by the ISSE were: affordable quality education for everyone; an end to all cuts in social programs, including health care; and an emergency public works program against unemployment, which has recently reached a 70-year high of 12.2 percent in California.

Two ISSE members addressed the crowd of students. “The ISSE called this rally in support for the *impulse* behind the UC walkout, which we consider to be a healthy display of political discontent,” Cody Stephens, president of the ISSE at SDSU, said. “By orienting their struggle toward the Democratic Party and the trade unions, however, the organizers of the UC walkout are betraying the popular frustration that is the essence of the protest.”

Stephens said that the ISSE rejected the notion that politicians in Sacramento or Washington can somehow

be pressured into giving more money to public education.

“We will not encourage anyone here to vent at the tent, or sign an angry banner to send to Arnold Schwarzenegger, both of which were strategies employed at the unserious rally held on this campus the first day of classes,” Stephens said. (See “California State University student fees jump 33 percent”)

Stephens attacked the Obama administration, noting its support for the bailout of the banks. “Obama came into office by riding a wave of popular hostility to the policies of George W. Bush,” he said. “He then turned around to carry out wholesale those very same policies, even stepping them up in certain instances.” Stephens pointed in particular to the escalation of war in Afghanistan.

Stephens argued that the demands of the working class for improved economic and social conditions could not be met within the framework of the capitalist system. The ruling class was attempting to make the working class pay for the multi-trillion dollar bank bailouts.

The \$23 trillion that were spent on bailing out the banks, Stephens said, could fund public education in California for two millennia.

Ricardo Ruiz, secretary of the ISSE at SDSU, also addressed the crowd. “Under the California Master Plan for Higher Education, which was put into law in 1960, tuition for universities and community colleges was *free* and student fees were almost negligible,” he said. “Today this seems like a fantasy.”

Ruiz outlined the impact of budget cuts on SDSU. In July, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and the California state legislature reduced state funding for the California State University system (including SDSU) by \$584 million, which, according to the CSU web site,

accounts for the instruction of 95,000 students. Roughly \$35 million of the \$584 million was cut from SDSU.

This fall, SDSU denied admittance to almost 2,000 qualified students. The SDSU administration recently sent out an email announcing that next year enrollment will be reduced by nearly 11 percent, or 4,500 students.

More than 500 courses were eliminated from SDSU's fall schedule; an entire dormitory on campus, which can house up to 550 students, has been shut down; student fees have increased 33 percent; and furloughs have been imposed on faculty members in order to reduce their pay by 10 percent.

Ruiz concluded his speech by saying that students are witnessing the dismantling of the system of public higher education in California. The struggle for better education—for students and teachers—is inseparable from the struggle for socialism, he said.

After the two speeches, ISSE members talked to students who had gathered around to rally.

A pre-nursing senior, Maria, said the nursing program at SDSU has suffered a 30 percent cut in funding. Many students are being denied admittance to the major. "Higher education is a human right, so the fact that it is being qualified and reduced is a scary thought," she said.

Maria said the current economic and social conditions that face the working class will continue to go unchanged until there is a revolution. "This is a perfect time for a revolution," she said.

Saba, a senior in political science, said the recent cuts may cause a delay in her anticipated graduation date. She is trying to graduate this year, she said, but if the school does not offer courses she needs in the political science department, then she may have to postpone her graduation.

Saba said she was frustrated by the policies taken against education by the current administration. "How do you assess who deserves an education and who doesn't? It's as though they're saying that some students are not worthy of an education."

Both Maria and Saba said that the Obama administration had not carried out the changes promised in the campaign, and that it was continuing the policies of the Bush administration.

"Democrat or Republican, it doesn't matter. To me, what comes out of the office seems to be the exact

same [policy]...They don't have anyone's interest but their own at hand," Saba said.



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