

For a socialist movement to defend education!

International Students for Social Equality
23 February 2010

On March 4, students and workers throughout California and the US will demonstrate against the attack on public education and increases in tuition that are making a college education unaffordable for the majority of working class youth.

The ISSE encourages all youth and working people to take part in these events. It is high time for a fight back against the unrelenting attack on jobs, living conditions and social services!

However, demonstrations by themselves will not solve this crisis. What is necessary, above all, is a new political movement that unifies all sections of the working class in a common political struggle, directed at the source of the crisis: the capitalist system and the two political parties—the Democrats and Republicans—that defend it.

Having emptied the federal treasury through the bank bailout and the funding of two criminal wars, the big business politicians claim there is no money for education or any other basic services. They insist that only the affluent should get a decent education, while the vast majority of young people are consigned to poverty-stricken schools and a future of low-paying jobs or joining the military.

The right to education—including access to low-cost and even free higher education for many working class, minority and immigrant youth—was won through mass social struggles. Today, every politician, from Schwarzenegger to Pelosi to Obama, insists that universal access to quality education—along with health care, jobs and a home—is an extravagance that working people must learn to live without.

This is unacceptable. The working class is not responsible for the crisis of American capitalism or the economic meltdown produced by the recklessness and avarice of the Wall Street speculators. We must not pay for it.

Opposition to education cuts has found its strongest expression in California, where students throughout the state are planning walkouts in response to tuition hikes of

up to 33 percent and the firing of thousands of staff. But this is a national and international struggle.

In New York, Michigan and other states, parents, teachers and students have organized protests to fight school closings and funding reductions. In Greece, Spain, Germany and other countries, there have been mass strikes and protests against cuts in higher education and other austerity measures.

The ISSE calls for these struggles to be integrated and for a fight for the international unity of the working class in defense of public education, jobs and decent living standards for all.

Some groups involved in the March 4 demonstrations have claimed tuition increases can be reversed through appeals to the politicians in Sacramento and Washington. This is not the case. This attack is a deliberate and conscious policy of the ruling class and both of its political parties, which are determined to make the working class pay for the Wall Street bailout and economic crisis through destroying the gains won by working people through decades of struggle.

Barack Obama is leading the attack on the right to public education. The president has used the economic crisis to blackmail bankrupt school districts into increasing the number of privately run charter schools and impose merit pay and other punitive “performance-based” schemes on teachers and school employees. An escalation of the Bush administration’s “No Child Left Behind” program, Obama’s school “reforms” will increase inequality by cutting off funding for schools in poor neighborhoods and channeling resources to so-called priority schools, where a handful of young people will get an adequate education.

Millions hoped the election of Obama would mean the end of Bush’s hated policies of war, attacks on democratic rights and handouts to the wealthy. The last year has demonstrated that it is impossible to enact serious change through the two-party system, which is dominated by the financial aristocracy. A new political movement must be built so that the working class can

assert its own, socialist solution to the crisis.

The International Students for Social Equality advocates the following program:

1. No education cuts! Billions to rebuild schools! Free public education for all! The ISSE calls for free, quality public education from kindergarten through university level. Pour trillions of dollars into the public education system to hire teachers and provide good wages and benefits, build new schools and equip every building with the most up-to-date technology and learning tools. The debts accumulated by students to pay for exorbitant tuition must be immediately canceled.

2. For an emergency public works program! Jobs for everyone who wants to work! The Obama administration has done nothing to provide relief for the tens of millions who have lost their jobs, incomes, health care benefits and homes. The fight to defend education must be linked up with the struggle to defend jobs, including those of city workers in Los Angeles and San Francisco and auto workers at the NUMMI plant in Fremont. The ISSE calls for a ban on all home foreclosures and the launching of a multitrillion-dollar program of public works to hire the unemployed and guarantee good-paying jobs for all.

3. Withdraw all troops from Iraq and Afghanistan! For an end to militarism and war! The US government spends hundreds of billions of dollars every year to send young people to their deaths in the interests of the American ruling class. The ISSE calls for the immediate withdrawal of all troops from Iraq and Afghanistan. The US war machine must be dismantled, and the vast sums squandered on the military used to meet pressing social needs, both in the US and in countries ravaged by American bombs.

4. For the international unity of the working class! As the international scope of the economic crisis reveals, workers and young people in every country face the same struggle. The ISSE calls for the unity of the working class and rejects all efforts to scapegoat immigrants and divide the working class along racial, ethnic or national lines.

5. Nationalize the banks and large corporations! For equality and the redistribution of wealth! The question of who controls society's wealth lies at the heart of the crisis in education. The wealthy have no interest in educating workers destined for unemployment or menial jobs, and it is their interests that dictate government policy. Taxes on the wealthy must be sharply increased to provide resources to rebuild social infrastructure in the

US and internationally. The banks and major corporations must be nationalized and placed under the democratic control of working people in order to break the economic and political grip of the financial elite over society.

6. Defend democratic rights! The arrest of California students in response to protests in November shows what type of methods the government will use to suppress popular opposition. As part of a defense of democratic rights as a whole, the ISSE demands the dropping of all charges against student protesters, the ending of police repression on the campuses and neighborhoods, and an end to political censorship of socialist and left-wing views.

7. Mobilize the working class to defend education! Public education cannot be defended on the campuses alone; it requires a fight by the whole working class. This means uniting every section of the working class in a common struggle in defense of jobs, education and basic rights. This fight can only be carried out in opposition to the trade union apparatus, which works to subordinate all struggles to the Democratic Party and the capitalist system as a whole.

8. For the political independence of the working class! The experience of the Obama administration demonstrates that the Democrats, no less than the Republicans, are the bitter enemies of workers and students. The precondition for a fight to defend education and other social programs is a complete and irrevocable break with the two parties of big business and the construction of a mass socialist party of the working class.

9. For socialism and equality! To defend education, the problem must be addressed at its roots: the entire structure of American and world society. No opposition to cuts in public education that accepts the parameters of the capitalist system can be successful. The alternative to capitalism is socialism. The defense and expansion of public education requires the reorganization of economic life on a world scale, to meet social need, not private profit.

If you agree with our program, make the decision to join the ISSE and take up the fight for socialism!



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