

Oppose furloughs and all school cuts! For a working class movement to defend public education!

Socialist Equality Party
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The Socialist Equality Party urges teachers in the Los Angeles Unified School District to reject proposed contract revisions that would cut five days from the current school year and seven days next year. The changes will reduce teaching time for students, create greater hardships for parents, and amount to a significant pay cut for teachers.

The LAUSD, the United Teachers of Los Angeles union, and the political and media establishment are lining up to convince teachers that they must accept these cuts in order to save jobs. Teachers are told that some cuts are necessary to balance the \$640 million budget deficit, and cutting school days is the “better option.”

Both LAUSD and UTLA have depicted the changes as an effort to save 2,100 teacher jobs in the district, out of 6,300 LAUSD workers that were given pink slips this year. According to LAUSD, the furloughs would save \$140 million and prevent oversized classrooms in grade and middle schools.

There are in fact no guarantees that jobs will be preserved. Even if teachers approve the furloughs, the school district would still face a \$500 million deficit that will inevitably be made up in the form of more layoffs, bigger class sizes and school closures. The unions have repeatedly declared that concessions are necessary to “save jobs,” with such claims invariably followed by more layoffs and more demands for concessions.

Throughout the state and country, the same argument is made in district after district. Schools are being shut down, teachers laid off and forced to accept cuts in pay and benefits, programs critical for children are eliminated, services such as busing privatized to exploit cheaper labor. All of this is supposedly necessary to balance budgets.

Teachers should reject the entire framework of the “debate,” which accepts as its premise that public education and the interests of workers must be sacrificed to resolve the economic crisis. The Obama administration is now leading

this attack, even as it has expended trillions to bail out the banks, and hundreds of billions of dollars every year to wage wars in the Middle East and Central Asia.

Last year, the top 25 US hedge fund managers took home a record \$25.33 billion in income—that is, *as a direct result of the bailout of the financial system, the pay of 25 individuals was 40 times the entire budget deficit of the LAUSD*. And we are told that there is “no money” for schools and decent pay for teachers!

A rejection by teachers in LA of these contract changes must become the starting point for an all-out defense of public education. There is a growing sentiment throughout California and the entire country for such a fight. Mass demonstrations on March 4 saw thousands of students, teachers and workers take a stand for public education.

A successful fight must begin with the formation of new organizations—independent committees that unite teachers with all sections of the working class to defend public education. The UTLA does not represent teachers. In collaboration with the school district, the UTLA is exploiting the selfless attitude of many teachers who are willing to accept pay cuts in the hope that the jobs of their colleagues can be saved.

What is above all necessary is a new program and perspective on which to base this fight.

Reject all furloughs, layoffs and social cuts! Stop the vilification of teachers!

Instead of enforcing cuts and furloughs, billions must be expended to ensure quality public education for all student youth. Schools must be rebuilt and equipped with new supplies, textbooks, and technology. The SEP opposes the destruction of public education in favor of charter schools.

The attempt to scapegoat teachers for the crisis in education is aimed at pitting workers against each other and shielding those who are truly responsible. Teachers are engaged in a heroic effort to educate youth, often paying out of pocket to give their students the most basic necessities.

Teacher pay and benefits should be increased and all benefits restored. Thousands more teachers must be hired to reduce class sizes and workloads.

For a broad public works program! Guaranteed jobs for everyone who can work!

The attack on public education is part of a broader attack on the jobs, wages and social programs of the working class. Official unemployment in California is 12.5 percent, while in at least 8 counties the jobless rate is above 20 percent—figures unheard of since the Great Depression. Millions have been thrown into foreclosure. Wages are under attack throughout the country, as corporations use mass unemployment to increase exploitation.

A successful fight for the defense of public education is bound up with a struggle to defend all workers' jobs and living standards. Students cannot get a decent education when they go to school hungry and their parents are out of work. A massive public works program is required to guarantee good-paying jobs for all. There is no shortage of work to be done—including the rebuilding of our schools and communities.

Nationalize banks and multibillion-dollar corporations! Reclaim the wealth for social need!

The resources exist to finance an excellent public system of education; it is a question of who controls these resources and how they are distributed. Taxes on the wealthy must be sharply increased, and the immense resources accumulated through speculation and parasitism must be reclaimed to meet pressing social needs, such as education.

To break the control of the financial and corporate elite over society, the large banks and corporations must be turned into public utilities, democratically owned and controlled by the working class. Why should these institutions, which determine the lives of millions, remain subordinated to the money-mad drive of a small minority?

Break with the Democrats and Republicans!

The UTLA and the other unions work closely with the Democratic Party, which, together with the Republicans, is insisting that the working class pay for the economic crisis. Both these parties speak for the interests of the corporate and financial elite.

The Obama administration is now leading the nationwide attack on public education. The administration has stood idly by while states and localities implement devastating cuts—in sharp contrast to the speed with which the government moved to bail out the banks.

With his “Race To The Top” program, essentially the continuation of Bush’s “No Child Left Behind,” Obama is aggressively promoting charter schools while victimizing teachers for the crisis of public education caused by decades of underfunding. Last month, Obama explicitly endorsed the

mass firing of teachers in Central Falls, Rhode Island.

Obama has expanded war, rejected any serious measures to address the economic crisis, and is now leading a cost-cutting drive to reduce spending on health care and other social programs.

A socialist program for the working class

The assault on public education is the inevitable outcome of an international system that subordinates all questions to the drive for profit by a small oligarchy. Ruling classes throughout the world are implementing harsh austerity measures with one thing in common: workers are to bear the cost.

This situation is the outcome of the crisis of the capitalist system. A year and a half after the collapse of Lehman Brothers, it is clear that for the vast majority of the population, the crisis is far from over.

The working class needs its own program and party, based on opposition to the entire social system that has created this disaster. The alternative to capitalism is socialism, the democratic and rational control of the world’s productive forces in the interests of social need, not private profit.

The SEP urges teachers and workers throughout the Los Angeles area to study our program and perspective, read the *World Socialist Web Site*, and make the decision to join the Socialist Equality Party.

To contact or join the SEP, visit <http://socialequality.com/contact>. The Socialist Equality Party is holding an Emergency Conference on the Social Crisis & War in Ann Arbor, Michigan on April 17-18. For more information and to register, visit <http://socialequality.com/conference>.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact