

Break with Obama and the Democratic Party

For an independent working class movement to defend public education!

The Statement International Students for Social Equality
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The following statement is being distributed by supporters of the International Students for Social Equality at demonstrations in California against education cuts. For more information or to join the ISSE, visit intsse.com.

Students are protesting today against attacks on public education under conditions of mounting social distress for millions of young people. Whatever the talk of an “economic recovery,” the US and world economy remain mired in the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Unprecedented budget deficits are leading to the shutdown of K-12 schools, rising tuition and fees for colleges and universities, and cutbacks in essential classes and programs. Students graduate today with a mountain of debt and no prospects for a decent job.

The attack on education is part of an attack on the entire working class. Mass unemployment is being seized on by corporations as an opportunity to reduce wages and increase exploitation, while all social programs and services that benefit working people are being drastically cut.

The spearhead in this assault is the Obama administration. After bailing out the banks with trillions of dollars, Obama has left bankrupt states, including California, to resolve their budget deficits through repeated cuts in social programs and education funding. Obama’s Race to the Top education “reform” uses the economic crisis to blackmail 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.

Two years ago, millions of young people voted for

Obama in the hope of changing the hated policies of Bush. Instead, on every front, the new president has deepened the right-wing policies of his predecessor—expanding war in Afghanistan and Pakistan, ensuring the profits of the corporations and the wealthy, and furthering the attack on basic democratic rights. Whatever the outcome of the upcoming November elections, the political establishment is moving sharply to the right.

The fight to defend public education requires a new program and perspective. The International Students for Social Equality (ISSE) calls for:

1. Repeal all cuts! Billions for education!

The claim that there is “no money” for quality education is a lie, when trillions are spent to guarantee the bank accounts of the wealthy. A massive increase in funding for education must be part of a public works program to rebuild social infrastructure while providing quality jobs to all who can work.

2. Education as a social right from kindergarten through university! Forgive all student debt!

Education must be a basic right for all working people, but quality education is increasingly accessible only to the rich. The ISSE demands open admissions and free education from kindergarten through university. The enormous debts accumulated to pay for education, leaving students as indentured servants to the banks, must be immediately cancelled.

3. For the nationalization of the banks and major corporations! For social equality!

The right to education—as with all the rights of the working class—comes into direct conflict with the private ownership of the giant banks and corporations, which exercise a dictatorship over economic and political life. Despite the economic crisis of their own making, corporations are making record profits and the rich are better off than ever. To free up resources to meet pressing social needs these corporations must be placed under the democratic control of the working class, while taxes on the wealthy must be sharply increased.

4. Break with the Democrats and Republicans! For an independent political movement of the working class!

The Obama administration has demonstrated that the Democratic Party cannot be pressured to carry out the interests of working people. No less than the Republicans, it is a party of, by and for the financial aristocracy.

It is not to Democratic politicians in Sacramento or Washington that students must turn, but to the working class. Throughout the world, there are growing signs of opposition among workers—from strikes in China, India and Spain, to auto workers in Indianapolis who have formed a rank-and-file committee to fight against concessions demanded by the corporations and the unions.

For a movement of the working class to be successful, it must break free from the constraints of the two-party system and the stranglehold of the unions, which support the Democratic Party and the capitalist system.

Those organizing the protests today, however, are opposed to this perspective. In planning committee meetings for these demonstrations in San Diego and Berkeley, groups such as the International Socialist Organization—which is playing a principal role in organizing these demonstrations—intervened to block proposed demands by the ISSE for a break with the Democratic Party and for the nationalization of the banks.

Despite all evidence to the contrary, the ISO continues to insist, as in a recent article, that “politicians only make changes that benefit working people when there are social movements organized to demand, fight for and win these changes”—that is, the

Democrats can be pushed to the left with mass pressure.

The ISSE rejects this perspective, which is another trap for students and workers. The interests of the working class can be advanced only by the working class itself, by building an independent political movement that fights for power.

The aim of the ISSE, the student organization of the Socialist Equality Party, is to build a socialist movement of students and young people, as part of a socialist movement of the entire working class.

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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