

Oppose Brown's cuts in California! Education must be a social right!

International Students for Social Equality
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In his latest budget, California Governor Jerry Brown, a Democrat, is proposing drastic cuts that will affect the lives of students and workers throughout the state, including \$1.4 billion in cuts to higher education.

Faced with a \$25.4 billion budget deficit, the newly elected governor is just as insistent as his predecessor, Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger, that the bulk of it must be paid for by the working class. Brown has pledged at least \$12.5 billion in cuts this year, which could increase if voters do not approve a series of regressive tax extensions. These cuts come after a series of budget cuts in previous years, which have had devastating consequences.

Among the new cuts are \$1.7 billion from the Medi-Cal health care program, \$1.5 billion from the CalWorks welfare program, and \$750 million from the Department of Developmental Services. Funding is being scaled back for these crucial social services even as demand rises due to continued mass unemployment, which, according to official figures, stands at 12.4 percent.

As for higher education, \$500 million each will be slashed from the University of California and the California State University systems, and an additional \$400 million will come from community colleges. Every student knows what this means: higher tuition, reduced classes, furloughs and wage cuts for teachers and staff. In 2009, the UC and CSU systems saw tuition increases of 32 percent.

The claim that there is no money for basic social services, including education, is a blatant lie perpetuated by those who seek to place the burden of the crisis on the backs of workers. California is one of the wealthiest states in the country, with one of the

largest economies in the world. The net wealth of the 19 richest Californians is more than ten times the entire amount of proposed budget cuts!

Throughout the United States and around the world, the ruling class—dominated by a tiny parasitic financial elite—is seizing on the economic crisis to carry out a far-reaching attack on all social programs and any government spending that benefits the working class.

At stake is the very future of public education itself. The Obama administration and the entire political establishment are aggressively pushing to expand private charter schools at the K-12 level, even as local governments shut down public schools, laying off tens of thousands of teachers in the process. At the same time, the systematic raising of tuition and lowering of government funding make the “public” character of higher education throughout the country little more than an empty phrase.

Working class students who are able to attend school are forced to work in addition to taking out loans. They graduate with mountains of debt, even as they confront bleak job prospects. Last year, for the first time in history, student debt surpassed credit card debt nationwide.

The International Students for Social Equality calls for the mobilization of workers and youth throughout the state to defend public education on the basis of a new political program and perspective:

1. Break with the Democrats and Republicans!

The actions of Brown and Obama make clear that the Democratic Party, no less than the Republican Party, is an instrument of the corporate and financial elite. Brown was brought into office to work with the Democratic Party-controlled legislature to implement cuts that even Schwarzenegger had trouble getting

through.

As for Obama, two years of his administration have brought only increasing inequality, the expansion of war, and growing attacks on democratic rights. In the wake of the 2010 mid-term elections Obama is shifting even further to the right, agreeing to extend the Bush era tax cuts to the rich, planning deep cuts in social programs and pledging a sharp reduction in regulation on business. With states facing record deficits—a total of up to \$140 billion this year—Obama has made clear that there will be no bailout for the states, after trillions have been handed to the banks.

2. Mobilize the entire working class internationally!

Education cannot be defended on campuses alone. The issues facing students—growing social distress, increasing debt, government austerity, mass unemployment, militarism and war—are the same issues that face the working class throughout the world.

A struggle in defense of education requires fighting to mobilize the widest layers of the working class in a common struggle. Such a turn to the working class, however, does not mean a turn to the trade unions, which do not represent their own members, let alone working people outside of these organizations. The unions relentlessly support the Democratic Party and gave their full support to the Brown campaign, even as he made clear his plans for austerity.

The independent political mobilization of the working class also requires a break with all those middle class “left” organizations that claim to oppose the attack on public education but in fact work to facilitate it. In March and October last year, tens of thousands mobilized throughout the state to oppose the attack on public education. However, the organizations that led these demonstrations promoted the illusion that the Democratic Party could be pressured to defend education. This bankrupt perspective served to politically decapitate the movement against cuts.

3. For the nationalization of the banks and major corporations! A socialist program to defend education!

Education is a basic social right, necessary for modern society. Like all the most basic necessities of the working class—including the right to a job, a livable income, health care and retirement—the right to

education runs into immediate conflict with the private ownership of the giant banks and corporations, which exercise a dictatorship over economic and political life.

Increasingly, America’s wealthy elite considers public education an unacceptable drain on profit, particularly since they are condemning the vast majority of young people to a future of unemployment, low-paying jobs and war.

To free up resources for public education, the big corporations and banks must be transformed into publicly owned and democratically controlled entities. The great bulk of the wealth of the American plutocracy, amassed through fraud and speculation, must be seized for the benefit of society as a whole.

To realize this program requires the fight for a new type of society—one based on social need, not private profit. This is the fight for socialism.

The International Students for Social Equality is co-sponsoring a public conference on April 16 in Los Angeles, “The Fight for Socialism Today.” We urge all students, young people and workers to register for this conference today, join the ISSE and its parent organization, the Socialist Equality Party, and take up the fight for socialism!



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