

Oppose Brown's cuts in California

Jerry White, SEP candidate for US President
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As the Socialist Equality Party's candidate for US president, I call on workers throughout California to begin organizing mass opposition to the latest round of cuts demanded by Democratic Governor Jerry Brown.

With these cuts, workers in California are facing the same attack on social rights as workers throughout the world. As with their political counterparts in Spain, Italy, and Greece, the Democrats and Republicans are united in their determination to defend the corporate and financial elite by demanding a historic reversal in the wages and living conditions of the vast majority of the population.

In his latest budget proposal, Brown is calling for over \$8 billion in cuts, primarily to health care and social services. More than \$2 billion will be cut from Medi-Cal and CalWORKs, the state's Medicaid and welfare-to-work programs. This comes under conditions in which official unemployment is over 10 percent, and nearly 100,000 Californians were just cut off extended federal unemployment benefits.

These cuts follow years of attacks against social programs upon which millions of people depend. Since the beginning of the economic crisis, \$20 billion has been cut or deferred from the state's education system, resulting in over 30,000 teachers being laid off. Tuition at public colleges and universities is soaring, and working class youth are being priced out of a decent education.

Mental health services have been cut to the bone, leaving the mentally ill in jail instead of hospitals. Subsidized childcare has been slashed, leaving working mothers unable to find safe and affordable day care.

With the willful collaboration of the states' trade unions, Brown is also demanding further cuts in wages for government workers.

"We are going to have to go much farther and make cuts far greater than I asked for at the beginning of the year," Brown declared in announcing that the state's

anticipated budget deficit for next year had ballooned from \$9.2 billion to \$16 billion.

Brown is packaging his attack on workers with proposals for increased revenue—aimed primarily at increasing sales taxes that disproportionately impact the working class. With typical cynicism, the governor is also proposing a slight increase in income taxes on the rich. This is merely intended to give political cover for cuts that go far beyond anything proposed by the previous governor, Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger. At the same time, if voters do not approve the tax increases, Brown is threatening further devastating cuts in public education.

What is happening in California is happening throughout the country and around the world. If ranked as an independent country California's economy would be the 8th largest in the world, and the state accounts for 13 percent of the United States' gross domestic product. Brown's cuts will be used as a model for every other state, where governors of both big business parties have already enforced deep cuts in essential social services.

Basic rights that workers have taken for granted are being dismantled. Much of this takes place at the level of the states, which are largely responsible for funding of education and health care. Since August 2008, the total number of state and local government employees in the US has declined by 646,000.

The policy of the Obama administration is to encourage the states to carry out these cuts, while it implements its own drastic austerity measures on the federal level. In the upcoming elections in November, the interests of workers can find no expression through Obama or his Republican challenger, Mitt Romney—both tested representatives of the banks.

Since taking office, Obama has defended the interests of the financial elite. This included an explicit rejection in 2009 of any additional federal assistance to

California and other states.

After bailing out the banks Obama joined with the Republicans to slash health care and other government programs, while overseeing a drastic lowering in the wages of workers throughout the country. The results of his policies can be clearly seen by the fact that 93 percent of all new income in 2010 went to the top 1 percent.

To the extent that there are disagreements between the Republicans and Democrats over these austerity measures, it amounts to what role the unions should play in enforcing these cuts. While the Republican governor of Wisconsin, Scott Walker, sought to impose austerity by circumventing the unions, Democrat Jerry Brown has worked hand-in-glove with the California Teachers Association (CTA) and Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

With the announcement of the increased deficit this month, the SEIU, which bargains for 95,000 state employees, openly endorsed Brown's call for a five percent reduction in employee compensation, and suggested that Brown save money by shifting employees to a 38 hour 4-day work week. Similarly, the CTA has continued to endorse Brown and his tax proposals, while rejecting any struggle to maintain teacher salaries or prevent layoffs. The unions are bolstered by a broad array of pseudo-left pro-Democratic Party organizations, whose central purpose is to block any independent political mobilization of the working class.

The working class needs a new way forward!

In every workplace and neighborhood, preparations must be made to fight back. Workers should organize rank-and-file and neighborhood committees, independent of and in opposition to the trade unions and the Democratic Party.

Above all a new political program and party of the working class must be built—a party that does not seek to work within the existing political and economic system, but fights to organize and coordinate mass opposition to it. It is to build such a party that the Socialist Equality Party is intervening in these elections. What is required is nothing short of a revolutionary socialist transformation of social and economic life around the world.

The Socialist Equality Party rejects the claim that there is no money to meet the needs of working people.

At the same time that over 13 percent of the state's population is living in poverty, California is home to over 85 billionaires, including Larry Ellison whose net worth of \$33 billion is more than double the state's deficit.

It is not the lack of resources, but how the economy is organized and in whose interests. So long as economic life is controlled by the banks, there is no way forward for working people. The economy must be reorganized to serve human need, not private profit. This is the fight for socialism.

I call on workers and young people throughout California study the program of the Socialist Equality Party and make the decision to take up the banner of socialism.

For more information on the SEP campaign and to get involved, visit socialequality.com



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