

SEP campaigns against budget cuts in California

A WSWS reporting team
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Members of the SEP and ISSE distributed several hundred leaflets at the Florin Street Walmart in Sacramento, California announcing the SEP's public meeting scheduled for 6 pm Tuesday, June 26 at the Valley-Hi North Laguna Library. Supporters also campaigned at Sacramento City Community College, where tuition rates have increased to \$46 per unit and where courses and faculty have been slashed under Democratic Governor Jerry Brown's series of austerity budgets.

The average debt for public college students in California is \$18,113. This number will continue to increase as tuition rises and financial aid drops. The Cal State system has approved a 9 percent tuition hike for next year, and the UC system is proposing a 6 percent increase. Community colleges like Sacramento City are increasing their tuition by 25 percent.

SEP members spoke with students and workers at both locations and distributed copies of SEP presidential candidate Jerry White's statement, "Oppose Brown's cuts in California."

Nicole, 17, and Rachel, 18, are students at Sacramento City College. They expressed anger at the rising cost of tuition, and saw the cost of education as playing a role in the larger social crisis. "The loan rates are going to double soon, so that's a problem," said Nicole, a Chemistry student. "But I'm not going to get one because I can't pay it off."

Over one quarter of all recent college graduates state that they have moved back in with family because of their student loans. Many others report relying on their families for food, healthcare, or phone bills.

Rachel added: "High unemployment is also crazy. You go to college, and it doesn't even help. My boyfriend is a temporary worker, and they keep saying they'll hire him full time, but they never do... Books are

also ridiculously expensive. Some books are in the hundreds of dollars. It's really expensive. That money could go to rent or food. I see that the money they give to the banks is a lot of money."

Only half of all recent college graduates have found full-time employment. Moreover, the average starting salary of those employed has dropped by \$3,000 a year since the recession.

The WSWS also spoke with Leslie and her daughter Naomi, who will be attending Sacramento City College next year as a physical therapy major.

Leslie was deeply angered by cuts to education. "It's crazy that they're taking so much from education. It can't be that important for [politicians] as it is for us. They're not suffering any... If young people don't have an education, how will they run the country later? Nobody is out for education. The politicians are in to lining their pockets and not doing things that matter to me."

Naomi explained that cuts were "very angering because they're destroying our future."

Leslie also expressed discontent with the brutal methods used by the police to suppress peaceful demonstrators, including at University of California, Davis, last year. "I was disgusted by that. It was stupid to deny those young people their rights to free speech and to protest."

With the largest economy in the country, California serves as a bellwether. Every year, the state's budget has cut billions from crucial social services. Education has been particularly hard hit, with over 30,000 K-12 teachers laid off since the economic crisis, and over \$1 billion cut from higher education last year. This year's budget, created by Democrats with support from the unions, contains a minimum of \$8 billion in cuts with an additional \$6 billion if Brown's tax proposal is not

accepted.

The cuts in California are part of a nation-wide assault on social services at the state and local level. These cuts have been overseen by the Obama administration and have the support of both the Democrats and Republicans. (See, “US states carry out European-style attacks on jobs and services”)

The Socialist Equality Party's candidate, Jerry White, is the only candidate fighting for the working class. In order to defend education and social services, workers and students need to build a new leadership independent of the big business parties.

For details on the meeting in Sacramento, [click here](#).



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