Thousands of California teachers receive layoff notices

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Thousands of layoff notices were sent out to teachers in mid-March across California, marking the fifth year in a row of mass teacher layoffs in the richest state of the nation.

When voters in California approved Proposition 30 last fall they were promised that it would halt and reverse the assault on public education, and that Governor Jerry Brown would spare the state's education system from $5 billion in contemplated budget cuts.

The unions, including the California Teachers Association (CTA), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and SEIU Local 1000, all spent millions of dollars to help get the proposition passed. The proposition included tax increases designed to extract billions more dollars from the working class. Proposition 30 also included a small token tax hike on wealthy households.

The *World Socialist Web Site* warned at the time that far from "saving education," Proposition 30 increased taxes on the working class while laying the groundwork for more attacks on public education. The WSWS wrote, "This current year around $5 billion in cuts to education would be postponed, but after that it's open season. When next year's deficit arrives, public education would once again be on the chopping block." (See "The reactionary essence of California's Proposition 30")

The recent announcement that 2,600 teachers received layoff notices has vindicated that warning. While that number is down from 20,000 pink slips sent out last year, many teachers and staff are rightfully angry that any layoff notices are being sent out at all after being told that Proposition 30 would help, not hurt their schools. Some teachers are receiving layoff notices even though their schools have substantial reserves—in other words, they are being fired even though their schools have the funds to pay their salaries.

The teachers unions in California are feigning surprise at the further cuts in education that they helped to facilitate. "For school districts now to be issuing layoff notices really violates the spirit in which Proposition 30 was promoted to the voters," Joshua Pechthalt, the California Federation of Teachers president, told Abc7news.com.

In reality, teachers unions across the entire country are working tirelessly to help the Obama administration decimate public education. The teachers unions universally accept the premise that cuts are necessary, and their chief function is to help contain workers' opposition in return for dues revenues, which are then funneled into the Democratic Party.

In Chicago, the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) is playing a critical role in helping the Democratic Party establishment carry through one of the largest mass school closings in history, with 61 schools slated for closure. The CTU, in collaboration with its pseudo-left supporters such as the International Socialist Organization, worked in the face of mass opposition to shut down a strike of 26,000 teachers and force the teachers to accept a major concession contract, paving the way for the mass closures. (See "The attack on public education in Chicago")

In California, the unions play a similarly treacherous role, promoting and cheerleading for the Democratic Party even as that same party works systematically to shred teachers' jobs, benefits, and contracts.

With the onset of the 2008 financial crisis, a mantra was established from the Obama administration on down that workers would have to make sacrifices, "tighten their belts" in order to pay for a crisis caused

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by bankers, swindlers and speculators. The teachers unions embrace this conception. In struggle after struggle, they have sold out teachers by supporting the charterization of public schools and paving the way to the privatization of education.

Because Proposition 30 only prevented one year's contemplated cuts to schools and did not actually add desperately needed money to them, many school districts were forced to lay off staff anyway.

H.D. Palmer, a spokesman for the Department of Finance, stated, "Two factors that Prop 30 can't touch are declining enrollment and federal cutbacks." Given the sequestration cuts imposed at the federal level, no federal assistance will be forthcoming. Indeed, the opposite is the case: cuts in federal assistance will necessitate further cuts.

The Obama administration is leading the assault on public education with its aggressive endorsement of charter schools as part of its so-called "Race to the Top" program. Since 2008, more than $18 billion has been cut from education in the state of California alone. Under Democratic Governor Jerry Brown's tenure, California now ranks 47th out of 50 states in per-pupil spending.

Since the 2007-2008 fiscal year, a staggering 32,000 full-time teachers have been laid off in California, an 11 percent reduction, while school funding has fallen 8 percent.

Proposition 30 now stands exposed as a total fraud. While it increased taxes on the working class, it did not "save" any jobs, nor has it restored any funding to education. The unions that endorsed the measure, including the CTA, the AFT, the SEIU, and all of their pseudo-left friends and allies, have likewise been exposed as collaborators in the destruction of public education.

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