

Los Angeles school district approves hundreds of education layoffs

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12 March 2015

The Los Angeles Unified School District Board voted on Tuesday to deliver “reduction in force” notices to 609 elementary school teachers, counselors, foreign language teachers, art teachers and others. Five of the seven board members voted in favor of the layoffs. The vote was conducted after only 56 seconds of discussion, according to local National Public Radio affiliate KPCC.

The recent pink slip announcement, along with the district’s intransigence in negotiations, indicate that a rotten deal is being prepared to ram down the throats of teachers. In this, they have the full support of the United Teachers of Los Angeles, which is doing everything possible to prevent a mobilization of teachers against the Democratic Party and the drive to privatize education.

In the face of emerging struggles of oil and dockworkers in the Los Angeles area, the UTLA has made no effort to link the struggles of teachers with other sections of the working class. The union instead makes the claim that the needs of the teachers can be met through the district’s existing budget alone, neglecting the fact that cuts to teacher salaries are the product of years of cuts enacted by both Republican and Democratic state governments alike.

The district, as in previous-year negotiations, was able to reach an agreement with the Associated Administrators of Los Angeles and SEIU before the current impasse with the UTLA. The UTLA has in fact deliberately divorced the interests of teachers from administrators and staff as part of its campaign to “keep cuts away from the classroom.”

During negotiations, the UTLA leadership has not even raised the savage attacks on public education being carried out by the US ruling class, including the destruction of teacher job protections and the fact that

private charter operators and their billionaire backers are using the Los Angeles school district, the nation’s second largest, as a testing ground for nationwide efforts to roll back public education.

The unions’ complicity in this assault on workers comes after two landmark decisions were reached drastically undermining teacher job protections and laying the groundwork for increased attacks on public education.

The California Teachers Association (CTA) praised the State Assembly Bill 215, which limited due process rights for teacher dismissal.

The CTA has “long supported the streamlining of the dismissal process, so we are pleased to see this legislation approved by the legislature and signed by the governor,” union President Dean Vogel enthused.

Teachers throughout Los Angeles increasingly see the UTLA as a representative of their political and class enemies.

Teachers “would only get a better deck chair on the Titanic” even were the union to receive token salary increases, one teacher writing in the comments section of the LA School Report website remarked.

Instead of opposing the introduction of charter schools to begin with, the union is proposing wholly symbolic palliative measures such as a requirement that charter school board meetings take place in a geographically close area to the school in question.

These provisions are nothing more than a smokescreen, as the union knows fully well. The promotion of charter schools is the means by which the financial elite is seeking to arrogate more than \$500 billion in annual public education funding nationwide into its own hands. A struggle against charter schools can succeed only in opposition to both the Democrats and Republicans and the capitalist system they defend,

which is the last thing the union wants.

The union's latest offer includes a one-time teacher salary increase of 8.5 percent along with a \$1,000 annual stipend for supplies and support materials. Class size requirements proposed by the union would include a 24-to-1 student teacher ratio up until grade 3, a 27-to-1 ratio between grades 4 and 8, and a 31-to-1 ratio between grades 9 and 12.

The union, moreover, has made little mention about provisions in the proposed contract related to its Public School Accountability Act and union-led charter oversight. In particular, the union at no point has claimed that it is opposed to the creation of charter schools, but merely wants a more substantial "piece of the action" as the latest contract proposal makes clear.

The UTLA has quietly accepted the notorious Parent Trigger Law, which allows charter school astroturf organizations to manipulate school district votes to secure "local" approval for charterization.



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