

California State University faculty union agrees to sellout deal

Our reporters
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After secret negotiations with the California State University (CSU) Board of Trustees, the California Faculty Association (CFA) consented to a sellout contract and called off a statewide strike scheduled to begin April 13. The CFA is now preparing to ram the agreement through 26,000 professors, lecturers, librarians, counselors and coaches throughout the 23 CSU campuses.

CFA members had voted by 94 percent to back the strike and there was widespread sympathy for such a struggle from students who have also faced repeated tuition increases. In a press release the CFA stated, “The tentative agreement means plans for a strike on April 13-15 and 18-19 at all 23 CSU campuses are postponed, pending approval and ratification of the Tentative Agreement by CFA members. The CSU Chancellor’s Office reports the CSU Board of Trustees will vote on the Tentative Agreement at its May 24-25 meeting.”

The deal reached by the CFA is a miserable betrayal of instructors who have suffered stagnant and declining wages in the one of the most expensive states to live in the US, and who, in many cases, are treated as little more than part-time casual laborers.

While the union is boasting it achieved a 10.5 percent General Salary Increase (GSI) the increase is spread over three years, an average of 3.5 percent annually or exactly halfway between the Trustees’ negligible two percent and the CFA’s miserly five percent demand.

An across-the-board five percent retroactive raise will go into effect on June 30, 2016, followed by a 2 percent raise the next day, which will be the only raise for the entire 2016-17 school year. In 2017-18, faculty will receive a 3.5 percent raise.

These raises will not even recover what has been lost due to increases in the cost of living over the last eight

years, which amounts to nearly two percent per year in California, not to mention the 10 percent reduction as a result of furloughs imposed by Republican Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and the Democratic-controlled state legislature, and accepted by the CFA, during the state's 2009 budget crisis.

Another significant concession by the union is the doubling of the amount of time it takes newly hired instructors to be eligible for retiree health benefits, from 5 to 10 years.

In a statement exposing the treachery of the union bureaucracy, CFA President Jennifer Eagan told the *Star Tribune*, “What the CSU faculty have done is historic. We avoided the largest strike in US higher education ever.”

The CFA sabotaged the strike not because faculty workers lacked support. On the contrary, there was and continues to remain enormous support for a struggle. Caltrans workers have been working without a contract for nine months and expressed solidarity with CSU faculty during statewide rallies held Friday.

In the last few years alone oil refinery workers, nurses, bus and train drivers, municipal employees and longshoremens have carried out individual strikes and other job actions against the employers. The chief obstacle to uniting these different sections of workers has been the trade unions, which have worked tirelessly to impose sellout contracts and subordinate workers to the capitalist, pro-austerity Democratic Party.

The chief concern of the CFA and its parent union, the California Teachers Association, throughout the past year of contract negotiations has been to prevent a struggle. This is not because such a struggle was fruitless but because it had the potential to develop into a far broader struggle of the working class, which would lead to a direct conflict with the Brown

Administration and the Democratic Party—which the unions are allied with. As this is an election year, the CFA, the CTA and the National Education Association are campaigning for Democrats in the presidential and state elections and do not want any struggle to erupt that would quickly expose the anti-working class character of the Democrats.

In February, CFA President Eagan pleaded with 3,200 delegates at the California Democratic Party Convention, saying, “We need your advocacy and your passion for what’s right. That’s why we’re Democrats, right? So, I want to ask all of you to get active and *help us prevent this strike*” (emphasis added).

CFA President Eagan, a professor at CSU East Bay, claimed, “This agreement represents a strong step forward for salary stability for the faculty and their families, and this support from their employer will help faculty to serve the students of California. We are happy about this fair agreement, and are delighted that we will be teaching and mentoring our students next week.”

The CFA website also notes, “CFA and CSU management also committed to work cooperatively going forward to protect the quality of public higher education, including jointly seeking appropriate funding from the Legislature to accomplish the mission of the CSU.”

In fact, the Democratic Governor Jerry Brown—who is a trustee on the CSU board—and the state legislature have carried out a relentless attack on funding. Whatever meager wage increases are granted to instructors will largely be paid for through tuition increases on working class and lower middle class students already burdened with crushing debts. Opposed to a common struggle by faculty and students against the bipartisan attack on education, the CFA accept without challenge the claim that there is no money for both decent wages and affordable education.

Tuition has already more than doubled since 2006, rising from \$2,520 to \$5,472, creating a situation where tuition and fees now cover roughly half of the state’s public higher education costs.

Referring to the CFA, a San Diego State University professor with 14 years in the CSU system told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “It’s one of these corporatist unions. For me, the final straw was in 2007. I had been part of an effort to mobilize people to be serious about

a strike and the CFA was too quick to call off the strike. They ended up coming to an agreement and then declared a victory, but we ended up getting very little. So I got disgusted that they looked upon this as a success when they essentially caved in.”

In opposition to the CFA betrayal, the Socialist Equality Party and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) have fought for the unity of faculty and students and the development of a political struggle against both big business parties and the profit system they defend.

Earlier this week, the IYSSE at San Diego State University (SDSU) held a well-attended public meeting with over 50 students to discuss the political significance of the planned strike and to warn workers and students of the impending betrayal by CFA officials. IYSEE supporters noted that between 2003-2012, the CFA contributed nearly \$9 million to the Democratic Party, including the 2010 campaign of Governor Brown.

The presenters also discusses the global character of the austerity facing teachers, students, and workers by analyzing the similarities of the Chicago Teacher Strike and the recent attacks by riot police against student protesters in France. The IYSSE stated that the crisis of capitalism was global and that the working class required an international socialist strategy to oppose poverty, social inequality and war.



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