

Mobilize the entire working class in the Twin Cities

Defend the striking Allina nurses!

Ron Jorgenson
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Nearly 5,000 nurses at five Minneapolis and St. Paul metro-region hospitals have begun an open-ended strike against Allina Health to defend their health care benefits and improve working conditions. Three times nurses have rejected Allina's contract demands to eliminate four traditional medical plans and impose higher out-of-pocket costs and inferior coverage.

Allina nurses must not fight this battle alone. This struggle deserves the widest support from all workers in the Twin Cities area. This begins with the thousands of health care workers at other area hospitals who will face draconian demands for similar concessions if Allina executives and their wealthy financial backers are able to impose their will on striking nurses. Every section of workers—public and private sector—must rally to the support of the Allina nurses by organizing mass demonstrations and solidarity strikes. The history of Minneapolis—including the great 1934 General Strike—showed that workers never won anything without mass, organized struggle.

What are Allina nurses up against?

First, there is corporate management that is determined to slash tens of millions in medical costs and impose ever-greater workloads on nurses in order to channel even more money to the insurance, technology and pharmaceutical monopolies. Moreover, the Allina bosses are only answering to far more powerful financial interests, like US Bank, which is demanding the payment of millions after entangling the hospital chain in various financial swindles.

Second, there is the Obama administration and the politicians of both big-business parties that want to shift the cost of health care from the corporations and the government onto the backs of working people. The misnamed Affordable Care Act (ACA) was not a “bridge to universal health care” but a plan written by

the for-profit health care industry and a component part of it is to drastically increase the exploitation of health care workers, regardless of the dangers to patients and caregivers.

Third, the biggest obstacle to the full mobilization of the nurses has proven to be the Minnesota Nurses Association and the AFL-CIO and Change to Win labor federations. The unions are politically allied to the Obama administration and are only seeking to be “partners” in the restructuring of the health care industry. The MNA and National Nurses United are opposed to the expansion of the Allina strike because they are determined to prevent any struggle from interfering with their campaign to elect Hillary Clinton who will only intensify Obama's attack on health care and workers.

After mediated talks broke off last week, MNA Executive Director Rose Roach admitted that the union was prepared to surrender health care protections if Allina would make some cosmetic gesture that would help the MNA sell the rotten deal to its members. “If we could've achieved those simple ‘asks’ along with some staffing and workplace safety protections and monetary compensation for making such a huge concession, we could get a deal and avert the strike,” she wrote.

The fact is, however, that every concession made by the MNA—including the abandonment of two insurance plans shortly after the shutdown of the weeklong strike in June—only emboldened Allina. As for Obama's federal mediator—far from siding with the nurses, as the MNA claimed, the mediator has worked with the union to try to find a way to push management's dictates past rank-and-file nurses.

In the end, however, the determination of the nurses has forced the MNA to call a strike.

Allina nurses are taking a stand not just for themselves—they are fighting for all working people. If health care providers do not have the right to affordable health care, then who does?

Nurses face powerful enemies but have far more powerful allies—the working class in Minnesota, throughout the US and internationally.

To take their fight forward, however, nurses need a new strategy and leadership. The efforts of the MNA to divert this struggle into bankrupt appeals to Democratic state legislators, federal mediators and the “conscience” of Allina executives and US Bank officers must be rejected. Such stunts have only led to defeat after defeat.

Instead, nurses should elect rank-and-file strike committees to appeal to the 7,000 workers at other area hospitals for joint strike action. Delegations of striking nurses should be dispatched among construction, transit, postal and other sections of the working class to hold informational meetings, mass rallies and common actions. Workers who respond must set up solidarity committees to organize mass pickets against Allina’s strikebreaking plans, raise donations and ultimately bring together the struggles of all workers to defend the social right for high-quality health care for all.

The Socialist Equality Party and its presidential candidate Jerry White and vice presidential candidate Niles Niemuth demand that profit be taken out of medicine as part of a socialist reorganization of society. The SEP candidates pledge to provide striking nurses with every assistance possible to win their fight. The *World Socialist Web Site* will do everything to break through the lies of the corporate-controlled media, provide nurses with a voice to explain their struggle, and fight to mobilize the full strength of the working class behind this critical fight. We call on striking nurses to contact the SEP and the WSWs to discuss how to take this battle forward.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact