

Defeat MNA sellout!

Mobilize the working class behind the Minnesota nurses strike!

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Striking Allina nurses should oppose the capitulation of the Minnesota Nurses Association (MNA) and reject the latest Allina-MNA ultimatum with the contempt it deserves. The fact that the MNA-NNU officials could bring such a sellout agreement to a vote only underscores the need for rank-and-file nurses to take the conduct of the strike and negotiations into their own hands. Action committees, led by the most militant and self-sacrificing nurses, should be elected to spread the strike to all area hospitals and mobilize the widest support possible in the working class to defeat Allina's demands.

In a September 30 Bargaining Update, the MNA said that after weeks of federal mediated talks Allina had not budged from its takeaway demands, writing, “[D]ue to the unwillingness of Allina to make any further movement without additional concessions elsewhere, our Negotiation Team made the hard decision to take this contract offer to you for a vote.”

This is a novel approach. The company has refused to budge so therefore the strike will be shut down and we will surrender entirely to the company's demands! But rank-and-file nurses have not walked the picket lines and sacrificed a month's pay to capitulate to the hospital bosses and the corporate interests that stand behind them.

Is it any wonder that Allina has not budged given the impotent and destructive “strategy” that has been pursued by the MNA? First of all, the union refused to call out all area hospital workers even though they face the same struggle. Second, they subordinated the struggle to pathetic appeals to the corporate executives on Allina's board and to Democratic politicians, from Bernie Sanders to US Congressman Keith Ellison, who

pose as friends of workers while backing the corporate attack on the working class.

From the beginning, the MNA accepted Allina's main demand to abolish the long-standing union healthcare plans and replace them with its corporate plans by 2020. The MNA had only one real demand: that it be allowed to sit on a labor-management board to oversee the cost-cutting plan. Part of the deal includes: “An Insurance Committee will be created that will meet four times per year which will review health insurance information, costs, plan designs, issues and trends.”

The MNA and the rest of the trade unions are not opposed to workers paying more for inferior healthcare plans. The unions supported Obama's misnamed Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), which is aimed at shifting the costs of healthcare from employers and the government onto the backs of the working class. ACA is also predicated on a sharp increase in the exploitation of healthcare workers through higher nurse-patient workloads. A new labor-management committee will also be set up “to review, evaluate, and implement changes to Charge Nurse's patient assignments.”

While the MNA accepted management's demands, it was looking for something from management to help sell this deal. But management refused to throw out any of the bones the MNA was seeking, including a cynical \$500 signing bonus or any further contributions to defray the enormous increase in premiums nurses will have to pay.

The timing of the vote is no accident. With nurses losing their medical coverage on October 1, the MNA officials are using the increased economic pressure on nurses to push through this rotten deal. Predictably, the MNA is making no recommendation on the vote so it

can blame nurses if its blackmail operation is successful.

Throughout this entire experience the MNA has functioned in a thoroughly disloyal manner. In 2010, Allina and five other Twin Cities hospital chains attempted to take on all 12,000 nurses in the Twin Cities. Nurses were not the least bit cowed by management and voted for an open-ended strike by all nurses. After MNA leaders realized they were riding a tiger they quickly caved in.

By 2016, the corporate establishment devised a plan to separate the 4,800 Allina nurses from the 6,000 nurses at the other five hospitals. The MNA facilitated this strategy by quickly signing wage-only contracts with the other five hospitals while dropping nurses' demands over staffing issues. In June, the MNA sent nurses back to work after a week-long strike without a contract.

It was only forced to call an open-ended strike because of the resistance of rank-and-file nurses.

Well aware of the growing political radicalization of nurses and other sections of the working class, the MNA and NNU promoted the campaign of Bernie Sanders during the Democratic primary elections. The Sanders campaign, however, was a political trap aimed at channeling popular opposition to the two corporate controlled parties and the capitalist profit system behind the campaign of Hillary Clinton, a warmonger and the favored candidate of the "billionaire class" that runs America.

It is significant that Sanders is coming to Minneapolis and Duluth this week to campaign for Clinton, after the MNA organizes its vote on this sellout contract. Sanders is coming to Minnesota—long considered a safe Democratic state because millions of workers and youth know neither Clinton or Trump speak for them.

The Twin Cities nurses strike is the latest in a series of struggles that demonstrates the growing militancy and political radicalization of the working class, including last year's rebellion of autoworkers against the sellout contract pushed by the UAW, the sickout strikes by Detroit teachers and the walkout by nearly 40,000 Verizon workers. These battles in turn are part of a broader growth of working-class opposition, including mass strikes in China, India, France and Greece and the fight by Canadian autoworkers.

The Allina nurses confront determined enemies, from

the hospital bosses and the corporate and political forces behind them, to the company stooges in the MNA, NNU and the AFL-CIO. However, the striking nurses have far more powerful allies among the broad masses of working people. To win their just demands, nurses must reach out to the working class and fight for the broadest mobilization of workers and youth in the Twin Cities. This should be the beginning of a powerful political counter-offensive of the working class against the two big business parties and the capitalist system they defend.

The Socialist Equality Party and the *World Socialist Web Site* have from the beginning sought to warn nurses about the treachery of the MNA and the AFL-CIO, and explain the political significance of the unions' subordination of the working class to the big business Democratic Party. Our presidential candidate Jerry White has spoken with striking nurses and explained the SEP's fight to build a mass political movement of the working class that will fight for a socialist alternative to the capitalist system, including taking profit out of medicine and providing high-quality universal healthcare.

If this nurses' struggle is not to be defeated, everything depends on the initiative of rank-and-file nurses themselves. The SEP and the WSWWS will do everything possible to assist in this critical battle.



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