

Phoenix Amazon workers to teachers: “Keep fighting!”

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30 April 2018

The strike by thousands of teachers in Arizona is continuing into its third day today. Teachers are facing pressure from politicians, the media and the Arizona Education Association (AEA) to end the walkout before any of the underlying issues are resolved.

There is widespread support for teachers throughout the state, which must be organized and mobilized to fight to defend public education. A recent AP poll showed that 80 percent of Americans who heard of the teachers struggles across the country supported them.

Alyssa, a worker in Phoenix, had this message for teachers: “Please don’t quit! Do not quit on us, we need better schools. It shouldn’t have even gotten to the point of a strike, but if it had to come to this it’s good that you’re doing it now. This is about the entire country, we all need to step up our game. Our kids will be running the country one day, we might as well educate them.”

Republican Governor Doug Ducey announced a deal on Friday that he hopes will end the walkout. He is promising a 20 percent raise by 2020 and an inadequate \$370 million more in education spending by 2023. Currently the state’s education funding is roughly \$800 million per year below its 2008 levels. His proposal is essentially unchanged from what teachers rejected when they began the walkout. It depends for 85 percent of its funding on the Arizona economy booming over the next three years.

For its part, the AEA said that Monday was the last chance for the legislators to fix the situation. However, the union is making clear that it is working to shut down the strike regardless, saying that it will end the walkout and direct teachers into a campaign for a ballot initiative to raise school funding through a higher state income tax.

The AEA has invited American Federation of

Teachers President Randi Weingarten (yearly salary \$500,000) to speak at the rally on Monday. Weingarten is a longstanding proponent of “school reform” and opponent of teacher militancy. Weingarten had been called in to end the Detroit teachers sick-out in 2016, the strike of 33,000 West Virginia teachers in March, and the 12-day strike of graduate students at the University of Illinois.

In an opinion piece for the *Washington Post* last month, Weingarten warned that without the unions the “activism and political action” seen among West Virginia teachers “will be multiplied and magnified across the country.” That is, the aim of the AFT is to prevent strikes.

Teachers in Colorado, where over 10,000 rallied on Friday, are facing similar pressures. The Colorado Education Association is also trying to divert teachers into a ballot initiative for funding that leaves schools under the control of anti-public education legislators.

In opposition to all these forces, workers around Phoenix sounded a common refrain: “Keep Fighting.”

Reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke with Amazon workers coming off the afternoon shift.

Anitza, an Amazon worker, urged teachers: “Don’t stop!” She added, “All these negative comments you’re getting, it doesn’t matter. Without education we’ve got nothing. Teachers aren’t just fighting for their pay, they’re fighting for what they provide us. I remember growing up, a lot of teachers would buy supplies for us with their own money.”

“Not a lot of people are looking into being teachers anymore because they get paid so little, especially in our generation. None of us are thinking about being a teacher, they’re underappreciated. We know what they go through, we know how hard it can be, we were there. We put teachers through a lot, but we wouldn’t

be able to read without them!

“Right now they’re funding prisons, when they should be funding students and education and teachers.”

One Amazon worker expressed his hopes in the walkout: “If they win a raise with the strike, I think I’d want to become a teacher. I have two younger brothers still in school, and it would set a good example if I did something like that.”

Another employee who preferred to remain anonymous railed against the claim there was no money for education: “That’s a lie! How can there be no money for education when there’s so much for other stuff.” She pointed to the warehouse and said: “Bezos [the CEO of Amazon] became the richest man in the US because he’s not paying us enough. You can find so many people here who could rant about that.”



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