

Educators' struggle in US continues in aftermath of union betrayal in Arizona

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The wave of strikes and protests by educators in the United States is continuing. Just days after the Arizona Education Association (AEA) called off the strike by nearly 60,000 teachers in the southwestern US state, new struggles have emerged from California and Colorado to North and South Carolina.

More than 53,000 university service workers, nurses and other hospital workers began a three-day strike Monday at ten University of California (UC) campuses, medical centers and research labs across the state. The UC workers are demanding a six percent annual raise, a freeze on health care premiums and an end to the contracting out of jobs.

Also on Monday, 900 teachers in Pueblo, Colorado walked out to demand pay increases after working without a contract for more than a year. Less than two weeks ago, thousands of teachers in the state, which is run by the Democratic Party, carried out sickouts and rallied in the state capitol in Denver to demand improved wages and pensions and the restoration of a decade of school funding cuts.

On May 15, 30,000 school bus drivers, custodians, special education assistants, cafeteria workers and other support staff employed by the Los Angeles Unified School District are expected to launch a one-day strike in the second largest school district in the United States.

Thousands of teachers throughout North Carolina are expected to demonstrate on May 16 in Raleigh, as the state legislature begins its session. Teachers in neighboring South Carolina have called for a May 19 demonstration at the state capitol in Columbia to protest low pay, high class sizes, excessive testing and lack of preparation time.

Teachers are giving expression to a much broader oppositional sentiment among workers. Last Friday,

nearly 1,500 workers at Ford's Flat Rock Assembly plant, just south of Detroit, refused company demands that they resume production and walked out after a worker was trapped in machinery and severely injured. An incipient rebellion by rank-and-file workers is brewing against the United Auto Workers union, which functions as a cheap labor contractor and labor police force for management.

The growth of class struggle in the US is part of an international movement, which has seen mass demonstrations and strikes throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America this year.

In France, the week opened with continuing strikes by French workers at Air France and the state-run SNCF rail system. Fifty years since the revolutionary upheaval of May-June 1968, the clash between the French working class and the government of Emmanuel Macron, the "president of the rich," is intensifying. Last Friday, airline workers overwhelmingly rejected an insulting pay offer of 7 percent over four years. Macron's economy minister, Bruno Le Maire, responded to the vote by threatening workers with mass sackings.

These developments make clear that the strikes that have erupted so far this year are initial expressions of a powerful, objective social movement. The class struggle, artificially suppressed by the unions for decades, is erupting once again, decisively refuting all claims that the conflict between classes has been superseded by conflicts over race, gender and sexual orientation.

The resurgence of class struggle raises basic political issues for all workers. First, it has demonstrated the anti-working-class character of the organizations that call themselves unions, which in fact function as instruments of the corporations and the state. In the US,

every strike by teachers this year has been initiated by the workers, with the unions acting as strike-breakers called in to isolate the struggles in West Virginia, Oklahoma and Arizona and shut them down as quickly as possible.

The unions perform the same basic function in every country. In France, the unions have coordinated closely with the state in an attempt to suppress mounting opposition and have already agreed with the Macron government to enforce the policies demanded by the ruling class.

The growth of working-class resistance raises the necessity of organizing and coordinating these struggles not only within countries, but internationally.

New organizations of struggle, rank-and-file factory and work-site committees, must be built, independent of the corporatist unions, to unite workers and prepare an industrial counter-offensive, including a general strike.

Moreover, workers are entering into a struggle not just against one or another employer, but against the entire capitalist system and all of its political instruments. In the United States, the teachers' strikes are the product of the policies of successive Democratic and Republican administrations, from Bill Clinton and George Bush to Barack Obama and Donald Trump, which have funneled money from public schools to charter businesses and other for-profit schools.

This is part of a policy of social counterrevolution, bank bailouts and corporate tax cuts that has produced a massive redistribution of wealth from the working class to the corporate and financial elite. All over the world, the capitalist class is on the offensive, determined to preserve its social and economic system through the ever greater exploitation of the working class, the vast majority of the population.

The ruling class will not respond to workers' strikes and protests with a program of social reforms, but with state repression. This is seen in the moves by the government and tech giants like Google and Facebook to censor the Internet, in the first instance the *World Socialist Web Site* and its worker newsletters, which have become the center of working class opposition.

As David North, the chairman of the International Editorial Board of the WSWS, said in his opening remarks to the 2018 May Day International Online Rally sponsored by the International Committee of the

Fourth International, "The claims by decrepit reformists" like Bernie Sanders and Jeremy Corbyn "that the capitalist oligarchs can be persuaded with sweet phrases to accept a more equitable distribution of wealth is nothing less than delusional... There is no way to settle accounts with the class that owns and controls the means of production and the global financial networks, along with gigantic military machines, intelligence agencies and police forces except through socialist revolution."

Two hundred years after the birth of Marx, the principles of Marxism are being confirmed in the growth of the class struggle throughout the world. However, the Marxism of the 21st century, as the May Day rally expressed, is Trotskyism, embodied in the International Committee of the Fourth International. The ICFI is the only organization fighting on the basis of genuine Marxism and the program of world socialist revolution.

The urgent task is to develop in every section of the working class, in the United States and internationally, a socialist political leadership. We call on all workers and young people to draw the necessary conclusions from their experiences by joining and building the ICFI and its affiliated Socialist Equality Parties throughout the world.



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