

A reply to the communications director of the South Carolina Education Association

The WSWWS Teacher Newsletter
24 May 2018

The following letter was sent to the WSWWS by Skot Garrick, communications director for the South Carolina Education Association, in response to the article, "Teachers and public workers protest in South Carolina," published on May 21. It is followed by a reply from the WSWWS Teacher Newsletter.

As Communications Director for The South Carolina Education Association, I appreciate the advance coverage our May 19 mobilization received from your publication, and the subsequent write up by Hiram Lee. Thank you for taking note of what we are doing in SC on behalf of educators and state employees.

However, I must take extreme exception to an error near the end of the story. The story stated: Workers commented that the unions did nothing to promote the event in Columbia. One teacher told the WSWWS, "We didn't know about this ourselves until a few days ago. If it had been better promoted, I'm sure more people would have come."

It is completely false to state "the unions did nothing to promote the event." In terms of news coverage, the event had print and electronic coverage dating from the time the first press release went out on Thursday, May 10, before the first press release even went out and due to my advance conversations with contacts in the media.

Once the released [sic] went out, we received television coverage from [sic] Charleston on the coast to Greenville on the other end of the state for over one week. We were in print on television news on almost a daily basis throughout the state.

Further, I sent e-mail notifications on a regular basis, three times last week leading up to the event, to more than 30,000 recipients (each time), a mass phone texting to more than 8,500 recipients and posted numerous times on our social media. The event was

promoted in US News and World Report.

As I remember, your publication promoted the event. I am appalled and personally insulted by the accusation we did nothing to promote the event. Why didn't you reach out to us, to me as Communications Director, to verify that statement before publication? Please address this.

Mr. Garrick,

The *World Socialist Web Site* accurately reported what South Carolina teachers said during the May 19 rally at the state capitol in Columbia. You may not like the criticisms regarding the extent of the union's promotion of the rally, but these were made by the teachers themselves.

While you may be satisfied with the union's effort, it was not seen by teachers as sufficient. Similar criticisms were expressed on social media, including on the North Carolina Teachers United Facebook page, where one educator, responding to a photo of the Columbia rally, commented, "Wish there had been more advertising so we could've shown up in droves."

While you may take issue with teachers' assessment of the South Carolina Education Association's promotion of the rally, it is perfectly clear that the SCEA and its parent union, the National Education Association (NEA), are trying to prevent South Carolina teachers from joining the wave of teacher strikes and protests spreading across the country.

With South Carolina teachers using Facebook to organize opposition outside the union and the Kershaw County school superintendent recently warning of "large storm clouds gathering" in the form of a potential strike, the SCEA chose to hold the May 19 rally on a Saturday so there would be no disruption of school. It also made no effort to bring teachers from

North Carolina, where just three days before 20,000 educators had marched on the state capitol in Raleigh.

Instead, the small crowd at the Columbia rally was informed by officials from the York County Education Association, the Palmetto State Teachers Association and other local unions that nothing could be done to improve wages and school funding except campaigning for the election of Democrats and “pro-education” Republicans.

After betraying the strikes in West Virginia, Oklahoma and Arizona, the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers and their state affiliates are trying to prevent any further walkouts by diverting opposition behind their campaigns to elect Democrats in November. If teachers are demobilized, however, this will give the Trump administration and both big business parties a free hand to launch a counteroffensive against teachers and public education.

The WSWs will continue to alert teachers that the struggle for their social rights and the rights of the entire working class can only be taken forward independently of and in opposition to the strike-breaking unions and both corporate-controlled parties.

Sincerely,
Jerry White, on behalf of the WSWs *Teacher Newsletter*



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