

For a unified struggle of Oakland students and teachers to defend public education!

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality - Berkeley
23 February 2019

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the student and youth movement of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), expresses our utmost support for striking Oakland teachers. The strike, which began Thursday, is only the latest in a national and *global* explosion of teacher and working class struggle.

As a youth organization, composed of high schoolers, college students, and working class youth opposed to capitalism, the IYSSE supports and applauds the tens of thousands of teenage students in Oakland who have protested in solidarity with their striking teachers.

The fight to defend public education is a fight that will be conducted by teachers, students, and the entire working class. The interests of teachers and students are not opposed; they are the same.

For the past decade, following the financial collapse in 2008, public education has been the subject of a bipartisan onslaught. Democrats and Republican alike have repeatedly claimed that there is no money to fund schools, no money to fund teachers' salaries, health care or retirement, and no money to feed, clothe or shelter the millions of students who are hungry and even homeless in this country.

Democratic politicians like to posture as “pro-teacher,” but the reality is that they have passed budget after budget of cutbacks and austerity. What does education look like if its run by the Democratic Party? Look no further than the Oakland Unified School District. Run by Democrats on the state, municipal, and local level for decades, Oakland has some of the worst conditions in the country. Now, after years of sacrifice from teachers and students, dozens of new schools are on the chopping block.

The IYSSE unequivocally rejects the lie that there is no money for public education. There is, in fact, more

than enough money to fund quality public education at levels far beyond the present. However, these resources are monopolized by the ruling class. Vast sums lie locked in the hands of the financial-corporate elite and the military-intelligence complex. None of it will be given – we must fight to take it back.

This is why teachers across the country and the world have moved into struggle. In the past year, teachers have struck in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Arizona, Los Angeles, Washington, and Denver. Internationally, teachers have struck in Chiapas and Oaxaca (Mexico), Buenos Aires (Argentina), Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Amazonas and Sao Paulo (Brazil), Denmark, France, Scotland, and London. These strikes express a global movement of teachers to defend public education against the insatiable demands of the profit system.

These struggles are part of a broader upsurge of class struggle. The issues motivating teachers—the defense of social programs, the fight for jobs and health care, the fight for a future for the youth—are the same issues driving all sections of the working class to fight back.

The critical question now is whether this struggle remains isolated and local, each set of teachers on their own, or unites together in a state-wide, nation-wide, and, ultimately, international fight for public education.

If there is one lesson so far that is clear, it is that the unions, which present themselves as the representatives of teachers, are, in fact, enemies of the working class. Whether in Los Angeles or West Virginia, the teacher unions have done nothing to broaden the struggle across cities and states, and among different sections of the working class.

On the contrary, the unions have worked to limit the duration of the strikes, withheld strike pay from teachers, rushed the voting process, and presented new sell-out contracts as “wins.” Randi Weingarten, the

head of the American Federation of Teachers, makes at least half a million dollars a year. The unions speak for this highly privileged section of the upper middle class that support the capitalist system and are collaborating in the destruction of public education.

The IYSSE calls on teachers to take the struggle into their own hands: build rank-and-file committees to discuss how to *broaden* and *unify* the struggle, not shut it down. We call on students in Oakland to join us on the picket lines and get involved in the political fight to defend public education.

The question of the defense of public education is a question of the organization of society. Will it continue to be organized on the basis of profit, with the immense productive resources of the world economy subordinated to the interests of the corporate and financial elite? Or will it be democratically run by the working class on the basis of social need?

To fight for a society in which public education is a social right for all means to mobilize the working class as an independent political force, opposed to the Democrats and Republicans and the entire capitalist state, to fight for socialism.

The IYSSE will do everything it can to mobilize young people and students to fight with the working class, teachers and parents alike, to defend public education – our struggle is the same and we must unite to win.

To get involved in this fight, visit iysse.com.



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