

Vote “no” on sell-out agreement

Union pushes contract in effort to shut down Oakland teachers’ strike

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On Friday, the seventh day of the Oakland teachers’ strike, the Oakland Education Association (OEA) bargaining committee announced that they had concluded a Tentative Agreement (TA) with the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD).

The TA, which has now been made available to the membership, does nothing to defend public education or to prevent school closures and the drive toward privatization through charter schools. The OUSD, OEA and the media all immediately hailed the deal as “historic.” GO Public Schools, the leading proponents of charter schools in Oakland, also praised the deal, the surest indication that it represents an attack on teachers and public education.

The *World Socialist Web Site Teachers Newsletter* urges teachers to vote “no” on the agreement and organize independently of the union to coordinate a struggle to defend public education.

The deal is predicated on teachers accepting the district’s slashing of the education budget. When OEA President Keith Brown was asked by a reporter, “Does this agreement hinge on the board making cuts?” he replied, “Yes, there is a vote in which the district must reprioritize.” The vote to which Brown referenced was on the Friday afternoon agenda of the OUSD board and was scheduled to carry out \$30 million in cuts including to staffing and services.

In exchange for their consent in the attack on public education, the OEA secured a deal for a pay increase that does not keep pace with inflation and completely accepts the district’s slated closure of 24 public schools. Details of the contract include:

- Teachers will receive an 11 percent raise over four years. Oakland teachers are the poorest paid of any

major district in California. Inflation in the Bay Area is between 3 and 4 percent. The majority of the pay raise will not take place until 2021, with only a 2 percent raise slated for 2020. Teachers will be less able to afford living in Oakland at the end of their contract than they are now.

- The deal completely abandons the demand to prevent school closures. School Board president Aimee Eng has committed to recommend a non-binding resolution calling for a five-month pause in closures.

This will not save Roots International Academy, which has already been scheduled to be closed. Another 23 schools are on the chopping block, fully a third of all Oakland public schools. The deal concluded by the OEA means that OUSD can resume its program of closing public schools and opening charters at the beginning of the next school year.

- There is no moratorium on the creation of charter schools. The OEA claims that an advisory resolution to be voted on by the school board, which is stacked by supporters of the Broad Foundation and KIPP Charter Schools, will put a stop to charter schools.

- The deal promises a 3 percent bonus on ratification, but this is already more than offset by the wages which workers lost during the strike. Over the course of the seven-day strike, teachers already lost 3.8 percent of their annual salary while the union paid no strike benefits.

- The staffing ratios maintain the ratio of nurses at one for every 1,350 students. Some nurses currently have their duties split over five different school sites, leaving students with untrained staff to administer medication and handle injuries. Other service providers only receive minor caseload reductions spread out over

years.

- The deal trumpets class size reductions, but the majority of classes have only been reduced by a single student, the smallest possible reduction. For most schools, this class size reduction will not take place until 2021–22, three years from now.

For the second time this week, teachers picketed the school board meeting to keep them from voting on more than \$30 million in budget cuts. In the afternoon, shortly after the school board meeting was scheduled to begin, OEA President Brown arrived at the pickets and addressed the crowd, telling them to disperse, that there was a tentative agreement and they did not need to shut down the meeting any longer.

Angry over the threatened cuts, hundreds of teachers defied the union and maintained their blockade for hours, forcing the school board to once again postpone their cuts.

Nurses are particularly irate over the contract. The OEA had brought them out on stage during rallies over the past week, including yesterday’s rally. Now they find themselves completely abandoned by the proposed contract. They began chanting, “The contract must be chucked, the nurses have been f*cked.”

The deal is the product of a behind-the-scenes operation involving the OEA, the national teachers unions and the Democratic Party. In the run-up to the announcement of the TA, the OEA solicited the assistance of Democratic Party politicians in reaching an agreement to the same forces responsible for slashing the state’s education budget and attacking public education throughout the country.

The Oakland Rank-and-File Strike Committee, which has been established independently of the OEA, issued a statement following the release of the TA, declaring, that “it will only embolden Eli Broad and other billionaire privatizers to expand their war against teachers and public education across the country.

“That the OEA and CTA would bring back such a deal makes it clear that they are on the other side of [the] class war. That is why teachers must take the conduct of the strike out of the hands of the OEA and CTA and build the Oakland Rank-and-File Strike Committee, which will fight for what teachers and students need, not what the politicians and corporations say is affordable.”

The OEA has not yet announced the location and

time of a members meeting to vote on the contract. Dozens of teachers joined a call Friday night, led by the Oakland Rank-and-File Strike Committee, to organize opposition to the agreement.

Oakland teachers should campaign for a “no” vote within their school sites and networks across the district. The only way to address the systemic, international attack public education is through the organization of teachers in unity with the broader working class, independently of the unions, which have been the principal brake on the class struggle for decades.

The *WSWS Teacher Newsletter* urges all teachers and educators in Oakland to join the rank-and-file strike committee and to turn out to the broader working class, including teachers across the Bay Area facing the same attacks on their living and working conditions, to carry out a struggle to defend public education and all the social rights of the working class.



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