

“This is a sellout, a scheme by the OEA executives!”

Oakland teachers denounce agreement to end strike

Our reporters
4 March 2019

A team of *World Socialist Web Site* supporters campaigned outside of the Paramount Theater in downtown Oakland, California yesterday, where the Oakland Education Association (OEA) held a vote on a tentative agreement between the OEA and Oakland Unified School District (OUSD).

Though the OEA claims the vote passed, teachers expressed feelings of betrayal, disgust and anger at the so-called “historic agreement.”

“This is a sellout, a scheme put together by the CTA [California Teachers Association], the OEA executives, and members in the senior parts of the Democratic Party,” said Booker, an Oakland teacher.

“They told us to vote for Tony Thurmond, he’s the very person undermining this,” said Booker, referring to the California Superintendent of Public Instruction. Brought in by the OEA to help “negotiate,” Thurmond, a Democrat, voted last year for Assembly Bill 1840, which mandated that Oakland close public schools to service the repayment of its debt.

WSWS reporters quoted the OEA, which described the tentative agreement as a “historic victory.” Booker vigorously shook his head in disagreement and disgust.

“We need to develop rank-and-file committees. [These committees] should not only take control over policies going on in Sacramento but in Washington D.C. as well.”

The WSWS told Booker about the rank-and-file strike committee that had been formed, for which he expressed enthusiasm. Also, we noted that the OEA had banned two WSWS reporters, one an OUSD schoolteacher, from posting on OEA social media because of our popular posts opposing the contract.

“Exactly,” he said. “They talk about this being a

democratic process. Anyone trying to tell me that this is a democratic process is deluding themselves.”

Booker went on to emphasize that Oakland teachers needed to link up with port workers and shut down the port.

“There’s always money if you want to find money.”

The WSWS spoke to dozens more teachers, parents and families of teachers at the Paramount in Oakland. Those who expressed ambivalence about the contract did so not because they agreed with the contract, but because they were exhausted and confused about how to take the struggle forward. Following a week of no strike-pay, little to no communication and bogus rallies that excluded serious discussion, teachers expressed little faith in how the OEA would continue the strike.

One teacher noted, “I have a lot of uncertainty in the way this is going down.”

“It feels like they [the OEA] are saying ‘It’s great, vote, so we can be done.’ It feels like they are actually saying, ‘We want to stop doing this,’ instead of actually really fighting for what we teachers originally wanted.”

Urina, a member of the OUSD support staff, told the WSWS: “The youth have had no voice in this contract. OEA came to our student leaders and promised them to support them and not oppose these programs that they rely on [school programs trying to stop the school to prison pipeline].” She said, “The second they got what they [the OEA] wanted they walked out on our babies,” referring to how the new contract will allow budget cuts that will eliminate these programs.

“What happens in August?,” she continued. “[The OEA] is giving very shady language to make it seem like teachers are getting what they asked for, but if

teachers don't get together to really read it, they will get screwed over big time."

Dorina, a high school chemistry teacher told us, "Living in Oakland is really tough."

She added, "As a teacher, and considering that they are giving us only 11 percent over four years, this is not keeping up with inflation that's going on. It's [the contract] not realistic. In that sense."

She continued, that in the new contract, "nurses are not being provided for every school. As a high school teacher, there are at least 1,600 kids at my school, and the nurses are struggling to provide for students that need the care. So this puts me on the edge [of voting no]."

She continued, "I buy stuff from Safeway to do laboratories for the kids, and I don't think that's what First World chemistry class should look like. My lab hasn't been renovated since the 70s."

"How in the tech hub of the world am I teaching chemistry with no chemicals, and in a laboratory with no running water? It's ridiculous."

Liz, a rank-and-file teacher from San Francisco who has played an active role in supporting the strike, said that she and her colleagues are working to find rank-and-file leadership throughout the SF school system for a strike. Her message to Oakland teachers was, "Absolutely vote no."

She said, "There are a diversity of people out here who overall agree that this contract is not good, whether or not they vote no or yes." It's "this movement of opposition that needs to be capitalized on."

"Teachers need to show the union that they are running the show not them. Teachers need to fight like hell to stop school closures."

Two students, Israel and Ahn, showed up to support their teachers and urge a "no" vote. "Teachers deserve the world," Israel said, "but this contract is not even the bare minimum."



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact