

# Union betrayal ends three-week teacher strike in Hayward-Union City, California

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The 14-day strike by nearly 600 teachers in the New Haven Unified School District (NHUSD) in Hayward and Union City, California, has been shut down by the New Haven Teachers Association (NHTA). The union announced late Sunday that 60 percent of teachers voted in favor of the Tentative Agreement (TA), with 302 votes in favor out of a total of 502 cast by educators.

The terms of the agreement include a significant pay cut. Teachers lost roughly 7.7 percent of this year's pay during their 14 days on strike, which consumes more than the 4 percent raise and 2.5 percent bonus spread out over the two-year contract. One high school teacher calculated that without inflation the average teacher would come out with just \$400 more dollars in their pocket when the contract ends, but with inflation a net loss of \$6,691 over the two years.

The entire experience of the New Haven strike has exposed the anti-working-class character of the teachers' unions. Throughout the strike, the *World Socialist Web Site Teacher Newsletter* called upon teachers to form their own, independent rank-and-file strike committees, to take the conduct of the struggle into their own hands. Coming out of this betrayal, New Haven teachers must draw the necessary conclusions and work to build these committees for the struggles to come.

The NHTA, working under the leadership of the California Teachers Association (CTA), deliberately orchestrated the sellout of New Haven teachers. They timed the strike to take place after the P-2 ADA deadline when school districts report their daily attendance to receive state funding. Thus, the strike financially benefited the district while costing the average teacher over \$7,000 of their annual salary. Over the course of the strike, the NHTA continually

climbed down from its initial demands, acquiescing to the NHUSD managers at every turn. After first demanding a 20 percent raise over two years, along with a retention bonus and other demands, the union ultimately settled for a 4 percent raise over two years.

As with every other teachers' strike that has been betrayed by the unions, New Haven school officials have already threatened to fund teachers' miniscule pay raises through budget cuts, with at least \$8.6 million slated to be cut over the next two years. The district has already cut \$4 million from the budget over the last year, while increasing elementary class sizes from 25 to 30 and cutting teacher positions.

June, a science teacher, told the *WSWS Teacher Newsletter*, "I've only been teaching here a couple years but I'm one of this year's layoffs from the budget cuts. They're taking all my students and shuffling them to other classes, so class size is just going to go up. I was on the picket line every day of the strike but come Friday, I need to find a new job. The next two years they're planning on cutting even more so there's going to be other teachers leaving like me."

At the membership meeting on Sunday, NHTA leadership sought to browbeat teachers into voting for the contract, saying this was the best offer they could get, given the intransigence of the NHUSD officials at the bargaining table.

A New Haven teacher that supports the *WSWS Teacher Newsletter* informed us that the atmosphere inside the membership meeting was "one of indignation for the most part," on behalf of teachers. On the other side, the NHTA/CTA negotiations team cultivated a mood of "resignation and fear mongering," while "threatening that if we vote 'no' and don't go back we'll soon have to pay the district out of pocket." They repeatedly said that they "got the best deal possible."

The teacher noted that “the treatment of the retiring teachers is particularly galling.” As part of the contract, the NHTA agreed to enforce that retiring workers, whose pensions are calculated based on their final year of work, will have to work an additional 14 contract days over the summer to make up for their time on the picket lines.

New Haven teachers showed great resolve over the course of their struggle, the first strike in the history of the school district. They must draw the political lessons from this strike, above all the need to organize themselves independently of the teachers’ unions, which subordinate them to the Democratic Party and the capitalist system. A genuine fight to defend public education will require the independent mobilization of teachers and the entire working class, as part of a fight for socialism.

Reporters with the *WSWS Teacher Newsletter* spoke with teachers outside the ratification meeting, and distributed roughly 200 copies of our statement, “Reject NHTA sellout! Expand the strike to defend public education!” Having joined the picket lines at every school on multiple days throughout the strike, our reporters were well-received, with many teachers expressing support for our perspective, thanking us for exposing the role of the NHTA and CTA throughout the strike, and signing up to receive our email newsletter.

The majority of teachers that we spoke with expressed opposition to the TA, with one describing it as “devastating” and many saying they would vote “no.” Most of those that said they planned to vote “yes” said they were doing so out of exhaustion and financial stress from the strike, but many said they would read our leaflet before voting.

Also present at the ratification meeting were CTA officials, who attempted to isolate New Haven teachers from their fellow teachers in neighboring districts. One official came outside the meeting and repeatedly shouted, “Shame on you!” to three Bay Area teachers distributing the *WSWS Teacher Newsletter*, for being “outsiders” that were “interfering” in the local vote. She claimed that it was “deeply disrespectful” for teachers outside the district to present any position on the vote.

The real “outsider” in this situation, who was “interfering” in favor of the sellout contract, was the

CTA official herself. Throughout the wave of teacher strikes this year, the CTA has actively opposed any coordinated struggle between districts. Although the year began with San Francisco, Los Angeles, Oakland, New Haven, Fremont and other districts all out of contract, the CTA and local union leaderships insisted that no two districts should go on strike at the same time and that their demands needed to be contained within each local. The CTA went so far as to order Sacramento teachers to call off their one-day strike on May 22nd so it would not overlap with New Haven.

In sharp contrast, teachers in every district have emphasized the need for a broader struggle.

A special education teacher who wished to remain anonymous agreed that the contract is a sellout and that unions no longer represent the interests of teachers. He stated, “Teachers get nothing for their union dues, which makes me think I should stop paying those dues. Teachers lost more than \$7,000 in pay while on strike because there is no strike pay.”

The special education teacher commented, “I believe the union purposefully drew out the whole negotiating process so that teachers would suffer and finally give in to a sellout contract. There should be a statewide or nationwide teacher strike, because the issues we face are not just local.”

The *Teacher Newsletter* urges all New Haven teachers that agree with our perspective and the need to broaden the struggle for public education to contact us today, and to prepare for the coming battles over the summer and in the next school year.



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