

Oppose the betrayal of the Chicago teachers strike!

CTU moves to shut down strike without giving teachers right to vote on sellout contract

The WSWS Teacher Newsletter
1 November 2019

The Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) announced on Thursday that it is shutting down the 11-day strike, the longest in thirty years, and sending teachers back to work today before giving them the right to vote on a new contract.

In coordination with the administration of Democratic Mayor Lori Lightfoot, the CTU orchestrated a cynical ploy Thursday morning over make-up days for those lost due to the strike. Lightfoot announced at a press conference that there will be five additional school days added to the end of the year.

Since teachers were strung out on the picket lines without any strike pay, this will mean that most will lose more than \$2,000 in pay this year, entirely swallowing up the meager pay raise included in the contract for next year. In fact, not only will teachers have to work the additional days, but this will only compensate for less than half of the lost pay during the strike.

CTU is now launching a media campaign to portray its betrayal as a “victory” in order to justify the shutdown of the strike and compel teachers to believe the propaganda and not their own eyes.

The agreement adopted by the CTU House of Delegates Wednesday night, in a 364-242 vote, conforms entirely to the demands of Lightfoot, who has insisted from the beginning that there is “no money” to meet teachers’ demands for better pay, increased staffing, lower class sizes, and more prep time.

The contract includes wholly inadequate increases in the number of social workers and nurses over a five-year period. Most teachers will not see any increase in

prep time. It includes “aspirations” to reduce class sizes through a joint CPS-CTU review committee which controls funds and is to come up with remedies that it chooses where and how to apply.

Teachers know such promises to be worthless, as the district’s class sizes have continued to swell and existing state laws are routinely violated for special education classrooms.

A parent of a student in special education told the WSWS, “I feel terrible that many schools won’t be among those that get the improvements. Only some schools are going to over time. I am a special needs mother. My daughter’s classroom is oversized. I have been advocating for my kids since they were six years old, and I know for a fact that the kids are never, ever going to get the resources they require. They don’t have a social worker, and I don’t think my daughter’s school will be picked to be one of the schools with the needed resources.

“Bottom line: CPS doesn’t care for low income residents.”

Delegates spoke after the meeting to denounce the shameful and antidemocratic conduct of the vote on the tentative agreement. Teachers asking for information about their school’s delegate votes were told that no ballots were cast. Instead, delegates were told to stand and be counted. Some delegates reported that some were so angry they refused to participate. Four abstentions were officially noted.

The way that the strike is being shut down says everything about the character of the agreement. Teachers have been given no opportunity to study and

discuss a contract that will govern the next five years of their lives and the lives of their students.

Teachers speaking to the *WSWS Teacher Newsletter* voiced their opposition to the contract. Molly, an elementary teacher, said, “The union basically stopped communicating with us on Monday. There was no tele-townhall.

“On the last tele-townhall they laughed when someone asked about getting deferred back pay. The whole room of their conference room laughed at us. It was their fault we lost it in the first place.

“Our delegate asked us about prep time only. They made us vote [Wednesday] on whether we wanted to keep fighting solely based on prep time. And they made us write our answer next to our names on the sign-in sheet with our phone numbers and emails.”

The CTU and the city hope that the shutting down of the strike will remove any initiative that teachers have and create the conditions for pushing the agreement through. Teachers know, moreover, that if they reject the contract in votes being held over the next ten days and resume the strike, the CTU will not fight for anything better.

The outcome of the strike is in line with the way that the CTU has operated from the beginning. CTU President Jesse Sharkey declared at the onset that the strike would be “short-term,” a means of letting off steam as the CTU collaborated with the administration to reach an agreement along the lines demanded by Lightfoot.

The strike lasted as long as it did because the CTU felt it could not push through the agreement approved on Wednesday. With pressure building within the ruling class in Chicago to end the walkout, however, the CTU organized a maneuver to quickly shut it down.

Teachers should oppose the sellout of their strike. A real fight to defend and expand public education, however, cannot be subordinated to the CTU and its alliance with the Democratic Party, which no less than the Republicans has overseen a decades-long assault on public education.

Opposition to social inequality is growing among workers and young people across the United States and around the world. But the biggest obstacle to unifying workers are the pro-capitalist unions, whether it is the CTU or the United Auto Workers, which recently shut down the 40-day GM strike, accepting the closure of

plants and a vast proliferation of temporary labor.

A real fight by the working class is necessary to radically redistribute wealth to meet the needs of society instead of the corporate and financial elite. To fight for this, teachers and all workers must advance their own demands, which begin with what working people need, not what the corporations, big-business politicians and union officials say is affordable.

The *WSWS Teachers Newsletter* calls on teachers to form rank-and-file committees in every school. Organize meetings to carefully review the contract and plan opposition. Contact the *WSWS Teachers Newsletter* for assistance in organizing such committees and reaching out to other sections of the working class to prepare a joint struggle.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)