

Committee for Public Education in Australia supports the struggle of Chicago teachers

The Committee for Public Education (Australia)
4 February 2021

The Committee for Public Education (CFPE), a group of rank-and-file educators, school staff and academics in Australia, has issued two statements in support of Chicago teachers who are courageously opposing the Biden administration's homicidal policy of reopening schools amid the raging pandemic in the US.

The CFPE is raising the importance of the Chicago struggle widely among Australian educators, and has today published a series of supportive comments from teachers and students. This morning, educators at Footscray High, in Melbourne public school, met during recess to take a solidarity photo to send to the Chicago educators.

The following CFPE statements are being distributed widely via the organisation's newsletter and social media pages.

This statement was adopted by the CFPE's primary and high school division:

"The CFPE salutes the struggle of Chicago's teachers and educators who have refused to yield to the demands of the Biden administration and state authorities that they return to work under extremely unsafe and deadly conditions. Chicago educators are at the forefront of a rebellion that places human lives before profit, giving voice to the fight of millions of workers across the US and internationally to contain the pandemic and save lives

"In refusing to return to work and demanding the right to continue remote learning, Chicago educators are protecting not only their own health and safety, but that of students, and parents in school communities.

"Behind the lies and ferocious corporate media campaign claiming that schools are safe is the political establishment and the financial oligarchs of Wall Street, who oppose any obstacle to the continuous drive for profit.

"Any scientists, such as the courageous whistleblower Rebekah Jones, who are committed to the truth, know schools are not safe, but are a major spreader of the virus, as are all workplaces where social distancing is impossible and protective measures cannot be put in place. A recent study in the scientific journal, *Nature*, found that school closures actually reduced the incidence of COVID-19 by approximately 60 percent.

"Trump's homicidal policy of 'herd immunity' has been seamlessly adopted by the Biden administration, in alliance with the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) and the other education unions. Their homicidal aim is to herd teachers and students back into the schools, force parents back into the factories, and above all else head off a threatened teacher strike that would become a focal point of resistance for teachers and workers across the US and internationally.

"An urgent warning must go out to Chicago educators. A treacherous deal is being negotiated behind closed doors between the CTU, Chicago school authorities and Democratic Mayor Lightfoot. Reopening the schools while the pandemic is raging through the population is non-negotiable.

"We urge teachers, educators, parents and students to take matters into your own hands.

"Join the Chicago Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committees as part of a network of independent rank-and-file committees already established in New York, Michigan, Illinois, California, Texas, Alabama, Pennsylvania and Tennessee. Turn to workers in the warehouses, auto plants, and other workplaces who face the same deadly conditions and begin the fight to organise a general strike to shut schools and non-essential industries.

"The CFPE pledges to spread the news of your

determined and critical stand and fight for the formation of rank-and-file safety committees here, putting lives before profit.”

The following statement was unanimously adopted by a meeting of academics and other university workers in Australia, called by the CFPE on Wednesday:

“We fully support the courageous stand taken by Chicago teachers to refuse to return to face-to-face classes while the COVID-19 pandemic continues and to defy Democratic Mayor Lori Lightfoot’s threats of retaliation for opposing her back-to-classrooms order. Your struggle to defend your lives, and those of your students and communities, represents the interests of the entire working class, against the homicidal profit-driven policies of the corporate elite, which are now being implemented by the Biden administration.

“In Australia, the pandemic is not, at present, anywhere near as severe, but could resurge at any time. No less than anywhere around the world, the public health disaster caused by the government-corporate return to work drive is being exploited here to mount an historic offensive against the jobs and conditions of educators and all workers. Up to 90,000 jobs have been eliminated in Australia’s public universities in one year, and worse is to come. Like you, our fight against this onslaught has pitted us directly against the trade unions, which have sought to suppress all resistance to the dictates of the ruling class, and the political establishment as a whole, including the Labor Party.

“Like our fellow educators in the US and Europe, we are fighting for the formation of genuine rank-and-file committees, totally independent of the union apparatuses, that will take responsibility for reaching out to all sections of the working class for a unified struggle against the deadly capitalist order and for the socialist reorganisation of society on the basis of social need, not private profit.”



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