

Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee (UK) supports call for International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees

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The Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee (UK) met Saturday amid a massive global surge of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the average number of daily cases at their highest ever.

Tania Kent, the committee's chairperson and a special needs teacher, quoted from two *World Socialist Web Site* editorials of the previous week—"Three million dead from the coronavirus pandemic" and "India ravaged by COVID-19 pandemic - a global catastrophe"—to illustrate the unprecedented catastrophe facing the international working class. The pandemic was a global crisis that required a global solution, she explained.

Kent pointed to the timely character of the educators' meeting, taking place on the same day as the publication of a powerful statement issued by the International Committee of the Fourth International—"Forward to the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees!"

She said the call for an International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) being issued at this Saturday's International Online May Day Rally of the ICFI, was the logical extension of the fight by the ICFI and the Socialist Equality Parties worldwide for the formation of independent rank-and-file safety committees among key sections of the working class during the pandemic.

Concentrating her remarks on the role of the education unions, Kent quoted from the ICFI's statement: "While the corporatist degeneration of the unions and their complete integration into the framework of management and the state is perhaps most grotesque in the United States, the same conditions prevail in every country. There has not been

a single struggle waged by the unions against the ruling class policy of "herd immunity" and massive handouts to the rich."

She reviewed the criminal role of the trade unions in Britain, which had sabotaged the struggles of workers during the past year, resulting in the highest per head of population death toll from COVID-19 (in a country with a population higher than 20 million) in the world.

"Despite schools being officially recognised as a key vector for the transmission of the virus, resulting in over 80,000 additional deaths since they were reopened in September, the unions repeatedly opposed efforts by their members to keep schools closed," said Kent.

"How degenerate and moribund the trade unions have become was graphically exposed in the annual union conferences held over the Easter break by both the NASUWT and the NEU", with Conservative Education Secretary Gavin Williamson and Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer invited to speak: "There are no two people in the UK more closely associated with the drive to reopen schools."

Zac Corrigan, a writer for the *World Socialist Web Site* and a member of the Socialist Equality Party (US) spoke to the meeting from the state of Michigan in the United States.

Corrigan explained that Michigan has become the worst pandemic hotspot in the US, with the contagious B.1.1.7 variant (which originated in Britain) now rampant in every part of the state and with daily case rates above 70 per 100,000 for two weeks.

Schools in Michigan have accounted for more outbreaks than any other setting since the new surge began in late February, he said. Significantly, there was a sharp reduction in outbreaks at K-12 schools and

school sporting events (illustrated by Corrigan with the slide below) during and after the spring break, when schools across Michigan closed on either the last week of March or the first week of April on a district-by-district basis.

The Biden administration, Corrigan explained, had continued seamlessly from the policies of Trump, prioritising the interests of corporate America and allowing the pandemic to spread out of control.

Gregor Link from the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) spoke about the situation in Germany, “After politicians suggested that people should light candles in their windows to commemorate the dead, workers and youth replied on social media that government ministers should light the candles themselves, since they have the dead on their consciences.”

Link explained that Germany demonstrated the role of pseudo-left parties in enforcing the herd immunity policy of the ruling class, “At the state level, the Left Party is already implementing the profits before lives policy in partnership with the Social Democratic Party and Greens—in Thuringia their leader Bodo Ramelow is premier. The Left Party oversees a state-wide COVID-19 incidence of 246 in Thuringia, the highest of any German state.”

Frankie, from the IYSSE in the UK, spoke of conditions facing students as universities prepare to reopen. Authorities had consistently attempted to blame students for spreading the virus, to deflect from their own role.

Lucia, from the Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee, reported on the absence of safe ventilation in UK schools and the government’s deliberate breaching of safety rules.

A lively discussion ensued with international speakers asked about education funding, homelessness and poverty and what support is available for neuro-diverse (special educational needs) students.

In her concluding remarks, Kent returned to the immense social crisis facing the international working class, “Look at the horrendous situation in India, with the prospect of millions of deaths—and they know it, they acknowledge it, and they are allowing it to happen. We’ve seen poverty in India and other oppressed countries for a very long time, but even those acute situations are being exacerbated to intolerable levels.

There is no health system to protect the lives of these people. Thousands are dying daily, and we are just expected to say, ‘well that’s India, they don’t have better conditions and we do’. Well, that’s not true as the working class is facing social devastation the world over.

“The resources necessary do exist and our position fundamentally is that none of these questions can be resolved unless the working class takes control of the productive forces and all of the resources that exist are in the hands of workers to distribute wealth equally and in the interests of society.”

The meeting concluded with a call for all listeners to get involved in the work of the committee, to donate and attend the International Online May Day Rally of the ICFI, on Saturday May 1, 4pm British Summer Time (please check your time-zone here).



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