

End censorship of WSWS articles on Kaiser union social media!

The Kaiser Workers Rank-and-File Committee
1 December 2021

The Kaiser Workers Rank-and-File Committee calls for an immediate end to the censorship of *World Socialist Web Site* articles and authors on social media groups connected with the Kaiser Permanente health care unions. This banning of material from the WSWS is an attack on the democratic rights of all nurses, and represents nothing less than an attempt to suppress and intimidate growing opposition to the sellout contract which the unions announced after canceling our strike at the last minute.

Facebook administrators at several groups affiliated with the United Nurses Associations of California/Union of Healthcare Professionals (UNAC/UHCP) union have responded to the growing distribution of WSWS material analyzing the contract and calling for its rejection by banning articles and blocking rank-and-file nurse users. WSWS writer Katy Kinner was also banned from a public group.

Seeking to justify these acts of censorship, union page administrators assert that the WSWS's reporting is "full of inaccuracies" and "promotes conspiracy theories." To date, it has not provided a shred of evidence to justify these claims.

This is because it is not the WSWS which is lying about the contract, but the UNAC/UHCP. When it defied a 96 percent strike authorization vote and called off a strike by 32,000 workers in southern California, it justified its actions by claiming that it had reached a new tentative agreement that was "a very hard-won victory," in the words of Hal Ruddick, the executive director and chief negotiator for the umbrella Alliance of Healthcare Unions, with "wage increases and wage justice, major staffing improvements, and [the defeat of] two-tier."

The opposite is the case. This contract, the full details of which have been sent to the membership, contains

massive concessions. Here are the details of the agreement, which are freely available on the unions' own web site:

- **Wage increases of only 2 and 3 percent.** This is below even the inadequate 4 percent demand which the unions had told us they were fighting for. Worse, it is below the current inflation rate of 6.2 percent. If they were honest, they would be telling us that this "victory" means real wage cuts of between 3 and 4 percent a year.

- **No provisions for safe staffing.** The new TA only promises to build yet another labor-management staffing committee. They already have these, and they do nothing but provide union officials with the chance to rub elbows with management. Their real plans are to continue working us to the point of exhaustion. This is proven by the attendance bonus in the contract, which pressures us to work through illnesses instead of taking our allotted sick days.

- **Tens of millions of dollars in direct corporate funding to the unions.** According to the TA, Kaiser will fund the Labor Management Partnership (LMP) to the tune of no less than \$8 million per year and will hand another \$15 million to the Ben Hudnall Memorial Trust, a joint training program. No wonder the unions have declared "victory!"

- **Contract length extended to four years.** By lengthening the contract to four years instead of the usual three, Kaiser and the unions are trying to lock us into this subpar contract for as long as possible.

As for "conspiracy theories," it is indisputable that the unions have been conspiring with management to prevent a strike and force through this sellout. Their own actions prove it. If it were not the case, we would be on strike right now, as we had demanded.

Nearly two years into the pandemic, the nation's

hospital system is on the verge of collapse, with a new surge and the new Omicron variant on the way. But at the same time, there is a growing movement for strike action among workers across the country and even the world, and conditions have never been more favorable for us to push for our demands of adequate staffing levels and decent pay. The fact that, under these conditions, the union has called off a strike and is now using censorship and scare tactics to ram through a sellout defies any innocent explanation. It shows that the unions in the Alliance stand on the side of management, not us.

Throughout the country, other unions are playing the same role. At John Deere, the United Auto Workers shut down a strike by forcing workers to revote on a contract they had already rejected. The IATSE union, which covers 60,000 film production workers, also called off a strike and then “ratified” a contract which a majority of the membership rejected.

As health care professionals, our first obligation is to “do no harm.” A widely used modern version of the Hippocratic oath adds, “I will remember that I remain a member of society, with special obligations to all my fellow human beings, those sound of mind and body as well as the infirm.”

This is what we are fighting for above all—the provision of adequate public health resources to save lives and finally end the pandemic. The lies employed by the union, by the same token, would have deadly consequences. If this contract goes through, how many lives will be jeopardized because there will not be enough qualified nurses to treat patients as hospitals become overwhelmed with new surges of COVID?

This is why we have formed the Kaiser Workers Rank-and-File Committee, to fight for our demands against the betrayals of the union. We reiterate our demands from our earlier statement, and call on our fellow health care professionals not to accept any contract which does not contain the following:

- Adequate staffing levels must be set and enforced by nurses and health care workers themselves. The contract must have concrete and safe staffing ratios. In addition, there must be actual consequences set when safe staffing is not met during any given shift
- Annual 10 percent wage increases, together with cost-of-living increases to protect against inflation
- The elimination of all wage and benefit tiers, with

all workers brought to the top tier

- The enforcement of contractually mandated breaks
 - The immediate disbandment of the Labor Management Partnership and the requisition of its funds for the purpose of distributing strike pay to every striking worker

The unions in the Alliance want us to believe that there is nothing we can do to fight for these demands. There is. But it requires that we establish our own independent, organized initiative. This is why our co-workers should make the decision today to join the Kaiser Workers Rank-and-File Committee.



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact