

# Democratic Socialists of America provide cover for UAW and Democrats as they move to shut down University of California strike

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The United Auto Workers bureaucracy is moving rapidly to shut down the powerful strike by University of California workers after UAW Local 5810 reached a separate contract covering 12,000 postdoctoral workers and academic researchers. The union has ordered these workers to cross the picket lines of the remaining 36,000 striking graduate student teaching assistants, researchers and other workers beginning on Monday.

UAW officials have repeatedly said the strength of the walkout rested in it being a “a 48,000-strong strike.” Now, the union bureaucracy has stabbed the striking workers in the back by including a no-strike clause in the deal for postdocs and academic researchers, even though the vast majority do not want to cross the picket lines.

At the same time, Local 2865 and Student Researchers United (SRU-UAW) have caved into the University’s demands to bring in a private mediator to reach a settlement. This follows the bargainers’ dropping of the most central demands of remaining striking workers, including the doubling of starting wages for teaching assistants and cost-of-living protections.

There is also the danger that the UAW locals will shut down the strike as soon as they reach tentative agreements. This is exactly what the UAW bureaucracy did to end the powerful strike at the New School by 1,300 part-time faculty.

There is enormous opposition to this betrayal and increasing support for the formation of a rank-and-file strike committee to take the conduct of the struggle out of the hands of the UAW bureaucracy, which has colluded with the state Democrats who control the UC Board of Regents, the governor’s mansion and both houses of the state legislature in Sacramento.

Under these conditions, the Democratic Socialists of America is working overtime to cover up the role of the UAW bureaucracy, Governor Gavin Newsom and the Democratic Party.

Last week, UAW local officials organized the occupation of the UC Office of the President (UCOP) in Sacramento. This followed a larger demonstration in the state capital by the UAW and DSA to “demand CA officials pressure UCOP to bargain fairly.” As part of the protest, the DSA issued a petition and letter writing campaign to demand that Democratic Governor “Gavin Newsom intervene and let the Board of Regents know that he will not tolerate unfair labor practices in our state!”

The petition, which was promoted by various chapters of the DSA’s youth movement, was farcical at best. Newsom is a pro-corporate politician whose family ties to the California elite, including the heirs of the Getty (oil), Pritzker (hotels) and Fisher (fashion) fortunes, go back generations. Newsom’s hostility to the working class has been demonstrated again and again, including his sanctioning of the police assault on UC graduate student workers during the 2020 wildcat strike.

The petition is an attempt to portray Newsom as some sort of neutral arbiter, open to pressuring the pro-corporate board of trustees, which has been spearheading the attack on UC academic workers. The DSA’s statements are dishonest, as they omit the central fact that Newsom is *himself a UC Regent officer*, along with his lieutenant governor and state superintendent of instruction. On top of that, Newsom and his Democratic predecessor, Jerry Brown, appointed 15 of the 17 current regents to the board.

Newsom will not be moved to support the UC strikers through a petition since he is leading the attack on the UC workers.

There is no doubt that the UAW bureaucracy has been in constant contact with the governor and other leading state Democrats to contain and defeat the strike. Newsom has made it clear and the UAW bureaucrats have agreed that no deal will be allowed that challenges the austerity limits set by the corporate-controlled Democrats. The Democrats and labor bureaucracy fear that a victorious struggle by UC

students would encourage and inspire far broader sections of workers, including Los Angeles teachers, West Coast dockers and railroad workers, to strike for inflation-busting wage increases and other gains.

In a further attempt to shore up the Democratic Party and the UAW bureaucracy, *Jacobin*, the semi-official publication of the DSA, published its third article on the nearly month-long UC strike last Friday. The article by Michael G. Vann—a Sacramento State University professor—is forced to recognize that “COLA is at the center of this strike,” but tellingly avoids any reference to the fact that the UAW bargaining teams have completely dropped the demand for COLA or the fact that members of Local 5810 voted on contracts that did not include COLA.

Echoing the line of the DSA, Vann proceeds to glorify the UCOP occupation. Opposed to even minor criticisms of Newsom, the article avoids even mentioning the governor, instead promoting the “pro-labor” California State Assembly members for signing a toothless letter appealing to the UC administration to bargain in good faith.

The statements by Vann and the DSA serve overtly to disorient strikers by promoting the illusion that some “progressive” section of the Democratic Party will intervene on the side of the workers.

But the class character of the Democratic Party and its so-called “progressive” wing was on full display earlier this month when the US Congress and the Biden administration prevented a strike by 120,000 railroad workers and imposed a government-brokered contract that had previously been rejected. The dictatorial measure was passed on bipartisan lines, with DSA members Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Cori Bush and Jamaal Bowman all voting in favor of legislation to outlaw a railroad strike and impose the deal, and DSA-supported Senator Bernie Sanders enabling the strike ban to become law under an expedited procedure that any individual senator could block.

Within the week, the DSA demand for Newsom to speak out was realized in his nomination of Darrell Steinberg—the current Democratic mayor of Sacramento—as an independent mediator to intervene in the UC strike. In response to this news, the UAW bargaining teams sent out a statement, which said in part, “The BTs met to discuss this just now, and we feel that he’s a really favorable mediator, and paired with the fact that the Governor wants him to do it, this is probably our best shot at getting someone we like in the role. The teams voted unanimously to take him up on his offer, and we’ll be reaching out to the UC to recommend his name.”

Far from being “independent” of the UC administration, Steinberg is a member of the advisory board of the UC Davis Chancellor’s office.

The railroad unions also promoted Biden’s Presidential Emergency Board (PEB) as a so-called “independent” force, which would supposedly bring a favorable contract back for workers to vote on. In fact, the PEB lined up entirely on the side of the railroad companies and their billionaire owners, proposing a contract without a single sick day and below-inflation-rate raises. This was the basis for the tentative agreements the unions tried—and failed—to ram down the throats of workers, leading Congress and the White House to impose them by dictatorial fiat.

The DSA is a faction of the Democratic Party whose pseudo-left politics have nothing whatsoever to do with the fight for socialism and the defense of the democratic and social rights of the working class. The organization is a staunch supporter of the US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, as shown by its 24-hour revocation of the letter calling for negotiations to end the conflict.

The DSA does not speak for or represent the working class. On the contrary, it speaks for a privileged section of the upper-middle class whose income is derived from the exploitation of the working class. It supports the UAW bureaucracy not despite its betrayals of workers, but because of them.

While Mack Trucks worker and socialist candidate for UAW president Will Lehman campaigned for the abolition of the UAW apparatus and the transfer of power to the rank and file, the DSA-backed Unite All Workers for Democracy (UAWD) is being incorporated into the highest levels of the UAW apparatus.

UC strikers must draw critical lessons on the role of the Democratic Party, the UAW bureaucracy and its apologists in the DSA. Appeals to Newsom and the “independent” mediator are designed to block strikers from taking the conduct of the struggle into their own hands and spearheading an industrial and political counteroffensive against both big business parties and the capitalist system, which has nothing to offer but social inequality, dictatorship and war.

But this is exactly what is necessary. That is why UC workers should join and build the UC Rank-and-File Strike Committee.



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