The way forward for the strike by 65,000 Los Angeles school workers

West Coast Educators Rank and File Safety Committee
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The following statement is being distributed by members and supporters of the West Coast Educators Rank-and-File Committee at a rally today in Los Angeles. To join the committee, email ?wcedrankandfile@gmail.com or text (619) 431-0643?. Alternatively, fill out the form at the bottom of this page.

The strike by 65,000 public teachers and school workers in Los Angeles beginning Tuesday is a major offensive by the working class. It is the largest strike in the United States by number of workers involved since the North Carolina teachers strike in 2019.

Los Angeles workers and educators are fighting against intolerable conditions. The average school worker in the Service Employees International Union makes less than $28,000 per year, leaving them unable to afford rent in Los Angeles County. According to one survey by the union, one in three district workers have either been homeless or at high risk of becoming homeless while working at the Los Angeles Unified School District. These conditions have only been made worse under conditions of rampant inflation, as well as the continuing spread of COVID.

There is enormous support for a determined offensive against endless austerity and attacks on public education. In spite of hostile coverage by the corporate media, 80 percent of LA parents say they support the strike.

Workers at LAUSD are taking their place in a global movement of the working class. Massive strike waves are erupting in Britain, Germany, France, Greece and Sri Lanka against austerity and poverty conditions. Last week, 50,000 teachers held a one-day strike in New Zealand. In the United States, workers are also beginning to move, including the strike by 48,000 graduate students at the University of California last year. Hundreds of thousands of workers at UPS and in the auto industry are pressing for strike action when their contracts expire later this year.

This movement is developing into a direct confrontation with pro-corporate governments that have refused to give up even the slightest concessions, responding instead by ripping up democratic rights. There is “no money,” it is claimed, for decent wages and working conditions, but trillions of dollars are being poured into war. In France last week, President Emmanuel Macron, who also is raising military spending by €118 billion over six years, imposed a cut in pensions and an increase in the retirement age in the face of opposition from three-quarters of the population and without even a vote in parliament.

In the US, Democrats and Republicans—including three members of the Democratic Socialists of America—joined forces last December to ban a national rail strike. This defense of relentless cost-cutting by the railroads continued with their coverup of the derailment and toxic chemical spill in East Palestine, Ohio earlier this year. The White House also wants no opposition from workers because this would upset the plans for war against Russia and China, for which it has laid out the largest military budget in history.

Having launched the strike, workers now confront the need to mobilize independently in order to expand their struggle and appeal for the widest possible unity and support from workers throughout the city and the world.

LAUSD workers and teachers are not only in conflict with both parties and the LAUSD administration, but with the corrupt, pro-corporate trade union bureaucracy in the United Teachers of Los Angeles and SEIU Local 99. Every major strike, or even push by workers for strike action, has collided with the opposition of the

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apparatus, which is determined to prevent a struggle and force through concessions.

That the strike has been called at all shows that the anger and opposition has become so explosive that the apparatus feared that it was losing control of the situation. The UTLA has already kept teachers on the job for 8 months with an expired contract. For SEIU and support workers, it has been three years. They are limiting the strike to only three days, and even then have only called an Unfair Labor Practices (ULP) strike, in order to try to prevent workers from raising economic demands. Finally, workers will not see a single cent of strike pay, as was the case in the 2019 LA teachers strike.

The union officials demand that the LAUSD bargain in "good faith," but they themselves have worked hand in glove with the school district to carry out one betrayal after another. This includes the shutdown of the last strike in 2019, without any of teachers' demands on class sizes or other issues having been met. Worst of all was the unions officials' role in the premature reopening of schools in the middle of the pandemic. The cost of this policy can be measured in human lives.

The union bureaucracy is virtually a component part of the Democratic Party, the same party that is carrying out austerity in Los Angeles and other major cities, including the promotion of charter schools in Los Angeles and other pro-business school "reforms." American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten, who makes $500,000 a year off of teachers' dues money, is a top political operative for the Democrats, who spent "15 hours a day," according to the *New York Times*, trying to reopen schools against teachers' opposition.

The Biden administration's "pro-labor policy"—in reality, its pro-bureaucracy policy—builds upon these corrupt ties. Biden is using their services to try to prevent strikes and limit wage increases. In Los Angeles and other major port cities on the West Coast, he has worked with the ILWU to keep 22,000 dockworkers on the job since last summer. He also worked with the rail union bureaucrats to delay a strike and buy Congress time until after the midterms to ban it.

School workers and teachers must act to avoid another sellout!

This requires that workers take democratic control over their own struggle through the formation of independent, rank-and-file strike committees that can expand the struggle and activate the support of the entire working class. Composed of teachers and educators, these committees will serve as the means through which they can formulate their own demands and organize actions to take the initiative out of the hands of the apparatus.

Committees in every school should discuss and formulate other demands as the basis for the strike. West Coast Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee proposes that these include:

- A 100 percent wage increase plus cost-of-living adjustments to make up for inflation;
- The hiring of more teachers and support staff. Staff members should be dedicated to individual campuses rather than "roaming" between multiple sites every day;
- The transfer of all part-time workers to full-time.
- Educators' control over COVID and other safety issues, including the right to shut down schools in the event of a COVID outbreak.

The strike cannot be limited to only three days, but must continue until all these demands are met, with full strike pay paid out of the billions of dollars in combined assets of the AFT and SEIU. Meanwhile, the rank-and-file must have control over bargaining, which must also be live-streamed to keep concessions from being worked out behind closed doors.

If you agree with this program, contact us today to help fight for it. Email us at wcedrankandfile@gmail.com or call or text (619) 431-0643?.

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