

SEP/IYSSE online public meeting: The way forward for striking university workers in Sri Lanka

Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka)
7 June 2024

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka will hold an online public meeting on June 14, at 7 p.m. via Zoom, to discuss the way forward for the university non-academic workers' strike, which has come to an impasse. Click here to register.

The Non-Academic Trade Union Collective (NATUC), an umbrella organisation of unions covering non-academic university employees, earlier this week met with State Minister of Higher Education Suren Raghavan. While the talks are reported to have ended inconclusively, the striking workers have not been told what was discussed.

Nearly 13,000 non-academic employees from the country's 17 state universities have been on an indefinite strike since May 2 to demand a 25 percent increase in the monthly compensation allowance (MCA) and a 15 percent pay rise to eliminate "salary anomalies." Forced to call the strike due to growing pressure from rank-and-file members, the union leadership is desperately seeking a face-saving "promise" from the government. This would be used to call off all industrial action as quickly as possible.

The government has made its stance clear. On May 28, government minister and cabinet spokesperson Bandula Gunawardena declared that President Ranil Wickremesinghe had said that the government had insufficient funds to rectify salary anomalies this year. The government would instead appoint a committee to look into workers' demands.

Echoing ruling elite demands for a crackdown on the strike, the main print media has published articles slandering workers and accusing them of sabotaging

the education of university students. Notwithstanding its crocodile tears for the students, the media is silent on the role of successive governments that are responsible for deteriorating conditions in the universities as a direct result of budget cuts.

Under these conditions, striking non-academic workers can not have any faith in the union leaders. They need to take matters into their own hands by establishing their own action committees independent of the union bureaucracies and all parties of the capitalist political establishment. Through these committees, workers can democratically discuss and decide on their demands and how to conduct a struggle for them.

Non-academic workers need to unite in a common fight with their class brothers and sisters in other sectors throughout the island. This must include other public sector workers now facing severe attacks on their jobs, salaries and working conditions as part of the brutal austerity measures being imposed by the Wickremesinghe government under the dictates of the International Monetary Fund.

The SEP/IYSSE meeting will discuss in detail the program and perspective workers need to adopt for this struggle.

We invite non-academic workers, university students, academics and workers from other sectors to attend this important meeting and join the discussion on how to fight the government's savage attacks.

Date and time: Friday, June 14, 7 p.m.
Register through the following link:

https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMrfu2gpjMsHNTsx_9SN-sooWdau9IvP92g



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact