Teachers union executives maintain alliance with Zionist Anti-Defamation League

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The July 2-6 Representative Assembly of the National Education Association (NEA), held in Portland, Oregon, passed a resolution calling for breaking off the "partnership" between the union and the Zionist Anti-Defamation League (ADL). The NEA, is, alongside the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), one of two major educators' unions and is the largest trade union in the United States, with over 3 million members.

Within a week, the nine-member Executive Committee of the NEA quashed the resolution and maintained the status quo: educators in the NEA are to allow the right-wing, pro-genocide ADL to continue to implement its curriculum in schools and to sanction the ADL's dishonest practice of posing as a legitimate civil rights organization to young people and their educators.

The NEA leadership's action was entirely predictable. The flouting of the will of the membership is the rule, not the exception, and educators have repeatedly paid the price in jobs, wages and benefits – and in support for genocidal and warmongering governments.

If educators want to expel the ADL from schools, let alone stop the mass murder in Gaza, they will have to break politically from the wealthy functionaries who call the shots in the unions and form new, independent organizations of struggle. It was entirely legitimate to pass a motion to break with the ADL, but such a move must be part of a struggle to expose and abolish the pro-imperialist union bureaucracy.

The resolution, moved by Educators for Palestine, an officially recognized caucus in the NEA, read:

"NEA will not use, endorse, or publicize any materials from the Anti-Defamation league (ADL), such as its curricular materials or statistics. NEA will not participate in ADL programs or publicize the ADL's professional development offerings."

Educators have been encouraged and often required by administrators to cooperate with this organization, which equates anti-Zionism with antisemitism and implicitly associates Zionism with opposition to bullying, bigotry and racism.

The opposite is, in fact, the case. This is the organization whose CEO, Jonathan Greenblatt, said last year that students protesting the genocide were "acting like members of ISIS and Al Qaeda," and compared the keffiyeh, the traditional Palestinian national scarf worn by millions to show their support for the Palestinian people, with the Nazi swastika.

But in a cowardly and lying statement, President Becky Pringle told NEA members: "After consideration, it was determined that this proposal would not further NEA's commitment to academic freedom, our membership, or our goals… There is no doubt that antisemitism is on the rise. Without equivocation, NEA stands strongly against antisemitism. We always have and we always will. Our Jewish students and educators deserve nothing less."

The Executive Committee was echoing the propaganda promoted for months by the Democratic and Republican politicians, campus and school administrators, and the corporate media that the protests against the Gaza genocide can be equated with antisemitism.

This type of anti-working class reaction is not a new role for the union bureaucracy. NEA President Pringle, a long-time NEA bureaucrat, began her term as president in 2020 by working closely with American Federation of Teachers (AFT) President Randi Weingarten to implement the Biden administration's deadly program of opening the schools at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, Pringle claimed that schools could be opened safely with proper mitigation measures, which were never put in place, leading to the Omicron COVID surge and the prevalence of respiratory diseases among teachers and children.

Along with the bureaucracy of the AFT, the NEA spends millions of dollars on Democratic Party candidates who support the arming of the Zionist state and justify every heinous action it carries out. This includes Joe Biden in 2016 and Kamala Harris in 2024 (to whose campaign the NEA contributed at least $3 million), both responsible for material support to the Zionist regime.

The specific role that the Zionist ADL—also closely associated for decades with the Democratic Party—plays for the ruling class in the schools is to present itself as a civil rights organization that fights for "justice and fair treatment for all." Its flagship "No Place for Hate" educational program has developed a curriculum that has lessons on how to "recognize and understand the multiple dimensions and complexity of identity" and "understand how hate can escalate when biased

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attitudes go unchecked."

Each year it publishes widely cited figures on antisemitic incidents in the United States, which, notoriously, conflate real antisemitic acts again Jews with entirely legitimate protest against the state of Israel. The ADL is well known for working with police departments across the United States, including by giving police chiefs and their staffs counter-terrorism training.

Because of the opposition of many educators to Israel's brutal oppression of the Palestinians, the union has been forced to verbally oppose Israel's military actions in Gaza. Last year, the NEA committed itself to nothing when it signed, along with six other major American trade unions, an open letter to the Biden White House requesting that it cut off military assistance to Israel shortly before Netanyahu's notorious appearance before Congress.

The resolution ignored the call of the Palestine Confederation of Trade Unions for an embargo on the shipment of weapons to Israel and did nothing to distance itself from the Biden administration and the Democratic Party, the quartermasters of the genocide in Palestine.

The NEA Executive Committee is, like the rest of the trade union bureaucracy, an agency of the capitalist state and American imperialism. Inseparably connected to this is the role it plays in the class struggle as labor cop, seeking to prevent, shut down, and isolate strikes, as it has demonstrated many times, from the 2019 West Virginia strikes to sellouts by the MTA last year, to the recent maneuver of the California Teachers Association's "We Can't Wait" campaign.

The membership of the AFT was able to pressure Randi Weingarten into calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, something well within the bounds of Democratic Party rhetoric and essentially meaningless. She will do any job for the State Department, no matter how dirty, such as meeting with and providing moral cover for the political descendants in Ukraine of the last genocide in Europe. Her function, like Becky Pringle's, is to suppress the class struggle and, along with the AFL-CIO bureaucrats, develop a war economy and supply the most essential product for war: youth to man armaments production and the military.

The response of the Educators for Palestine to the quashing of the resolution by the bureaucracy has been to wag its finger and state: "Succumbing to pressure put on the NEA by outside, right-wing groups like the ADL harms union power."

This is a cover-up for the character and role of the NEA bureaucracy. In quashing the resolution, it is not succumbing to outside pressure from the right-wing ADL, it is carrying out its essential role as an anti-working class, right-wing agency of US imperialism and the capitalist ruling class.

That role is bound up with its support for the Democratic Party, a party of US imperialism and its military-intelligence establishment. The Educators for Palestine caucus does not say this because it has its own alliances with the Democratic Party and sections of the union bureaucracy through leaders linked to pro-Democratic Party pseudo-left organizations and local unions.

Of the two main spokespeople of the group, one, Judy Greenspan, is affiliated with the neo-Stalinist Workers World Party, which has long provided cover for the Democrats, and the other, Merrie Najimy, was president of the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) from 2018 to 2022. Under her watch, the MTA endorsed dozens of Democratic politicians, including Maura Healy for governor, whom Najimy stated would "make public education... a top priority."

Another figure closely associated with the group, Jesse Hagopian, edits *Rethinking Schools*, a journal devoted to "social justice unionism," which extols the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), run by the DSA. The CTU is now in the process of enforcing school closings and teacher layoffs in alliance with Mayor Brandon Johnson, a former functionary of the CTU who uses the term "genocidal" but unleashes the Chicago police against anti-genocide protesters.

The pseudo-left performs an essential role for American imperialism. It makes the claim—and this is the use to which the NEA resolution against the ADL has been put—that the union bureaucracy can be reformed and pushed to the left.

Only one alternative is open to NEA members who want to break ties with the ADL, stop the genocide in Gaza, and call a halt to the militarization of education: that is to form independent rank-and-file committees working for the abolition of the union bureaucracy and organizing action themselves, without the permission of the bureaucrats.

These committees can and must appeal to the only force that can stop the genocide: the international working class. Educators' rank-and-file committees must send delegations to the docks to encourage workers to embargo shipments to Israel, and to factories to mobilize workers to stop the production of armaments. They must organize independently of and against both big business parties to abolish the very system that gives rise to wars and dictatorship, helping to develop a mass movement to expropriate the capitalist oligarchy's wealth and provide massive funding for education, affordable housing, healthcare, and decent jobs.

Every NEA member who wants to take this program forward should contact the Educators Rank-and-File Committee.

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