

Not Taking This, Laying Down Or No how!: The Colorado Grocery Workers' Road to Class Struggle Self-Defense



Colorado Grocery Workers Would Like to Wage Class Struggle to Point the Way Forward For Other Colorado Workers

The Safeway and King Soopers employees, members of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local Union 7R Colorado, have been facing vicious attacks from every possible angle since new contract negotiations started in early May. Workers have been attacked by the corporation, which threatens to lock them out. The corporation has said that it has a scab army to replace the union membership if they strike. The attack is continued by Governor Bill Ritter who, since he was elected, has vetoed a number of labor bills and turned his back completely on struggling workers. Along with this the media, particularly the *Denver Post*, have published articles meant

to demoralize our struggling brothers and sisters in the UFCW, and has tried to turn the grocery workers against each other. The workers' democratic wishes have time and time again been betrayed by the International UFCW bureaucracy and the privileged elite of local 7R. Workers must organize for a fighting union leadership and be an example to all those unemployed and exploited workers who suffer at the hands of this rotten capitalist system.

The Safeway and King Soopers corporations fail to recognize the workers "contribution to company profits,"(1) and they continue to spit on the hands that feed them. The workers of these corporations in fact are the ones producing all of the profit for these ungrateful CEOs, so the real question is: How have they contributed to workers' security, and how can they do this while at the same time attacking workers' pensions??

The UFCW 7R website reveals the 2008 earnings of both the CEOs of Kroger/King Soopers as well as for Safeway. David Dillion, the CEO of Kroger, made \$8,031,721, while the CEO of Safeway, Steven Burd, earned \$10,959,400. Both have voiced their opti-

mistic outlooks on the economy because both are profiting off the banks' recession. According to *Fortune 500's* rankings of the most profitable corporations in the U.S., Safeway ranks at 50, while Kroger (King Soopers) ranks at 22.(2) The Safeway and King Soopers workers must unite because their interests are intertwined. As the corporations team up and plan the best way to crush the workers' movement one by one, it is necessary for the rank-and-file grocery workers to unite and create workers' democratic committees to truly represent the will of the members as well as their families.

Local 7R members know far too well the treacherous consequences of a divided union and united corporations. The grocery workers are being demoralized by the treacherous business union leadership, which drags out negotiations instead of acting on behalf of the workers' expressed and voted wishes. While this happens, the members are being attacked by the right wing media and especially their own corporations, which threaten them and their families with an unhealthy pension plan and statements that threaten a lockout.

The corporations say that if Safeway strikes, then King Soopers will lock out its workers, and vice-versa. This happened in 1996, and is a successful tool to divide the union membership. As workers, we should all stand up and say "NO to your lockouts! We will lock YOU out because we are the ones who pay for your luxuries. We are the ones who make your profits. We are the ones who suffer for your greed. We are the producers and the progressive class, and we base our interests on one another and not for

profit. We want security, and we will fight for it!"

Bill Ritter, an Enemy of the Workers

As current law stands in Colorado, when a union strikes at one grocery chain, the other grocery chain, which is also unionized, can lock out its workers; the locked out workers cannot collect unemployment even though their corporation forcibly locked them out. Governor Bill Ritter vetoed House Bill 1170 in May. This bill would have made it possible for locked out workers to collect unemployment after their despotic corporation locked them out. In regard to Ritter's veto, he writes, "I believe it is ill-advised and counterproductive to enact legislation that materially impacts the relative bargaining position of parties in the midst of ongoing negotiations." This gross accusation proves to the world Ritter's spineless disregard for working families. It's just another classic example of the Democrats' dealings with unions. While the six-figure-earning union bureaucracy props up Democratic candidates with the membership's PAC check-off, working families are left in the cold due to the business dealings of the Democrats and their union bureaucrat lackeys.

The UFCW's Hypocritical Leadership

On October 6, 2009, the UFCW union leadership once again betrayed their very patient membership. It is the second time in five months that the UFCW Local 7R

grocery workers of King Soopers and Safeway voted overwhelmingly to authorize a strike by over 90%. These workers are struggling to hold on to their pensions, and they have even asked their very wealthy CEOs to meet them only half way. Julie Gonzalez, a King Soopers worker, told 9 News, "We are ready, willing, and able to get back to the bargaining table if the corporation is willing to meet us half way. All we're asking for is a fair deal. And we really hope they don't lock us out for asking for livable wages and a pension plan that recognizes our contribution to company profits."

International UFCW President Joe Hansen on September 15th wrote Local 7R President Ernest Duran stating the International Union's stance if the workers voted to reauthorize a strike. "The International Union will accept this representation. If, however, following strike authorization Local No. 7R learns that additional bargaining may resolve the matters at issue, Local No. 7R must continue to engage in such bargaining." So explained Joe Hansen with the characteristic facility of the servant-fed: In just two sentences, he speaks to the membership from both sides of his mouth.

On October 20 the bargaining continued, with the corporations refusing to budge, saying that they "did not have any new or different proposals for the workers. They said to call them if we did." (3) These corporations, just like the banks, believe that working people should take the hit for their callous greed. The corporations have refused to bargain in good faith with the union, and the union bureaucracy refuses to recognize the will of its membership. This leaves the grocery

workers in a state of limbo that creates confusion. They know that Safeway and King Soopers only care about their own profits, and it's becoming clearer every day that the UFCW union aristocracy has anything but the workers' right to security and healthy pensions in mind. The Local 7R membership must reach out to the community and be an example for workers in Colorado and the entire U.S. Only the revitalization and reorganization of a strong, empowered working class will be able to defeat and expose the capitalist class and the union aristocracy.

Cristina Duran, the Associate General Counsel of UFCW and daughter of Ernie Duran, tries and fails miserably to represent anything that resembles the workers' interests. On October 22, she wrote a letter to the King Soopers employees addressing a letter by Dave Savage, the Vice President of Retail Operations for King Soopers, regarding the negotiations. She replies to Savage regarding the lockout by saying, "King Soopers could CHOOSE to not lockout their employees because they could negotiate their contract separately. In fact, if Safeway workers go on strike, King Soopers could profit millions if they CHOOSE to not lock their workers out." She acknowledges the fact that the corporations are united, and she's on her knees begging for them to negotiate separately.

The problem is that the UFCW leadership has continued to run the union on the basis of dividing the workers in a store. Some grocery workers are part of the clerk union, others are in the meat cutting union, and some workers in unionized stores aren't a part of the union at all, but are still greatly af-

ected by the union contracts. This horrible setup is there to divide the workers and pit them against their fellow employees by creating different interests instead of one united union fighting for the benefit of all its employees. If Cristina Duran truly cared at all for the UFCW workers instead of her fat six-figure salary, she would call for a united front against both corporations, and the uniting of separate union shops into one strong united union that would be able to win against the united corporations, but she doesn't. and she continues to be a brake on the progress of the workers' negotiations. This cannot be tolerated, especially when Savage writes that he will be forced to lock out King Soopers employees if Safeway strikes. Unfortunately, Duran does not call for a united union, nor does she call to occupy the stores in the instance that the employers attempt to lock the workers out. Instead, she cries and begs the union to negotiate separately, divided and weak. Workers must force the Durans out now and elect a leadership that is run by the workers, for the workers.

Workers must demand that all union staff be elected by the rank-and-file and make wages that are equivalent to their own, and never more than an average skilled worker in their given industry. This will only come about if workers unite and realize that the union bureaucracy, which says it represents them, continues to constantly undermine the democratic decisions of the rank-and-file workers. The union is there to protect workers, not to pay for extravagant salaries for sell-out bureaucrats who betray the decisions made by the rank-and-file. The only solu-

tion is to kick out union opportunists and to demand union democracy in which all workers have a voice; one in which anyone and everyone elected to union positions are rank-and-file workers themselves, making the same wage as an average worker, and whose interest is directly linked with the people whom the union is supposed to represent.

King Soopers has decided that if UFCW 7R goes on strike they will run ads to attract scabs in the right wing *Denver Post*.⁽⁴⁾ The *Denver Post* also blatantly shows its disinterest in the needs of the common worker by running disgraceful articles against the workers' struggle for respect and security. On October 6, the *Denver Post* ran three articles on the UFCW membership's votes, which overwhelmingly showed support for re-authorizing a strike. Two of the articles barely mentioned the reauthorization for a strike, and, of course, failed to mention the straight-up thievery of the treacherous corporations and UFCW's class-traitor International leadership. Both of these articles boasted fewer than 125 words. But on that same day, when Coloradans flipped to the Business section of the *Post*, the first thing they would all see on the cover was the bold words that read, "Strike Won't Stop Shoppers," along with a picture of a man saying a strike wouldn't change his way of shopping. The article slanders the cause of the grocery workers' struggle for livable wages and a decent life. The article concluded with: "These people are lucky to have jobs," the man said. "They'd be idiots to strike. I'd take that job in a heartbeat." By pitting members of the working class against each other for a fight to the

death, this article attacks not only the UFCW members, but all working families that want security. The workers' answer to Steve Raabe, the article's author, should be one of disgust and anger. He tries to demoralize the workers with right wing propaganda articles aimed at dividing and confusing the masses into blaming the Local 7R rank-and-file.

Throughout the negotiations, the employers and the media make it clear that if the union strikes, a team of scabs will be there to replace them. This must be fought against vigorously. So far, the union leadership has barely addressed this, and instead it continues a policy that ignores the scabs. Workers must kick out scabs already amongst them and refuse to work when there is a scab in the store. We know the union bureaucracy and the corporations do not care much for workers' security, and they continue to allow scabs to be trained to undermine the incredibly fragile security grocery workers barely have.

We say to the scabs-in-training: "Do not fight against fellow workers; fight alongside them, demanding employment for all and against pitting members of the working class against each other." History has proven this to be a powerful tool for fighting the working class: employing traitor elements amongst us who are willing to work against the struggling masses. This must be stopped because it will only deepen the crisis of the working class and lead to even deeper divisions amongst the people who struggle for their security. The working class must be united to defend successfully against the corporations, the union bureaucracy, and

against the contradictions of scabbing against one's own class.

Solidarity among all working class people is imperative for victory. Grocery workers from all stores must stand together and demand a living wage and security. Grocery, transportation, processing, and factory workers all must build solidarity among their struggles to demand a future not based on the profit shares of the rich, but on the security of all who struggle to feed and clothe their families. Workers have the power to emancipate themselves from the slanders of the right wing *Denver Post*, to be free of all Safeway and Krogers despotic CEOs, and against the traitors of the UFCW union bureaucracy. All workers must stand together in our brothers' and sisters' time of need. When the media, corporations, and business union bureaucracy are attacking working families from all sides, we stand together and unite against the theft and greed of corporate capitalist society.

No more excuses! They have the money! While the working class pays the banks for their recession, Safeway and King Soopers both made *Fortune 500* magazine's top 50 most profitable companies. We say "No!" to their lockouts against the workers! Workers, occupy your workplaces! Form action committees in every workplace, coordinate city-wide—prepare for unified action! Once the occupation is on, don't let the food spoil; invite the unemployed to supper!

When the management of a company pleads poverty in the face of workers' reasonable demands for pay and bene-

fits, we must call for the nationalization of failing enterprises under democratic workers' control, without compensation to the stockholders!

JOBS FOR ALL! From an individual's entry into the working world until retirement, everyone must be guaranteed the opportunity to perform meaningful, creative work that serves humanity and pays enough to support a family. To end unemployment and the squeeze on workers' wages, **we demand a sliding scale of wages and working hours: 30 hours' work for 40 hours' pay!**

Against the traitors of the UFCW leadership, the new fighting rank-and-file leadership will bring charges of nepotism and replace their rot with a **democratic leadership that earns average skilled workers' pay and is subject to immediate recall.**

Create democratically-elected strike committees that will truly represent the will of all of the rank-and-file workers. Reach out to the community and raise awareness about the maliciousness of corporate greed and the betrayals of the union leadership.

Reach out to all of the working class and unite under the banner of workers' democracy! **An injury to one is an injury to all! Workers of the world, unite! LABOR NEEDS A VICTORY. LET IT START HERE AND NOW!**

Notes:

Denver workers want negotiations to continue Jeffrey Wolf, 6/15/2009, <http://www.alwayshereforcolorado.com/node/201>

Statistics from Fortune 500 top 1000 U.S. 05/04/2009, http://157.166.226.108/magazines/fortune/fortune500/2009/full_list/

Little progress in Soopers, Safeway grocery talks; strike threat looms Denver Business Journal, 10/21/2009, <http://denver.bizjournals.com/denver/stories/2009/10/19/daily41.html>

(4) Colorado grocery chains, workers prepare for strike Denver Business Journal, 05/01/2009, <http://denver.bizjournals.com/denver/stories/2009/04/27/daily88.html>



It will take more than rallies around the union headquarters for grocery workers to win a strike.

Grocery workers in Colorado need to point the way forward by striking to win.

Strikes Not Furloughs! How to Fight Back Against Attacks on Public Employees



Schwarzenegger is playing "Terminator" with State Workers and their families.

In his quixotic quest for ways to balance the deficit-ridden California budget without imposing any part of the burden on powerful corporations or the state's wealthy coterie of campaign donors,

Governator Schwarzenegger has targeted the state's public employees for an unprecedented, massive attack.

Between the elimination of paid holidays and the imposition of mandatory furloughs, state employee wages have effectively been cut by almost 15%. Massive cuts in the future state budget for education promise to result in college enrollment cuts, massive layoffs of teachers, larger class sizes, shorter school years, and even school closures. Yet until recently – now that it may well be too late – the unions that represent those employees have largely abandoned their members to suffer, without raising a finger in their defense.

The July 1 Rally – A Case Study in Futility

The largest public workers' union in the state is SEIU 1000, which has approximately 30,000 members in Sacramento, the state capital, as well as over 120,000 other members around

the state. On July 1, 2009, SEIU 1000 held a march and rally in Sacramento against the current spate of attacks on California state workers. Even though tens of thousands of SEIU members work within walking distance of the site, and even though it bused in members from outside the state capital, SEIU 1000 was barely able to motivate 3,000 members and supporters to participate.

Concurrently with the demonstration, the governor, speaking at a press conference, lambasted state workers and their unions as “special interests,” and then signed an order for a third unpaid furlough day per month. Beyond holding the relatively small demonstration, the unions representing the state workers barely raised a peep at this outrage. Of course, the 3,000 of us on the capitol lawn were hooting and hollering at the top of our lungs, but after a few hours we all went back to the office or got on our buses and left, with less in our benefit package than when we had arrived.

The other state worker unions – CAPS, PEGS, AFSCME, IUOE Local 39 – did nothing to mobilize workers to attend the rally. CAPS released a letter in which they “vigorously opposed” the third furlough day, but when CAPS member Charles Rachlis approached a CAPS executive board member and asked the union to help build the rally, the CAPS official rejected the idea, expressing disdain toward SEIU. He argued that if SEIU couldn’t turn out its own members, why should we (CAPS) mobilize to fill out “their” rally.

None of Rachlis’s emails to the CAPS office or to the other executive board

members, suggesting that CAPS mobilize for the demonstration, were answered. About 150 Communications Workers of America (CWA) workers appeared early in the afternoon on the capitol steps, just around the corner from the SEIU rally point. It seemed obvious that the two contingents should merge in a show of class solidarity, but what was obvious to some was ignored by both the CWA and SEIU leaderships, who while on site did nothing to initiate a joint action.

The Legacy of Business Unionism

Why aren’t the public employee unions in California (and other states in similar situations) activating their membership to take militant action to combat these attacks? Are they incapable? Just plain against the concept? Or working for the other side?

In the days leading up to and just after the announcement of the third furlough day, the scuttlebutt around the water cooler was that what we need is a strike. Workers are pissed off, and jawboning about how we need to strike is how folk vent. However, there is no confidence among the workers that our unions have either the strength or internal fortitude to build for a strike. Instinctively, workers know what is needed, but we also see that we have no organizational structure capable of fighting. Nor is there any semblance of solidarity developing, which is essential if we are to build for, initiate, and sustain a winning strike. Union activists and staffers quickly cover their inaction with “blame the worker” statements,

such as “Of course we need a strike, but if we can’t even get our people out for a picket line or on the bus to Sacramento, how do you expect them to strike?”

It’s time that we look at our organizations to see why they are incapable of building a fighting leadership. The hand wringing we are seeing on the part of the staffers, executive boards and activists who have stood by, watched, and allowed our unions to disintegrate over the years is the conscious expression of the destruction wrought upon organized labor by 50 years of business unionism. Few and far between are members who remember or have learned the story of what it took to win the unions in the first place. For decades, labor has been told by its leaders to build support for Democratic politicians who, despite posing as “friends of labor,” invariably legislate, execute, and administer policies written by and for their true friends in the financial and corporate sectors. Rather than building a fighting workers’ party, preparing rank and file action committees, organizing the unorganized, and building solidarity among different locals and unions, our union “leaders” have told us that their Democratic “friends” would look out for us. So we kept sending them our contributions, worked their phone banks, and supported their candidacies.

What have we gotten in return? The real deal is being exposed now, when we are faced with a world wide collapse of capitalism, and all the Democrats and all the Republicans can’t put Humpty Dumpty back together again. The very same politicians who were elected to office with the support of organized labor are telling us that there is no money and

that we all have to “share the pain.” Big time liberals in the California Legislature like Mark Leno and Tom Ammiano, both of who, climbed the Democratic ladder from the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to the State Assembly, can be heard on the radio pushing the anti-worker, anti-union solutions that their caucus put together with uber-worker-hater Governor Schwarzenegger to be presented to the voters on the May 19th ballot, and soundly rejected.

No wonder the workers have lost faith in their unions. All that is left of the fighting spirit of state workers is to bluster boldly by the water cooler, as a mere fraction of the membership answers the leadership’s call to rally at the capitol. Union staff were heard to lament that they gave plenty of notice to workers to come to the rally. Indeed, we got at least three e-mails to mobilize us. What the union staffers apparently don’t realize is that it’s going to take a lot more than a few e-mails to mobilize the fighting spirit of workers who have lost all faith in their leadership’s ability or willingness to fight back.

The intention of this article is not to point to one union and blame it for the lack of leadership. But we cannot understand fully why workers don’t respond to their union’s calls for demonstrations unless we look at some of the concessions and practices some of the leaders of these unions have been party to. For example, they accepted a two-tier medical plan under which new workers have to wait longer to become fully vested. Like all such two-tier plans, this ruptures the solidarity between younger and older workers. Most workers who voted to ac-

not even aware that they were undercutting desperately needed solidarity between the young and the old. When the SEIU leadership cut a deal for one furlough day in the negotiations leading up to the failed May 19 ballot initiatives, they willingly voted to accept this concession despite the fact that other unions, facing the same furloughs, were still struggling (in court) to stop all furloughs. This lack of unity set the stage for the earlier mentioned animosity between CAPS and SEIU. And, of course, the reliance on the courts by CAPS and PEGS as their sole method of opposing the forced concessions did nothing to mobilize the workers to take any organized action greater than calling their legislator or sending a postcard to the governor.

In short, it is clear from the tactics and leadership provided by our unions that they simply are not capable of defending our interests, and are definitively not interested in fighting for workers' power. Their intention has long been to support the status quo. To that end, they have limited their role, as they have seen it, to negotiating for wage increases that keep up with inflation; preventing givebacks; and supporting only the most gradual reforms, if any. But today they have shown that they are not even capable of those limited tasks.

The Need to Build Inter-Union Rank-and-File Solidarity

If we had a fighting trade union leadership, they would long ago have convened a series of district-wide inter-union rank and file conferences to mobilize workers and prepare our organizations to take

united action to defend our quality of life and protect the multitude of vitally necessary social services – health care, education, workplace safety, transportation, parks, home care for seniors and the disabled, the poison hot line, and so forth – that state and local government employees provide to the public at large. But the union bureaucrats are so set in their ways that even the mention of such a concept sends them into apoplectic fits

It was due to this vacuum of leadership, and the unions' history of concessions and dependence on politicians and courts, that rank-and-file workers at the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Richmond campus came together on their own, in the spring of 2009, to form an inter-union organizing committee. This committee's purpose is to investigate ways to build solidarity and fight back against the cuts in our benefits, threats of layoffs, and cuts in public services and education. If not for the efforts of this committee, there would not have been a busload of folks from Richmond joining the rally in Sacramento. To be fair, we found one SEIU staffer who took action to support our work. It is our hope that the SEIU leadership allows this honest staffer to continue to advance the work and help us build inter-union solidarity.

At the rally in Sacramento, we distributed 400 leaflets approved by our steering committee calling on state workers to form inter-union organizing committees in every workplace throughout the state. Our bus to Sacramento carried public employees from a variety of state and local unions, including workers from EB-MUD (the East Bay water and sewer util-

ity) and the West Contra Costa County School District. The Richmond bus set an example of solidarity which must be repeated ten-thousand-fold if we are to defeat the anti-worker policies of the politicians in Sacramento and their corporate and banker friends who have destroyed the economy.

How to Respond to Teacher Layoffs and Furloughs

Another case study on the need for public employees to build solidarity among different unions, and with their surrounding communities, has been taking place in the West Contra Costa County School District, also centered in Richmond. The school district, not satisfied with merely closing schools and laying off teachers, is threatening to add mandatory unpaid teacher furloughs to its mix of budget-cutting measures

Parents oppose furloughs 100 percent and do not want any days taken from the educational year. As the school board is forcing the United Teachers of Richmond (UTR) toward a strike, parents and teachers must work together to prepare the community. The governor and his stooges on the school board have thrown down the gauntlet, and we must respond in kind.

In the case of a strike, the kids do not have to get screwed. The way to prevent the kids from getting screwed is for the strikers and parents to occupy the schools. If that is not possible because of the police, then we must create two teams of strikers. Half the teachers, assisted by other trade unionists and par-

ents, must stand guard at the school gates and prevent the entry of scabs. The other half of the teachers must set up assemblies of students and parents in local churches or other buildings that the community will make available to us. In those educational assemblies the teachers can teach the economics of the budget crisis, and the history of labor organizing, to the children. These lessons will allow children to learn math, civics, history, research methodology, and public discourse.

The older students can also take turns on the picket line, and stand with their teachers to demand education for all. They can also form a student council at each middle and upper school, and an inter-school representative council of student delegates. These bodies of student representatives should be involved in all aspects of running programs, giving input, and discussing tactics of the struggle. At the same time, each school should call on its existing parent teacher organization to contribute to the support of the teachers' struggle, and if the existing organization does not do so, interested parents and teachers, together with older students, should build their own alternative organizations. Having the parent / teacher organizations and student council bodies play an active role in support of the teachers' strike is an essential mechanism for spreading the concept of direct, militant struggle beyond the public sector and into industrial sectors of the working class.

Now is the time to prepare for the strike, to build class unity, and to prepare coordinated actions between teachers, transportation workers, other public work-

ers, and the community, particularly parents and students.

Don't Share the Pain – Send It Back Where It Came From!

The ruling elite of California are rich beyond our wildest dreams. The governor and the politicians are all in Sacramento to protect the plutocrats' wealth, not to serve working people. The same fat cat bankers and investors who ruined the economy now want working folk to pay the price for their recklessness and greed. We need to send them a loud and clear message that we refuse! The only way to force the corporations, the billionaires, and all their fat cat stooges to pay for education and social service is to take militant direct labor action – in other words, strikes.

As we have been advocating since the beginning of this crisis, there is a road to victory for working people, students, parents and the recipients of social services. That road is though massive coordinated state wide strike action. The only way for us to win is to defy the Taft-Hartley law that prevents sympathy strikes. We must stand together with one another to support all strikes against furloughs, layoffs, budget cuts, school closures, and other measures designed to force us to bear the brunt of the financial crisis.

On July 10, SEIU 1000 finally got serious, and announced that it is preparing to take a strike vote to oppose the third furlough day imposed by the governor. Let's force them to stick to their word, and make other public worker unions follow

suit. Only militant, unified action can lead us to victory. To prepare, we must immediately convene mass inter-union assemblies of the working class, including not only members of the trade unions but also parents, the unemployed, the poor, seniors, and other recipients of public services. When workers meet and talk, the ruling elite tremble, because their lies will not stand the scrutiny of public discovery.

Forward to mass inter-union assemblies of rank-and-file public workers!

Occupy the schools and state workplaces and keep out all scabs!

For mass strike action throughout the state to save education and social services!



Let's put Arnold on the run, like his character in "Running Man," and turn the tables! For state workers not to have to live out his dystopian fantasies, but to force the Governor and the capitalist class to play by *our* rules.

How the Unions Demoralize the Workers and Prevent Resistance from Developing

Following a series of actions for four months on furlough Fridays where members of the Inter-union Organizing Committee used their unpaid day off to stand with banners reading, "End the Furloughs" and "Strikes not furloughs" at highway overpasses and the State Building in Oakland, some of the members thought if the unions stepped forward the small actions could grow. SEIU members called upon their union to come down to the job site and build for the actions. What happened when they showed up is very revealing as to how these fake leaders hold back the workers. The SEIU showed up at the Inter-Union organizing committee meeting, with lunch and a team of professional staffers. They immediately assumed it was their meeting. They were aghast to hear that what they were supplying lunch for was an Inter-union meeting, not an SEIU meeting.

In June the SEIU 1000 members voted a strike authorization by a rate of 73%. Six months had passed. Consequently, a young woman worker asked, "What's up with our strike? It's been a long time since the vote." This legitimate question put the staffers on the defensive and they broke out their stock answer. Their stock answer is that how can you expect the workers to strike when they won't even come to a meeting or come to a picket in front of work or wear their purple shirts? This "blame the membership"

attitude from the paid staff of the union did not sit well with the militant activist workers.

The debate became heated as a militant worker seized the floor and disputed the staffers premise. It was argued that it is the sell-out class collaborationist policy of the SEIU and the other trade unions which take members money and energy and give it to Democrats, who represent the capitalists, not the workers. It was argued that because they have done this for decades, the workers have no faith in the unions' ability to fight and no faith in their ability to lead.

The staffers tried to regain their credibility by arguing that they agree with what everyone said. This resulted in another challenge. The militant unionist argued that if they truly agreed, then they would get on the horn to the Democrats and tell them there will be no more funding or staffing on future campaigns and that we would be using our funds and staff to prepare for a statewide strike immediately. Of course the staffers couldn't undo decades of class collaboration and left the meeting without convincing the workers that they are capable of providing more than lawn signs that say: "I am proud to be a state worker." They tried to use the meeting to regain authority, but were not successful, and were ultimately pressured into joining the committee on the November 20th action. The staffers showed up, but they could not turn more than two rank and file workers to

join the action.

State workers are frustrated, know they have useless unions and cannot see the road to victory. As long as these unions are allowed to trade class struggle for class collaboration, workers' frustration with organized labor will grow. Organized labor is not organized or organizing to win. As long as they tie the working class to the capitalist parties, labor will not be able to launch a winning struggle. The capitalist class has no choice but to enforce their crisis on workers across the globe.

California workers are getting the first dose of the drive to lower workers

conditions in the first world to those of workers in the semi-colonies. The great leveling is in process because capital is finding it harder and harder to make profit. The American Dream has long since turned into a nightmare. The only way workers can improve their conditions is to throw off the sell-out bureaucrats who tie labor to their bosses' political parties, and build their own revolutionary party to fight for a workers government to replace capitalist production with a socialist economy based on workers democracy, self management and the workers' own plan.

Shut Them All Down!

Open Letter to San Francisco Hotel Workers Local 2 Membership

Editor's Note: This Open Letter was prepared in November 2009, and distributed by HWRS members to hotel workers on the picket lines at the hotels in San Francisco, California that are currently in contract negotiations with Unite HERE Local 2.

The current struggle for a fair contract is at a crucial point for the members of Local 2. The Hotels may threaten layoffs due to losses caused by strike and boycott action, yet at the same time will claim those losses could have been used to pay workers bonuses and *continued* healthcare (as if they have a choice, given SF employment law). They are claiming their proposals are fair in "what

are difficult economic times." Yet their proposals call for increases in employee contributions, particularly family coverage. Their proposals also clear the way to eliminate retiree medical coverage. The rising cost of healthcare is at the forefront of political debate in the US today. The insurance industry is a rotten manifestation of the profit system. We must insist that the hotels and the insur-

ance industry must not push their increased cost onto the backs of the workers. Workers cannot expect the Obama administration via the so-called health care reform to protect their interests. **We can win only by shutting the hotels tight.**

The Hotels and the corporations that own them will continue to use the current economy as an excuse to cut away at workers' benefits unless a successful strike is waged to fight back. Hotel workers have already forgone wage increases in the recent past to keep health-care affordable. Any further give back now by the workforce will pave the way for continued decreases in benefits in the future. **It's time to fight back now.**

An indefinite strike at ALL hotels collectively bargaining, is as Local 2, is needed to leverage the full weight of the union against the corporate stranglehold placed on the hotels by the Starwood Corporation. The current method

of rolling, limited 3 days strikes at individual hotels only allows bosses to rotate managers and scabs to cover the work stoppage. This does little to hit their pockets, and therefore cannot be a winning strategy. Further, workers returning from these 3 day strikes are subject to harassment and retaliation, leading ultimately to further demoralization. **If we shut them all down, and have strong picket lines that will stop the scabs from entering the hotels, the tourist industry in San Francisco will collapse and the hotels will quickly give in to our demands.**

Be aware of what the union is doing in your name. Union reps have done little to inform you of details of the negotiations. The union bureaucracy does not practice democracy among the workers. It does not consult the membership on its actions, attitudes or decisions, yet is empowered to sign deals and contracts without workers' participation.

It's time to fight back now!
For workers' democracy in the unions!
For an elected rank-and-file Strike Committee!
For a fair contract now!
For an indefinite strike and
a well publicized boycott at all hotels!

In solidarity,
 Humanist Workers for Revolutionary Socialism

Attacks on Public Education

Turning a Profit on a Human Need

From K-12, to University, the capitalist class is sending a message that is a clarion call of class war. They are telling working class youth, their parents, their teachers and education workers, and working class communities that the hard won gain of free, public education – a victory that has long been taken for granted in the U.S. – is a gain they are looking to take back. Although our articles “The View from Ground Zero” and “Attacks on Public Education and Public Workers” discuss the attacks on Richmond public schools, and on the University of California and State University of California system, the attacks are not just occurring in the State of California, but nationwide. The capitalist class is sending the message loud and clear that minority and working class youth are only fit to fill prisons, or die in their imperialist wars, and that an education that could lead to their being ready and able not only to question, but to overturn the rotten capitalist socio-economic system, is a dangerous thing. For working class youth, who have traditionally looked to an affordable public college education as their ticket into the more privileged sectors of their class, the tuition hikes and cutbacks on classes they require for graduation and the slashing of the positions of teachers and staff, are telling them decisively that even if they do make it to (and through) college, they can most likely count on being disenfranchised out of the “middle

class” lifestyle to which they aspire. The U.S. is becoming increasingly polarized between the very rich and the very poor, and the living conditions of the working class are coming to resemble those of workers in the semi-colonies.

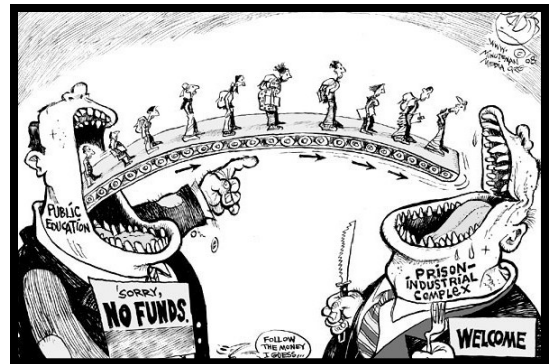
Only through militant students linking their struggles to those of education workers and of their communities can affordable, quality public education not only be defended, but an aggressive counter assault waged. The fight should raise demands such as “No Tuition, Open Enrollment” for students going to University, and “Jobs for All. 30 Hours of Work for 40 Hours of Pay”, in regards to the reinstatement of any laid off education workers. Students and workers should also fight together for a jobs training program so working class youth actually have a chance at employment at a living wage on which they can support themselves and their future families. Those demands can only be won if the working class, both in their communities and through their unions, become the backbone of the fight back. Fundamentally, what must be fought for is for the U.S. educational system to be run on the norms of workers’ democracy, with student / teacher / parent / worker control of the schools and universities. For such demands to be implemented, the passions and ambitions of the U.S. working class and oppressed

as a whole must be ignited to fight back, and to take control of a world they have so painstakingly built through their sweat, blood and labor.

The attack on Public Education is part of a broader effort by the capitalist class to privatize and squeeze as much profit out of services the state formerly supplied for free, or at little cost, and is part of a general slash and burn on the domestic front, in the overall quest of the ruling class to force the working class and oppressed to pay for the malfeasance of U.S. capitalism in creating the current global economic crisis while pumping more and more funds into their bloody, imperialist wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Just as the current health care “reform” is basically a mass herding campaign of the uninsured towards being a captive market for Big Pharma and the Health Insurance monopolies, so the attacks on Public Education are aimed at transforming another human need into an opportunity for capitalist interests to turn a profit, by setting up schools where students “learn to the test” in a Taylorized, mechanical way that does little but dampen the enthusiasm, passions and creativity of what begin as young, inquisitive minds, and where the educational system, for the sake of “efficiency”, is set up according to one size fits all norms, as encouraged by “The No Child Left Behind” Act of 2001.

Whether the current reigning regime in the White House is Tweedledee or Tweedledummer, what makes the recent attacks qualitatively different is that, instead of using piecemeal, backdoor, strictly legalistic and legislative means,

the capitalist class is out and out seeking to pull the entire rug out from beneath any kind of real educational opportunities for oppressed and working class youth, by trying to break the backs of education unions. Teachers are being turned from those who went into the profession due to genuine love and care for the intellectual development of youth into little better than overseers to youth into whom they drill information. They are compelled to treat students as if they were empty robots they can program like a computer, something which is equally demoralizing to both youth and teachers. But the attacks on working class schools such as in Richmond are just a localized version of national trends in regards to schools with large working class and minority populations. The articles in the “Attack on Public Education” section of this issue of *International Trotskyist* outline HWRS’s recent fights and strategies for linking the struggles of students and workers together, to not only defend Public Education as a right, but to make quality education from K-12, to the University level, free and universal, and to lay the foundation for socialist revolution to replace the rotting structure that is capitalism.



How to Defeat the Attacks on Public Education and Public Workers

Introductory Note: *Members of HWRS attended the September 24, 2009 walk-out at the University of California at Berkeley (UCB); the statewide “Mobilizing Conference to Save Public Education” held at UCB on October 24; and the occupation of UCB’s Wheeler Hall on November 20. At the October 24 event, we distributed a flyer ([in IT: “see page 52”; on web: insert link]) calling for militant statewide action to unite the fight to save and improve public education with the ongoing struggle to preserve other public benefits and social programs, as well as the defense of state workers against furloughs and budget cuts. This article presents our balance sheet and analysis of the September 24 and October 24 events, written in late October. A separate article on the November 20th occupation can be found [in IT: “on page 49 of this issue”; on web: insert link].*

The September 24 “Strike” at University of California Campuses

The reformists and fake-leftists who, at the moment, are in charge of the emerging student / worker movement on the California campuses, have a limited perspective of sporadic brief protests and so-called “strikes” that can only exhaust and demoralize the movement, and lead it to a dead end. Needless to say, a strategy like this poses no threat to the ruling class.

First we need to clarify the meaning of the term strike. A strike is a fundamental tool of the working class in the class war. The capitalist class does not give any concessions unless it is forced to do so by the pressure of antagonistic forces and the power of the working class. A real strike must be enforced by picket lines that are solid, uncrossable, and if necessary even violent.

The picket line is the means by which the working class defends itself. Indeed, taken to its logical conclusion, the picket line turns from a defensive tool into a succession of ever more powerful offensive tools: picket lines organized to defend strikes develop into workers’ defense guards to defend the overall needs and conquests of the working class, and lead ultimately to workers’ militias that can wage the struggle for power to overthrow capitalism.

In short, the first rule for a strike to win is: it needs powerful picket lines. The second rule is that nobody crosses the picket lines. Without these fundamental rules **a strike is not a real strike**. By this definition, the September 24 day of action was not a day of strikes. It was a day of protests, during which a relatively small percentage of students cut classes, and some workers were AWOL. The students and the workers who participated in the walkouts did not set up serious picket lines. At UC Berkeley, for example, the picket lines were set periodically in one location, and they did not seriously try to stop scabs from going in to work or class. As a result, campus business proceeded essentially as usual, and thousands of students went to classes and ignored the day of protest. During the big rally in the middle of the day, HWRS members made inquiries around the Administration Building to see if the workers were honoring the strike. We found out that the majority of the workers were working, and all the offices were open and doing business – while 5,000 were “on strike” just feet away on the steps of the building!

A day of protests like this, held a couple of times a year, and even a few brief building occupations such as those that occurred on November 20th, will do nothing to force the capitalists and their servants on the Board of Regents to halt

their relentless attacks on students and workers at the University of California. Unless far more militant actions are taken, the ruling class will go on with its plans of raising “fees” (i.e., tuition) **by 32% (!)** in January 2010, and laying off staff and faculty members in the middle of March.

The Capitalist Crisis Behind the Attacks

From the very beginning, the strategy of the reformists who have taken charge of the movement has been doomed to derail it to go nowhere. The types of protests they have initiated, in the place of real strikes, are particularly ineffective now that the capitalist system is in the deepest crisis since the 1930s. In the wake of the economic meltdown, the only way to restore the US capitalists’ profits is to engage in brutal competition against other imperialist rivals by driving down the wage base and reducing social services in the US. It has become a matter of high importance to the rich and powerful to lower the standard of living of the US working class to that of the workers in the semi-colonies, that is, the less developed countries whose economies are heavily dependent on US trade and investment. This is being done right now through attacks on workers’ wages, security and conditions, both in the US and abroad.

The task of winning quality, free public education, not to mention universal health care, jobs for all, and environmental protection and restoration, is exactly and nothing less than the task of overthrowing capitalism. Due to the international economic situation, the period of reforms is over, and the period of permanent cutbacks is on. Capitalism has no intention of offering concessions at this point; concessions will be won only when the capitalists see that without them, they are going to lose it all. When we consider this situation, we must realize that our task is nothing less than turning every battle into a direct attack on the capitalist class; that is, turning every struggle into one where the workers move toward the challenge for power.

Because of the crisis, the threat of educated proletarian youth rising up to stop the capitalists’ plans through united action with workers

makes the bosses tremble with remembrance of May 1968. For that reason, among many others, the capitalists are more motivated than ever to destroy the public education system. To that end, Obama has unleashed education secretary Arne Duncan to expand privatization and the profit system to a new frontier: the realm of public education, which has historically been the exclusive realm of government, strictly off limits to the private sector.

Any mass movement to defend students and workers against these attacks must take as its starting point these objective conditions. Because the attacks stem from the crisis of capitalism, the only way to stop them is to use the powerful fist of an *anticapitalist* movement. In order to win we must build mass picket lines, and other militant actions such as building occupations, in order to shut down all the colleges, and the universities in the state **until the demands are met**. This shutdown must be enforced by massive picket lines that prevent anyone from crossing them. If necessary, the pickets must be prepared to use force to defend their lines against scabs and police – the thugs of the state.

The reformists do not want to take this road of militant confrontation because they have no strategy for socialist revolution, and have taken upon themselves the job of perpetuating illusions in capitalism’s ability to be “tamed.” In turn, they have become the tools of the bosses’ ideology within the movement; while pretending to organize students and workers to fight back, they actually serve capitalism by channeling the anger and energy of the workers and students into toothless protests – a strategy that the capitalists gladly accept.

The Big Betrayal on October 24

On October 24, 2009, one month after the September “strike” action, a “Mobilizing Conference to Save Public Education” was held at UCB. The conference was attended by between 700 and 1000 people associated with many different public universities and colleges in California, as well as over 100 primary and secondary school teachers. Dozens of the attendees were members of various unions.

Our experience at the conference convinced us that the students who belong to the vanguard of the working class in California, consisting of working class youth and young workers, were ready and willing to organize a general strike before the imposition of the massive University of California tuition hike in January. These young students and workers, many of them African-American or Latino, wanted to take up the banner of the militant tradition of class struggle in the Bay Area.

Unfortunately, however, the reformists who comprised the unelected “leadership” of the conference **criminally** derailed the proceedings so that ultimately, the conference went nowhere. Even though the organizers claimed in the agenda that it was their intention to launch actions that could “win” the struggle, the conference closed without a winning strategy; without the adoption of any agreed-upon demands; and without any plan for action, other than to set up a day of further protest on March 4, 2010 – a date much too far in the future to have any real impact on the looming attacks we face.

The self-appointed leadership of the conference (who called themselves “facilitators”) was composed primarily of members of an organization called *La Voz de los trabajadores* (“the voice of the workers” – “La Voz” for short). *La Voz* is the US affiliate of a reformist organization centered in Latin America around the International Workers League (Fourth International), which is perhaps better known within the workers’ movement by its Spanish name, the Liga Internacional de los Trabajadores (Quarta Internacional), commonly abbreviated as LIT.

The LIT is responsible for many betrayals of the working class in Latin America (for two extensive exposés of the LIT’s role in betrayals of the class struggle in Latin America, see [ELAC Critique and Brazil Attack – insert links on web; URLs in IT]). As we explained in our flyer for the October 24 conference, the LIT “creates and perpetuates illusions in capitalism’s ability to deliver by calling for an elected Board of Regents instead of fighting for student/worker/teaching faculty control of the university system. Their faith in reform is made apparent in a banner headline in their press, *La VOZ de los Trabajadores*, asking:

‘OBAMA ARE YOU LISTENING? WE’RE FIGHTING BACK!’ As if this ‘bought and paid for’ pretty boy of Wall Street, whose job it is to impose the cuts, will turn his back on big capital and put the interests of the working class first.

The LIT’s method of derailing the conference was reinforced and supported by other left organizations such as the reformist fake Trotskyists of Socialist Action (USec), International Socialist Organization (ISO), Socialist Organizer, and the Revolutionary Workers Group. As for ourselves, the HWRS members present joined the militant youth in a battle against the reformists from the very beginning of the conference. To loud applause, our speaker called on the conference to organize an indefinite extended general strike by the students, union workers, and the oppressed, based on a transitional program – a bridge between the present consciousness of the working class and the socialist revolution. The only political speech made by the LIT was given by a cadre, whose only political declaration was to say that the purpose of the conference was to build a “big movement” against the attacks. The rest of the LIT’s interventions were about logistics, and were aimed at destroying the democratic rights of the conference attendees and derailing the conference.

This was not an accident. The reformists and the various fake socialists came prepared, and joined forces to **prevent any political discussion** at the conference. Their goal was to refuse to permit any discussion of the **demands** of the movement, and they accomplished their task. They explained this shamelessly in the written agenda distributed at the door, in these words: ***“The conference will not be voting on top demands or voting on the specific demands of the statewide action. Why? The process of collectively discussing and deciding on top demands is a very long process and there is simply not enough time at today’s conference to adequately and democratically do this.”*** Thus, the self-appointed administrators of the conference, who were not elected by the conference participants, bureaucratically decided in advance that the conference would not come out with any demands.

It should go without saying that the

agenda for the conference should have been decided upon by the students and workers in attendance. It should not have been up to the conference's self-appointed administrators – or more accurately, dictators – to decide this in advance! This is not only a complete abuse and betrayal of workers democracy, but it even falls below the corrupt standards of formal bourgeois democracy. And even more importantly, how can the mass movement take any action against the capitalists and their attacks without knowing what demands and program they are fighting for? The only answer offered by these reformists, led by the LIT, was . . . that it is a matter for a later conference!

The LIT and their handful of supporters at the podium deliberately blocked all political discussion by allowing each person who spoke from the floor only *one minute*, even though their own agenda called for a time limit of two minutes per person. Instead of a political discussion about demands and program, these rascals stated that people should put their demands in a suggestion box, to be dealt with later.

The Break-Out Sessions

During the second part of the conference, the participants broke up into smaller groups for “discussion” and the formulation of suggested resolutions by each group. HWRS participated in two workshops. One was a “workshop” for teachers in K-12 (elementary and secondary) schools. The other was for people connected with community colleges, which are two-year colleges that attract primarily working class youth. They often enroll with hopes of moving on to the state university system to earn a B.A. But when the colleges' budgets are cut and times are hard, they are more likely to find themselves on a trajectory to earn only an associate degree or a certificate in a trade skill, and to remain at high risk of unemployment. Thus, the community college break-out session attracted a largely proletarian group, with a huge and very direct stake in the fightback against higher education budget cuts.

At the K-12 break-out session, the well-known class traitor Alan Benjamin of the misnamed Socialist Organizer, sporting his AFL-CIO jacket, became the enforcer for the LIT-sponsored policy barring any political discussion

of demands or program at the conference. Benjamin opposed a proposal to call on the conference to address demands in the afternoon session, arguing that the attendees had to follow the conference as if it were written in stone – even though it had never been voted on by the conference participants.

There were two hundred plus strong working class youth at the community colleges workshop. Once again, the LIT and Revolutionary Workers Group members appointed themselves as administrators. In defiance of all their maneuvering, HWRS put forward a resolution for an indefinite general strike to be prepared and coordinated in the universities, colleges, unions, and oppressed communities. Despite the reformists' efforts to block it, the resolution passed by a clear majority. The group then also passed a student-sponsored resolution to start an indefinite general strike at the universities on March 4, 2010.

Vote First, Discuss Later?

According to the conference agenda, after the break-out sessions ended, there was supposed to be an hour and a half of “open discussion of proposals and voting.” Yet when the general assembly reconvened at the appointed time, the LIT and their backers on the podium deliberately ignored the agenda and the resolutions for a general strike that had been democratically voted on in the break-out sessions. Instead, the self-appointed bureaucrats went straight to the vote, without allowing any discussion first. When HWRS objected to the organizers' attempt to deliberately ignore the proposed resolutions for a general strike, we created an uproar in the hall. We received vocal support, particularly from students from San Francisco State University and UC Santa Cruz, who are clearly in the vanguard of the student movement. (Later, when a rash of building occupations struck UC in mid-November, the Santa Cruz students held their building long-est.)

We also raised objections to the reformist concept of having “actions” and “strikes” without a program or demands. The LIT and their supporters answered that this could be dealt with . . . at the next conference. They maneuvered wickedly, proposing to vote dozens of proposals, including

one about a general strike, as one bloc, thus totally diluting and preventing a vote on specific actions such as an extended general strike. Then they destroyed the whole purpose of the conference by proposing that each school should decide separately what actions that school would carry out. Jeff Mackler of Socialist Action played a big role in this particular diversion.

The March 4 Day of Action

To add insult to injury, the reformists passed a resolution for a “a day of actions and strikes on March 4, with another general assembly sometimes in February.” This was a massive betrayal, because on January 1, 2010, the UC system will impose a massive 32% hike in the fees charged to students, and CSU and community college students will also face fee hikes. Thus, the March 4 “action” will take place two months after the fee hikes, and many students will likely feel betrayed and demoralized.

In addition, the reason for holding an indefinite strike at the universities starting on March 4, as proposed by one of the students, was that layoffs of faculty and staff are planned for the middle of that month. Obviously, one day of protests less than two weeks before the layoffs is not a winning strategy – despite the promise by the conference organizers to forge one. Meanwhile, the teachers in Richmond are on the brink of a strike, which – if it happens – will be long since under way or perhaps even over by March 4. Thus, the selection of the March 4 date also misses an opportunity to connect the struggle of Bay Area college students with the struggles of K-12 teachers in neighboring West Contra Costa County.

LIT Violates Its Own Agenda

Ten minutes before the end of the general assembly, after most people had already left, the reformists finally permitted the “discussion” on program that was originally allocated an hour and a half on the organizers’ own preprinted agenda. In this miserable 10 minutes, each speaker was allowed only 30 seconds, and any meaningful discussion regarding the laundry list of demands was deferred to the next conference in February.

This was such a colossal betrayal of revolutionary politics and basic concepts of workers’ democracy that we can even say that it is a betrayal of ... the LIT’s own reformist politics. They no longer practice the classic reformist concept that “the movement is everything and the program is secondary.” Now the LIT’s politics appear to be that the program is nothing, the movement is secondary, and the movement’s logistics are everything!

With Friends Like These ...

In the end, the October 24 conference served to illustrate the unfortunate reality that the bourgeoisie does not necessarily need Social Democracy and Stalinism to stop the masses from mobilizing an effective resistance. All the fake Trotskyists have now lined up for the job formerly done by the Stalinists and Social Democrats, and they are doing a fine job for the capitalists.

The fake Trotskyist left, led by the LIT, destroyed the conference’s potential to spark militant joint worker and student actions across the state and nation. They defused the potential to organize and launch an indefinite general strike at the universities, which could have been coordinated with the struggles of key unions currently in the heat of battle. The Richmond teachers, the San Francisco hotel workers, the furloughed California state workers, and the Palo Alto city employees – all have voted for strike authorizations and could legally strike at any moment. They would have gained strength and resolve from an immediate and indefinite strike call coming out of the conference, leading to the formation of joint student-worker strike committees and coordinated inter-union actions. But due to the betrayal by its self-appointed leadership, the conference lost the possibility of being the spark to unite these struggles.

La Lucha Continua!

Despite this sabotage, the potential to launch a winning fight is not lost. The militance of many of those who attended the October 24 conference illustrates that a mass movement is beginning to heat up in the US, and that there is a

strong proletarian vanguard in the movement. HWRS will do everything we can to energize and support this vanguard with revolutionary theory, program, actions, and spirit. Our experience at the conference, coupled with the November building occupations and the support they inspired, tells us that many students want an indefinite general strike before the tuition hike in January. We will do what we can to assist students from San Francisco State and other colleges who are working to organize an emergency conference to build for such a general strike.

We know from history that when the working class and the oppressed in the US start fighting back, they move very fast. We also know from history that a leadership and a revolutionary program are critical in order such an upsurge to succeed. Transitional demands must be formulated to create a bridge that will carry the working class from their struggle to meet their immediate needs all the way to the understanding that workers can only win meaningful, long-term change by fighting capitalism. That is why our organization, HWRS, is committed to remaining in the midst of the fight, alongside the rising vanguard of youth, students, workers, and the oppressed.

Occupations at UC and CSU



UC Berkeley students get lesson on whose side the state is on.

On November 20th, 40 students at UC Berkeley, 150 at UC Santa Cruz and students at UC Davis, and at San Francisco state, staged building occupations, with students at UC Santa Cruz not ending their occupation until three days later. Supporters of HWRS arrived at the UC Berkeley campus, an hour after it reached our attention, and after three UC Berkeley students were arrested in the process of helping to barricade Wheeler Hall, and charged with Felony Burglary. Crowds of roughly, earlier on in the day, of 1500-2000 students and supporters had gathered on the east and west sides of the front of Wheeler, and on the back, with pickets having been thrown up during the course of the strike, precipitating a 9 hour stand-off with the UC Berkeley, City of Berkeley, Alameda County and Oakland police. As the hours wore on, more and more students showed up to be part of the lines on the barricades, swelling the numbers of students to 4-5000 thousand. During the course of the stand-off, there were several scuffles with police, with the police using batons to beat down students who tried to resist the police efforts to put up metal barricades, with one of our comrades being caught up in the scuffles.

The meeting for which action of students was discussed had occurred the night before, with several different factions and groups being involved, and there having been no clear plan for action that all parties involved could agree upon. While there seemed to be five to six different student leaders who were circulating around the crowd and were keeping in touch with each other and the occupiers inside via cell phones, the

general sense of whomever the leadership was boiled down to whoever it was who had a bull horn. There was an obvious divide between the students who had pacifist, reformist consciousness and students who wished for more militant action, who were opposed to calls to sit down in the face of the police. They probably realized that if enough students had been able to break through the barricades, then the occupation by 40 students could be turned into an occupation by a few hundred, dealing the police a mightier blow and raising the level of militancy of the students' struggles.

While demands were raised by the student occupiers included "Down with the 32% Tuition Hike", and "Re-hire the 38 Janitorial workers" who had been laid-off as part of cutbacks to UC, those demands were not ultimately met. During the stand-off, the student occupiers kept in communication with the crowd concerning a lot of "negotiations about the logistics of negotiation" with the Vice Provost of UC Berkeley, the Alameda County Chief of Police and Professor George Lakoff, with them raising the demand that negotiations take place in front of the crowd of students present, whereas the Administration wanted negotiations to happen behind closed doors. The occupiers correctly perceived that acceding to the administration's demands would cut them off from their base of support amongst students, and that the school administration would not be as pressured. At one point during the mid-afternoon, Lakoff tried addressing the crowds of students on front of Wheeler

Hall, telling them that the student occupiers would only be charged with a misdemeanor felony of trespassing, and would be led out of the building by one police officer, and urged students to keep the protests “peaceful” and “their bodies still”. However, it turned out, according to what the student occupiers communicated to the crowd, that it was more of a carrot or the baton approach, where, if the students didn’t open their barricades to the police, they were told they would be charged with two counts of Felony Burglary and Destruction of Property.

However, 150-200 police were outnumbered by what became a crowd of 4-5000 students, which, if the police tried to take the student occupiers to police vans, they would be compelled to use the tear gas and rubber bullets they had brought with them, and it could have easily turned into a case of blood being spilled at UC Berkeley. This would have caused national outrage, since every major television station and a good number of news outlets were present, and such naked violence of the state against middle class students would instantaneously be broadcast across the entire country. The stand-off between the police and the students ended around 7:15 p.m., with the building having been occupied since 6:00 a.m. that morning. The police and administration were unable to carry out their harsher threats towards the occupiers, and they were charged with misdemeanor trespassing, due to the outrage that would have been sparked amongst the rest of the UC Berkeley student body if the harsher charges had been pressed.

However, due to lack of coordinated leadership, despite there being a minor victory on the issue of charges, and despite the militancy of students both at UC Berkeley and at other UC campuses and at San Francisco State, none of the demands the student occupiers raised were met, and the negotiations via mass assembly the student occupiers desired never materialized. The picket lines the students had set up as part of the strike broke up as the stand-off wore on, with the principle of picket lines mean “Do not cross!” not being enforced. While the strike had taken hold in the humanities department of UC Berkeley, with many classes having been canceled, it was unclear whether the strike was extended to the rest of the departments. While HWRS applauds the militancy and willingness to fight back of UC and CSU students, the way for the demands of students to be met is for them to coordinate with efforts to save public education from the K-12, to University level, along with the unions of faculty, staff and teachers and to coordinate for an indefinite general strike on a state-wide level. The capitalist class and their bought and paid for lapdogs, the Republicrats in Sacramento, will use the current economic crisis as an excuse to try to make both students and the Californian working class pay for the ruling class’s economic crisis that the ruling class should be paying for. When the research departments of UC Berkeley, and other UC schools, are used as cash cows to develop research that brings billions of profit to

corporations, and there being a push for less and less dollars to be spent on the needs and education of students, the 32% tuition hikes, cutbacks and lay-offs have little to do with improving the quality of education for students.

The sweet deal of state subsidization is not something that the corporations that exploit taxpayer resources in the UC system are willing to give up without a militant, resolute fight back.

FROM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TO THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL: ONLY WORKERS' ACTIONS CAN SAVE PUBLIC EDUCATION!

**For control of our public universities by faculty, staff, and
students; abolish the Board of Regents!
For parent-teacher-staff control of public schools;
down with school boards and state trustees!
Stop the Democratic Party/CTA drive to privatize
through charter schools!**

Richmond, California, located in the West Contra Costa Unified School District and sitting in the shadow of Chevron, is Ground Zero in the attack on public education. Chevron draws down \$14 billion in annual profits and enjoys tax breaks via Proposition 13 and the corporate tax deals cut in Sacramento to pass the budget this year. All the while, schools are bulldozed; teachers and staff are fired; classes are overcrowded; and public education in California has become the laughing stock of the educated world. Youth in this district are more likely to go to prison or war than to get a good education and a decent job. Even now, few can afford the University of California. Yet they plan to increase fees to over \$10,000!

The swells and overstuffed suits on the Board of Regents, the school boards, the legislative and executive bodies (from the State

Capitol to the White House), and their paymasters on Wall Street, led by JP Morgan Chase, Citibank, Goldman Sachs etc., blather endlessly about their commitment to cutting costs. Meanwhile, their wealth and profits soar, in contrast to homeless encampments which bloom outside our cities.

WHO WILL STAND UP TO THIS INJUSTICE? WHO WILL FIGHT FOR OUR KIDS' EDUCATION?

Despite the clamor of the media pundits, who last week celebrated a jump in the Dow, the current crisis shows no let up for the working class, the unemployed, or our students. CEOs and public administrators see only one way to balance their books, via wholesale attacks on the living standards of working people. One in seven people internationally live in poverty. 40 million in the US join the 2 billion world-

wide surviving in poverty, alongside a billion who live on less than \$1.00 a day. We are now told to expect a jobless “recovery” while the economy shreds a quarter million jobs monthly, and the stock market skyrockets as profits return to the financial capitalists. ***The bailout is working – but only for Wall Street – and at our expense!***

Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan Chase, and their ilk have hoarded billions to pay obscene bonuses to their best thieves this Christmas. The treacherous leaders in the union bureaucracies, the union supported politicians, and the reformists posing as socialists only give cover to these accepting furloughs, lower wages, cuts in pensions, and increased health care costs, and to stand by as immigrants are scapegoated and deported. While Wall Street and the military receive billions of dollars from Washington, we are told: “Don’t fight back; you can’t win, because there is no money for education and social services.”

Most of all, we are told: “This is simply a crisis of the financial sector, caused by foolish people who let themselves get talked into mortgages they couldn’t afford.” They don’t want us to see the big picture. The truth is that the entire edifice of the capitalist economic system is rotten to the core. The present economic crisis is not a matter of bad mortgages transformed by Wall Street machinations into “toxic assets.” Rather, it is a **classic crisis of overproduction**, caused by inter-imperialist rivalry lowering workers’ standard of living in order to boost profits, until the workers can no longer afford to buy the goods they produce. This inherent structural weakness in capitalism means that **for the bosses and their profits to survive, Wall Street needs you to take the hit – you, your kids, your grandkids, and your descendants ad infinitum!**

Instead of explaining this truth, the fake socialists join the chorus of liberals and progressives who create the illusion that simply putting pressure on Obama will stop the cuts and save our education. One fake socialist group, the LIT-FI, creates and perpetuates illusions in capitalism’s ability to deliver by calling for an elected Board of Regents instead of fighting for stu-

dent/worker/teaching faculty control of the university system. Their faith in reform is made apparent in a banner headline in their press, *La VOZ de los Trabajadores*, asking: “OBAMA ARE YOU LISTENING? WE’RE FIGHTING BACK!” As if, this “bought and paid for,” pretty boy of Wall Street, whose job it is to impose the cuts, will turn his back on big capital and put the interests of the working class first.

What fake socialists, liberals, and progressives won’t say is that for us to win quality education, affordable health care, jobs for all, a clean environment, and an end to war, **capitalism must die**. We must replace this entire system – the economic foundation, the political structures, and the armed power of the state – with workers’ democratic self-management, all the way from the points of production and distribution to the highest levels of decision making and enforcement. **What we need is a Workers’ Government run by workers’ power.**

Rallies, teach-ins, forums, and one-day work stoppages alone will not end the attack on education. To win, we need **prolonged general strike action** across the state against the rule of the capitalists, in all the workplaces in both the public and private sectors, in the schools the universities and in the streets. We must fight for transitional demands that can break the grip of the capitalist media and world view on the masses of workers. Our program must include:

1) **No layoffs, furloughs, or speed-ups; no fee increases or cuts in programs or classes in the schools or in higher education; no cuts in social services and benefits for the poor, seniors, children, or the disabled.**

2) **Abolish the Regents! No to fake democratization of the Regents through general election! Down with the drive to privatize public education!** Only a university system democratically administered by teaching faculty, staff, students, and the working class community can provide education that serves the interest of the working class, not the corporate elite. **FOR STUDENT, FACULTY, STAFF, AND WORK-**

ERS' COMMUNITY CONTROL of the UC, Cal State, and Community College systems and all public schools! Down with the political appointees, elected officials, and state-imposed trustees who strangle our colleges and school districts!

3) FOR OPEN ADMISSIONS! FOR AN END TO FEES (NO TUITION)! STIPENDS BASED ON NEED! From pre-school to graduate school, provide free, high quality education and enough classes for everyone. The existing system is not designed to educate the working class. From grade school through university, it tracks students by socioeconomic class, separating the privileged from those destined for low paying dead end jobs, the military, or prison. In a socialist economy the highest education achievable by an individual would be valued and promoted. But in this era of capitalist decay, higher education and socioeconomic advancement are no longer valued by the denizens of Wall Street and their corporate skills on the UC Board of Regents. **DOWN WITH ARNE DUNCAN'S CHARTER SCHOOL DRIVE!**

4) JOBS FOR ALL! From an individual's entry into the working world until retirement, everyone must be guaranteed the opportunity to perform meaningful creative work that serves humanity and pays enough to support a family. **To end unemployment and the squeeze on workers' wages, we demand a sliding scale of wages and working hours: 30 hours' work for 40 hours' pay! Share available work! Reclaim advances in productivity from the expropriators!**

5) When banks and corporations plead poverty in the face of workers' reasonable demands for jobs, fair pay, and full benefits, we must fight for the nationalization of failing enterprises under democratic workers' control, without compensation to the stockholders!

6) ABOLISH CALIFORNIA'S INDUSTRIAL PRISON SYSTEM! The decline in spending on education since the passage of Proposition 13 is closely correlated with the rise of the prison population in California. Each prisoner is a con-

sequence of this system's failures in education and employment! The **system** is the crime; the prisoners are only the symptom. Abolish the capitalist system and the symptom will disappear. Prisoners cost \$47,000 a year and incarcerated youth cost a quarter million dollars a year – while our public schools operate on \$7,000 per student!

7) FOR UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE from cradle to grave. The only thing preventing universal, free, high quality health care is the profit system, which extracts profit from every illness or death. **For our families to have health care, the profit system must be driven out of medicine!**

8) Stop the two-tier system of contracting out permanent positions. Offer contract workers permanent union university employment, offer integration into CALPERS with credits for time served. **Organize the unorganized!**

9) Drive Military & CIA/NSA recruiters out of the universities! Down with all intellectual work that serves the exploitative and military ends of the imperialists. **Down with Lawrence Livermore**, home of US nuclear weapon research! Rather, we need a university that teaches the critique of political economy and the theoretical contributions of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky—not the deceptive system of exploitation and wars! **Education withers during imperialist war drives! Defeat US, NATO and Allies in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan!**

10) For a fighting Workers' Party. To achieve the above demands, workers and students must break with the Democratic and all capitalist parties (Greens, Republicans, American Independent, and Libertarian) and build a Workers' Party based in the trade unions, alongside unorganized workers, the unemployed, and their allies in the communities of color and the LGBT community. **Only a Fighting Workers' Party committed to defeating capitalism by revolutionary means and founding a workers' government can establish a rational socialist plan to win these demands.**

Labor and the Attack on Public Education: The View from Ground Zero



Public Education: Preparing Oppressed and Working Class Youth to Be Cannon Fodder Either for the Prison Industry or for Imperialist Wars.

Richmond California is Ground Zero for both the attack on public education and the fight to save our schools. This community, part of the West Contra Costa Unified School District, is well known for its high unemployment rate, high murder rates, and for sitting in the shadow of the massive oil refinery owned by Chevron (which benefits disproportionately from the Proposition 13 tax break which tied their rates to the property value from 1978 plus 2% per annum). A long history of negligence, corruption and mismanagement in the district's past has burdened the schools with

a massive debt to which a state trustee has been assigned. This is to assure it is paid before money is directed toward educational necessities. The trustee holds the threat of state take-over over the heads of an obsequious school board unable to shake the debt and provide for quality education.

Then the 2008-2009 statewide budget cuts set in!

In November 2008, just after the districts residents passed a school bond to keep schools open, the school board announced that ten schools would need to be closed. The school board meetings from November through February drew hundreds of angry parents, teachers and students. Of course, Richmond was not alone. Similar scenarios were played out in districts across the state and nation.

When the students at Richmond's Kennedy High School found out their school could potentially be closed, they walked out in protest on December 18th. At the school boards' "democratic" closure meetings (which were designed to gain buy-in and get communities to vote to close their neighbors' schools instead of their own), the authority of the school board was challenged, as the majority

vote was for no closures. Hundreds spoke out, protested and marched against the closures, and over a thousand showed up to demand no closure as the school board decided which schools it would close. The pressure from the public forced two cities to cough up 1.5 million dollars each to keep their city schools safe for two years. The “progressives” in their city councils had to do something to save face in front of the masses of parents and potential voters. From ten originally slated for closure three schools were shut down and one has been bulldozed this summer. But those schools temporarily saved will again face the chopping block unless funding is found annually.

School closures were just the start. Then came the layoffs, the forced give-backs and negotiated concessions from the unions. Students found overcrowded classes when they returned to school this September. Teachers had long ago accepted lower wages in exchange for medical benefits for their spouses into retirement. So in a cost saving maneuver the School Board has refused to negotiate seriously with the union for over a year, ultimately imposing an end to the spousal benefits on Dec 31, 2009. This forces older teachers who qualify to consider leaving the district sooner than they may have intended, leaving students with inconsistent teaching this year and opening the road to hire young first tier teachers at lower costs and with lower expectations. In this district where one third of those who enter school in kindergarten do not graduate and where a child has more of a chance of ending up in prison than going to university and landing a decent job, the conditions are slated to get

worse. Capitalism no longer has use for educated working class youth and has in turn abandoned them to the economic crisis. Even before the crash of 2008 this district was in dire straits. Now it is little more than a holding pen on the way to the penitentiary.

The Role of the United Teachers of Richmond’s (UTR) Class Collaborationist Leadership

When the cuts and school closures were first announced, the UTR president made demagogic speeches in defense of public education. But UTR never committed their resources to make the struggle to save schools a social and political fight to unite labor, parents and students against the closures. While our comrades advocated united statewide strike action to force full funding of the schools, the UTR president withheld the unions resources from the struggle. She told our comrade that they were saving their resources for labor actions later in the summer. The school closures were followed by layoffs and the UTR leadership didn’t lift a finger. Aside from a few threats of law suits and a few angry speeches, nothing was done to mobilize the membership.

After a year and a half of fruitless negotiations, a strike authorization vote was taken in August 2009 just a week prior to school opening. The strike authorization passed by 93%. But the UTR president never planned on using this vote for anything more than leverage (see our article on the insidious nature of strike authorization votes). In the meeting prior to the vote teachers from the Progressive Teachers caucus and other rank and file

leaders tried to propose a “strike-now” vote as opposed to a strike authorization vote, but they were shut down. Their motion for a strike-now vote was not allowed on the floor of at the meeting.

Following the strike authorization vote the school year started without a strike. The teachers missed the opportunity to strike from a position of strength. If the teachers had struck the first week of school when the classrooms were not set up, scabs would have been incapable of navigating the chaos of the first weeks of school. But, the UTR leadership let this tactical opportunity slip through its fingers. The leadership had no confidence in the ability of the union to win a strike, a message transmitted to the school board via non action and to the teachers directly in meetings. The school board took advantage of this hesitation on the part of the union and started training scabs at various sites around the county. It looked like the school board may had been preparing for a lock-out. Teachers and supporters turned up at the scab training to intimidate and drive out the scabs. (insert link for video clip). In a UTR leadership meeting, (held the same day as the first scab training) CTA hacks were brought in to promote a plan making the WCCUSD a charter district as the only alternative to accepting concessions; a strike was ruled out by there hacks as un-winnable.

The CTA, in league with Obama’s Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, is pushing a plan to destroy public education in districts around the nation which are failing. First they under fund the districts, then they push charter schools as the answer. During this campaign the UTR president and School board presi-

dent joined on stage at the Democratic Party of El Cerrito to promote their joint view of education’s future. But outside the meeting progressive teachers and their supporters held banners calling for “Strikes not furloughs!” This call for charter schools by UTR President Pixie Shickele Hayward turned many of the teachers against the direction the leadership was taking the union. It was becoming clear that this leadership did not have any strategy or tactics to win this struggle. All they were capable of was serving up concessions. When the proposal for a charter district was shot down by teachers and parents, Pixie came back around to furloughs and other cuts and brought a tentative agreement with give back of preparation time for Kindergarten teachers, acceptance of over crowded classes, furloughs in upcoming years, no wage increases for the duration of the contract and a cut in medical benefits for spouses and increased employee contributions for dependents.

Absent from the perspective of business unionism is the view that our unions fight not just for its members, but for the entire class. The UTR and the CTA have totally embraced the dislocation from the working class as a whole with their business unionism. But they have gone one step further; they demagogically speak to the higher good of public education but do nothing to unite the working class to defend it. Worse than that, they don’t even fight for their own membership. They would rather play footsie with the school district superintendent (the boss) at a Democratic Party forum pontificating on perspectives for quality education than devote resources to organizing the community to win quality education.

The bottom line is that the current crop of trade union bureaucrats are a transmission belt for the bosses' beliefs into the working class. The bosses say there is no money; the union shrugs it shoulders and says there is no money. The bosses say the community will not support a strike; the union echoes the right wing media and tells the membership they can not win a strike. The bosses say you can not win a strike; the union tells its members they can not win. These are the bosses lies and our unions push them on us because they are hooked into the bosses political party and they will do nothing that shakes up the ship of state that binds labor to capital, unless they are forced to act by the democratic and militant rumblings of an activated rank and file.

Which is what is now happening in the UTR. Following the strike authorization vote, the leadership brought back a tentative agreement as described above and tried to sell it to the membership. In a democratic union a general membership meeting would be called which would entertain all input from the floor, discuss and vote the TA up or down. Instead the UTR called a series of informational meetings which did not entertain debate or motions from the floor. The vote was held following three meetings. A few days later the outcome was announced that the TA had been approved by nine votes. The Progressive Teachers and the rank and file militants were not convinced and claimed there were voting and counting irregularities and demanded a recount.

In the meantime the Progressive Teachers were circulating a petition for a general membership meeting, on which

they collected double the qualifying 20% of membership signatures and submitted them, demanding a meeting.

The issue of the general membership meeting and the recount converged and angry teachers went to UTR headquarters to get answers about the petitions they had turned in and the progress of the recount. In turn the president of the UTR called the police on the teachers in their own hall! It is no surprise that a union leader willing to sell the district off as a Charter District, willing to bring back cuts in medical benefits and accept furloughs, who speaks from the same platform as the School District Superintendent (who is actively recruiting scabs), would call the cops on her own members. But this breach of workers morality and of the principle that "labor cleans its own house" cannot be allowed to stand. Pixie must be expelled from the union.

Following the confrontation at the union hall the petition for a general membership meeting was found and recounted, and the ballots for the TA were recounted. In both cases the Progressive Teachers and the rank and file militants prevailed. There were enough signatures on the petition to call a general membership meeting and the recount showed the TA had been rejected by a margin of 30 votes (approximately 670 yes to 710 no).

What was particularly unique, and revealing about the mood of the teachers, about the rejection of the TA was not that the majority voted no, or that the president resisted the recount and tried to steal the election, but that Pixie (the President) had also worded the ballot to scare teachers into voting for the TA. It

was worded thusly: "Yes, I accept the TA vs. No, I want to strike." Obviously Pixie had no intention of striking. She had not done any strike preparation and had not raised a finger to mobilize labor or community support for a strike. Rather, she worded the ballot to frighten teachers, pure and simple, and it backfired on her, reflecting the frustration and anger of the teachers.

On November 30th the teachers will had their General Meeting. HWRS and others brought a leaflets advocating that Pixie be removed and that a strike committee be chosen. The Progressive teachers initiated a petition to remove her, but other militants suggested a majority vote to amend the bylaws to allow for immediate recall followed by a recall vote. What has become clear is that the will of the teachers to fight and win a strike can not be abided by a leader who opposes strike action and who will call cops on their own members. Members of the Progressive Teachers told the assembled workers that they needed to plan a demonstration in the next couple of days and build for the strike committee and a member strike.

The following motions passed at the meeting, but the president said that she would have to "check" with CTA legal to make sure that they don't violate the authority of the bargaining team or the executive board.

1. Move that this body elect a UTR Strike Committee immediately. That UTR provide members of this committee with the resources to plan direct actions immediately.

Direct actions Include:

Send teachers door to door to our school community and inform them about our original demands. Work with parents and community groups to gain support for a strike.

Form solid picket lines at schools and in the community

Plan joint actions with our supporters and allies in labor, with Oakland and neighboring locals....

2. Move for resumption of bargaining, which passed with about a 2/3 majority:

"The president of UTR shall instruct the bargaining committee to make itself available for bargaining starting on December 1, 2009 and calls upon the district bargaining team to return to the bargaining table no later than December 2, 2009."

3. The last speaker, in the last minute of the meeting (5:59 p.m.) made the following motion on bargaining demands, which again passed overwhelmingly:

The president of UTR shall give the following instructions to the bargaining team:

- The bargaining team shall not accept any "average" class sizes. Every class must have a hard cap not to exceed 24 for K-3, 34 for Grades 4-6; 35 for Secondary academic, an average of 40 for Secondary PE, 25 for Alternative Education.
- If lifetime health care is reduced or eliminated, employees who, under the old contract, would have become eligible for lifetime benefits during the proposed contract period must remain eligible for the term of the proposed contract.

The bargaining team must consider the special lifetime health care needs of those members continuously employed since 1986, who may not be eligible for Medicare.

- If concessions are made, the membership will only accept temporary concessions, such as furlough days, rather than permanent concessions, such as an increase in employee health care contributions
- The bargaining team shall not accept any dollar caps on the district's contributions to employee health care; and if concessions must be made, the employee contribution must not exceed 10% of health care costs for family members; with employees and retirees covered 100% by the district.

As this article is being written, the UTR is in a crisis. The membership by a slim majority supports a strike and the President opposes it. In a strike situation the membership and leadership can only win if they are united for victory, and strike now. But a successful strike action depends first and foremost on the removal of Pixie from office.

The UTR needs fighting leadership with a winning strategy and tactics to include making the local economic struggle into a statewide and nationwide fight for public education. The attack comes from big capital via their puppets in the White House down through the State House and to the school board; so the fight back must identify the source of the attack. If big capital had use for educated workers, you can bet they would be pouring bil-

ions into education to create the next generation of happy worker bees. But now in this period of deindustrialization, outsourcing and increased inter-imperialist rivalry, workers are not needed here because factories can be established in places like Honduras, Indonesia and China where the local thugs can execute union leaders without a fuss thereby punishing and keeping down a super-exploited labor force. This is a process whereby the conditions of the working class in the First World are being driven down to those in the Semi-colonies.

To confront this onslaught from big capital, labor must self identify with its own power, establish working class political independence, and build class solidarity and united actions.

The teachers in the UTR can take back their union, establish democracy, and prepare for a winning strike. To do this Pixie must be expelled, a rank and file strike committee must be democratically chosen and a strategy of class solidarity must be established to prepare for the strike. The union resources must be turned to reach out to the working class community in the district, in particular to the Black and Latino/a parents to win them to; support solid picket lines, set up STRIKE SCHOOLS, and STRIKE KITCHENS, organized through massive STRIKE ASSEMBLIES including teachers, parents, students and workers. These assemblies must take up the task of reaching out across districts, statewide and nationwide.

AS GOES RICHMOND, SO GOES THE NATION!