

Reject NHTA sellout! Expand the strike to defend public education!

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The tentative agreement between the New Haven Teachers Association (NHTA) and the New Haven Unified School District is a sellout deal that amounts to a pay cut for teachers and gives the district a green light for budget cuts and layoffs over the coming years.

The *World Socialist Web Site Teacher Newsletter* calls on teachers to reject this deal with the contempt it *de World Socialist Web Site* serves. Teachers have not fought for fourteen days, in the first strike in the district's history, in order to accept a deal that will encourage the billionaire privatizers to escalate their war against teachers and public education across the country.

A “no” vote is a critical first step. But it is not a matter of sending the bargaining team back to negotiate a better deal. The NHTA and California Teachers Association will not because they are allied with the same corporate-controlled Democratic Party politicians in Sacramento that are waging a state-wide war against teachers and public education.

That is why rank-and-file teachers must take the conduct of the strike into their own hands. In every school and community educators should elect rank-and-file strike committees that are answerable to educators and students, not the corporate controlled politicians and unions. These committees should outline a list of demands of what is needed to improve the livelihoods of teachers and the quality of public education, not what the powers-that-be claim is affordable.

These should include:

- * No budget cuts!
- * For a 30 percent wage increase!
- * Full district funding of health care!
 - * Full strike pay and service years for teachers, retirees and other striking workers!
- * Lower class sizes to 20 for elementary and 25 for

secondary!

The claim that there is no money to improve wages and school funding is a lie. The Bay Area is one of the most unequal metropolitan areas in the US and California is home to 157 billionaires. When it comes to bank bailouts, corporate tax cuts, building prisons, attacking immigrants and endless wars, the Democrats and Republicans in Washington and Sacramento have no problem finding resources.

The only way the resources can be secured for education is for the working class to carry out a frontal assault on the wealth, power and private fortunes of the super-rich. This means the fight against the capitalist system and for the socialist organization of economic life to meet the needs of working people who produce society's wealth.

A rejection of this sellout is only the beginning. The strike cannot continue as a isolated struggle against the powerful political and corporate forces that are trying to destroy public education district-by-district and state-by-state.

There is broad popular support for teachers in Union City and across the country because educators are fighting to defend the right to public education for all children. Ninety-nine 99 percent of teachers West Sonoma County recently voted to go on strike if the district doesn't improve their offer, while Oakland teachers have joined pickets in New Haven in solidarity, knowing that none of the issues for which they struck this year have been resolved. Teachers in West Virginia are poised to strike again, as they face the threat of charter schools being introduced into the state.

This part of an international revolt by educators. In recent days and weeks, hundreds of thousands of teachers have struck in Chile, Honduras, Mexico,

Poland, Tunisia, Morocco and other countries, as part of the resurgence of the class struggle of workers against austerity and social inequality.

A “no” vote will send a powerful message to teachers and workers across the country and the world that New Haven and all teachers are taking their stand in this city and that they need all the support they can get to win this battle. Once rank-and-file teachers take this struggle into their own hands, they can appeal to all workers throughout the Bay Area, the state and beyond to mobilize behind them, including by calling a statewide strike and preparing for a general strike across the US to defend public education and all the social rights of working people.

It is time for New Haven teachers to draw the lessons of this and other recent teacher battles, including Oakland and Los Angeles where the unions ignored the demands of educators and signed deals that paved the way to budget cuts, school closings, the further expansion of charter schools and other privatization schemes.

The California Teachers Association (CTA) and National Education Association (NEA) have kept New Haven teachers isolated from teachers in neighboring districts. After intentionally staggering the Los Angeles and Oakland teachers strikes, the CTA deliberately called off the May 22 one-day strike by Sacramento teachers so as to prevent them from striking simultaneously with New Haven teachers.

The NHTA and CTA chose to time the New Haven strike after the P-2 ADA deadline, so that it would financially benefit the school district and put additional economic pressure on teachers, with the average teacher losing over \$7,000 while on strike. After initially demanding a 20 percent pay raise over two years, in addition to a retention bonus and other demands, the NHTA has caved completely. The proposed contract entails a minuscule 4 percent raise over two years, which amounts to an effective pay cut, as it is half the average inflation rate of 3-4 percent in the Bay Area.

Throughout the strike, the NHTA promoted Democrats like Tony Thurmond who has demanded budget cuts and school closures from districts across the state, while praising the support of Democratic presidential hopefuls like Kamala Harris, Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren. Despite the bitter

infighting in Washington, the fact is the Democrats represent the financial aristocracy that runs this country and are no less enemies of teachers and public education than President Trump, Betsy DeVos and the Republicans.

The district has threatened to impose budget cuts to fund any salary increases. School officials have already cut \$4 million from the budget this year and have planned cuts of \$8.6 million for the next two school years, which will lead to layoffs of teachers and support staff, as well as increased class sizes. Many high school teachers already have classes of between 36 and 42 students, while elementary school teachers will see theirs skyrocket from 25 to 30.

The fact that the NHTA and CTA could bring back such a deal, worked out behind the scenes with state Democrats, only proves that they are on the other side of the barricades. The unions do not unite teachers to defend our interests, they function as tools of the state Democrats who have spent decades cutting school budgets and expanding charter schools while handing billions in tax cuts to Silicon Valley and other corporate interests.

It is time that rank-and-file teachers take the conduct of this struggle out of the hands of the NHTA and CTA by building their own independent, rank-and-file strike committees to mobilize the broadest support among teachers and workers throughout the Bay Area, the state and across the US. New Haven teachers must fight for what all students need: fully funded and fully staffed, high-quality schools.

We urge New Haven teachers to contact us and build rank-and-file committees to take up this fight.



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