

“Everything is going up except our wages”: Striking University of Illinois nurses in Chicago speak from the picket line

Andy Thompson
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Are you a health care worker at University of Illinois hospitals with nice insurance policies. So, when we try to give or another workplace with a story to tell? Make your world-class care, it's up to us. The patients that come in here voice heard by filling out the form below. Tell us with their lives and we want to give them the best care submissions will be kept anonymous. we can.”

Over 1,700 Nurses at the University of Illinois Melia and other nurses who spoke with the WSWs shared hospital system, known as UI Health (UIH), in Chicago in recent years nurses have experienced a sharp increase in are on strike. Nurses had been working without instances of violence in the hospitals. Several nurses shared contract since August when the previous agreement expired. After a one-week strike that month, the Illinois Nurses Association (INA) sent nurses back on the job. Some nurses have trouble handling the toll this environment without an agreement. takes on them... we had two members of the bargaining team

In the last contract offer UIH offered a piddling wage assault during the bargaining process. For a while the increase of just 2 percent. Nurses have now authorized hospital safety committee didn't even have a nursing body an indefinite strike to win increases in pay, improvement representing it.” She continued, “To think that this is what we patient-to-nurse staffing ratios, and for improvement have to deal with on a daily basis to give the care we love to workplace safety and security. giving is heart breaking.”

Reporters with the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke Alejandra, a veteran pediatrics nurse with 14 years of with nurses at the picket line on Wednesday to learn experience, also spoke with WSWs reporters. “We’re fighting more about the issues in the strike. for fair wages. We’re asking for fair wages to close the

Melia, an early care nurse who only recently began information gap. Our parking has gone up, our insurance has gone working at the UIH hospital told reporters, “We have everything is going up except our wages.” She explained, have safe staffing resources and the ability to provide. Currently we’re asking for 7 percent which I don’t think is a safe care for our patients. Without that we don’t have to ask, considering that our chief nursing officer got 20 what it takes to succeed and do our best for patients.” percent.”

“In the pediatric clinic the violence that we see is more verbal abuse She added, “I want to make a career out of this job I keep patients and patients. But I feel if we had support and protections hearing my co-workers say that they love working from our administration then we would be able to better serve our they can’t afford it! Of all the places I applied to, this one offered

the lowest base wage. I want to make this something Alejandra said that in her area, there can sometimes be over 200 an continue to do, and we want to keep our best nurses patients scheduled at one time. “Currently we have agency nurses that “This is a public hospital, so a lot of the people coming here to fill the gap,” She said, “but there’s no staffing ratios in on’t have the same options to go to any of these family outpatient unit. So, if management was able to help assist us with

safe nurse to patient staff ratio that would be very high. While healthcare workers are fighting to keep food on the table, the stock market has been soaring in preparation for Donald Trump to take office as the next president. Plans by the billionaire financial oligarchs are well underway to prepare to boost their already enormous wealth.

them to be seen by the doctors.” These plans can only be paid for by increasing the exploitation of the working class. This will include further price increases, layoffs, and the slashing of benefits.

erie the nurses have, the solidarity that we have. Nurses and healthcare workers do not have to accept these attacks on their living standards while the capitalist class reaps in trillions of dollars. There is plenty of money in society to provide nurses with higher wages, full benefits, and to have proper staffing levels in the hospitals. It is, however, being hoarded by the rich.

er similar issues, including rapidly increasing cost of living. The strike and make serious gains nurses in Chicago should join the Healthcare Workers Rank-and-File committee and fight to begin Tuesday but was called at last minute by the United Healthcare Workers in a joint struggle with all workers against the capitalist system.

cases the union bureaucracies are working to undermine rank-and-demand for a strike and for serious improvements to their wages. In Michigan UMMAP agreed to call off the strike after a “memorandum of understanding” with Michigan hospitals.

memorandum was not a tentative agreement and met none of the demands. Its purpose was to posture as if progress toward an agreement had been made to get workers back on the job without improving their conditions.

ly, the University of California strike is being planned by the California Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (CFE) to last just two days. The purpose of this kind of “good strike” is to allow workers to blow off steam before sending them back on the job without a contract.

workers also experienced these tactics in August when the INA called the initial strike to just one week before ordering them back on the job. In the country healthcare workers are in a powerful position to demand serious gains that go well beyond the tiny raises proposed by the union bureaucrats. But to do so, rank-and-file committees must be formed to take the organization of the strike out of the hands of the union other union officials and into the hands of healthcare workers themselves.

a rank-and-file committee nurses can put forward their own demands based on what they need, not based on what the hospital administration says is acceptable. It can also combat the isolation of the strike, linking up with healthcare workers at other hospital systems in Chicago and nationwide. Nurses in Chicago should join and coordinate their strikes together with healthcare workers in California, Michigan, and other states.

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