



SPEAK OUT NOW

March 8,
2010

www.RevolutionaryWorkersGroup.org

March 4 – A Day of Action and Celebration

This past Thursday, there were protests all over California - in elementary schools, middle schools and high schools, in community colleges, CSUs and the UCs. Students, faculty and staff held meetings, rallies, speak outs, picket lines and teach-ins against the budget cuts to education. Some people marched in protest and some held rallies. The biggest and most important protest was in San Francisco at 5pm in Civic Center Plaza.

The San Francisco protest was organized by major education unions, including teachers, faculty and staff and students and the SF Labor Council. It brought more than 12,000 people together. There were kindergarteners and grandparents, high school and college students, parents and teachers and college instructors. It was a first in California – all levels of education in the same place at the same time with the same message.

There were also workers from many unions and workplaces who joined in. It was a wonderful gathering of people of all ages and ethnicities standing together. People not only addressed the budget cuts to education, but also the layoffs, the foreclosures, the increasing homelessness, poverty and hunger that are impacting so many. It was a gathering of ordinary people, many who had never come to a demonstration before. People had decided to break their isolation and not to remain invisible. They came together in public to make their anger seen and heard. People were there to reaffirm their commitment to education and a future for all the young people of the state.

The rally was addressed by students, teachers, staff members, parents, and union leaders. There was entertainment from singers and rappers who sang and spoke against the budget cuts. The rock band from Hayward, "The Angry, Tired Teachers" filled the night air with "No Cuts"

music. No politicians spoke. This was not their day. The rally made it clear that on March 4 what the politicians needed to do was listen.

The message was shared by all – *"No Cuts To Education"*. *"No More Cuts To Pubic Services."* We have stood by too long waiting for this crisis to turn around, for the politicians to find a solution. But month after month, year after year, the cuts are deepening. Now we have no choice. The educational system is on the brink of disaster.

The message was clear. There is plenty of money in California, the 9th largest economy in the world. It is time that money was used to provide the hardworking people of this state what they deserve – quality education and efficient services, paid for by our taxes.

The speakers at the rally also said that of course one day of demonstrations is not enough to turn the cuts around. Everyone understood this is just a first step. But it is nonetheless an important first step. We have to keep organizing and involving more and more of our family, friends, co-workers, classmates and others in this people's movement.

There are many consequences of this economic crisis that make all of us unhappy and angry. But on March 4, in San Francisco, along with the anger and discontent, there was also a strong feeling of a job well done, and a feeling of celebration shared with all the other people who had turned out. And in cities and towns across the state, where people organized and stood together for a collective future, it was a true celebration of people's power, across the state.

Contact us if you agree that it is time for working people to begin organizing for the struggles we need to take control our lives.

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The Line Has Been Drawn – We Are Under Attack!

In cities and towns, across the state, working people are under attack. School district after school district faces budget cuts. As the March 15 “pink slip” deadline date for school employee layoffs gets closer, the talk is more intense. Meanwhile, MUNI workers in San Francisco are under attack and 3700 workers at the NUMMI assembly plant in Fremont are waiting as the April 1 plant closing date moves closer.

Education Under Attack

California schools are facing cuts of around \$470 per student, nearly \$12,000 for a class of 25, a class size which hardly exists any more. Schools are facing even more cutbacks, closing of libraries, elimination of art and music programs, where they still exist. Specialized programs, bus service – just about everything will face cuts if this continues.

Seven of the 18 school districts in Alameda County, including Alameda, Emery, Hayward, Newark, Oakland, Pleasanton and San Lorenzo expect to face huge budget shortfalls in the next year or two. Hayward and Rodeo schools have county advisors overseeing their growing debt crisis. The Los Angeles school board voted to send nearly 5,200 preliminary layoff notices to teachers and other workers because of the budget deficit. In San Francisco, 900 workers are being put on notice. The list is endless.

It is not just a local or state problem. The Federal government is leading the attack. Last week Obama made a point of supporting the school board at Central Falls High School in Rhode Island, which voted to fire all the teachers in the school because the school had such a low graduation rate. That’s the policy. The schools are in trouble – fire the teachers. How about firing the bosses and their politicians?

City and State Workers

The state budget deficit is estimated at \$20 billion. Not only does this mean that less money is flowing in from the state, but the state is actually taking more than two billion dollars away from cities and towns, leaving them in an even greater crisis.

Their solution? Attack the workers. San Francisco has received the greatest attention with the recent layoff of 15,000 of San Francisco’s 26,000 city workers. Workers can reapply for their jobs and be rehired within two weeks. But if they are rehired they will now work 37.5 hours a week (a cut in pay of 6.25 percent). Once the city government is done with this round, most other workers will face a similar demand for a pay cut, probably without the reduced hours.

There is no reason to accept these attacks. Whether we work in the public or private sector, it is all the same. “Do more with less and live with less.” That’s no solution for us. And who is saying this to us – it is those who have benefited from the bailouts of the banks and corporations. It is those who are supporting the wars on Iraq and Afghanistan because they are profiting now or will profit in the future.

What can be done? Most of the politicians repeat the tired old words –“There is no choice.” Last Thursday, March 4, people began to send a different message. Teachers, workers, students and parents in more than 100 school districts across the state rallied against the attacks on education. In San Francisco around 12,000 people came together. In Sacramento, Oakland, and Los Angeles and on university campuses there were similar but smaller actions. People are saying, “Something can and must be done.”

We have no reason to listen to the bosses or their politicians. Our future is in our hands. Whether we mobilize our forces to fight for decent education, or to support a fight to save the jobs of workers at NUMMI or another workplace, it is the same fight.