

Fightback

The Marxist Voice of Labour and Youth

October 2005

★★★ Picket Line Solidarity Special ★★★

Victory to the Teachers!

BC Fed must call a General Strike to defend free collective bargaining!

Yet again, the BC Liberal Government has removed the democratic right of employees to strike. From the UBC TA's, to the ferry workers and hospital employees, workers rights and public programs are coming under constant attack. Now the Liberals plan to use BC's teachers as their next layer of cannon fodder. On, October 7th, 42 000 public school teachers will illegally walk the line in defence of their right to collectively bargain, to go on strike and to save education for BC's youth. Fightback stands together with the striking teachers.

Long gone are the days we can tell students "you have your whole future in front of you." With class sizes increasing, giving students a quality education becomes increasingly hard. As resources are stretched to the limits and beyond, students are left behind without the skills to survive in today's world. The Liberal agenda in our classrooms turn students into commodities, and graduates into quotas for teachers

The BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) is the next line of defence in a wider battle over workers' rights to have a union, collectively bargain and to strike. Asking for only a 5% raise over 3 years and smaller class sizes to better be able to reach out to youth in need is not that much. It is no accident that in a province where we can find 12 year olds building houses, that the government is not concerned with the conditions in the classrooms these youth should be in. The Liberals changed the labour code to remove teachers' right to strike for a reason.

Striking is always the last option for any worker. Capitalism, and its political backers, must attack the living standards of the working class if they are to boost profits and not fall victim to the competition of the next guy. Larger

classrooms are a way of achieving a higher quota. Less money spent on schools means better tax breaks for the rich. The Liberals know which side they're on, and will use their connections to achieve their aims.

The Liberals may have the law, but we have the numbers and a will to fight! When the government legislates teachers back to work we must defy their order. First the UBC Teaching Assistants defied legislation. Then the ferry workers went on illegal strike. Both acts of militancy forced the government to back down. The capitalist laws are not worth the paper they are written on when confronted by mass working class action.

The hospital employees took the lessons of the past to heart during their strike. Solidarity action quickly spread from the bottom up. The private sector began to come out in support and cries of "General Strike!" became common. Unfortunately, the union and NDP leadership betrayed the movement and signed a sellout agreement behind the backs of the workers. The leaders were more interested in their careers than they were with the interests of the rank and file. Now teachers must keep their leaders accountable. This fight cannot be over until the workers vote to say it is over!

This strike is not just about the Teachers' demands; it is about the right of all workers to free collective bargaining. The Teachers have already learned many lessons from previous struggles and CUPE support staff are refusing to cross picket lines. Teachers also have a 90.5% mandate for illegal strike and a resolution was also passed requiring another vote before returning to work. However, the Teachers must not be left to fight the government alone - the strike must be generalized to the entire labour movement. The BC Federation of Labour must organize a

general strike and the teachers must send delegations to other unions and workplaces to expand the strike. Telus workers have begun to send out flying picket squads in their struggle. Students can also play a role in supporting the teachers who are fighting for their future. By learning from the successes and failures of other strikes is the only way to guarantee against defeat and sellout. The HEU was building towards a general strike. That was sold out. This is a fight over more than just education. It's a fight about every worker's right to a decent existence.

The time to demand a general strike has arrived! The bigger our threat the easier it will be to force the government to back down. If the teachers are defeated it will give a green light to the Liberals to walk over all of our democratic rights. A line needs to be drawn in the sand if we are not to live in a dictatorial society. The BC Fed must organize a general strike to defend the right to free collective bargaining. If the Liberals cannot give us free collective bargaining then the government should fall so we can elect one that can. The Liberals have shown whose interests they govern in. Members of Fightback have been on the lines with the UBC TAs, with the Ferry Workers, with the HEU, and now with the Teachers. Join us if you want militant action to kick out the Liberals!

VICTORY TO THE TEACHERS!
DEFEND THE RIGHT TO STRIKE AND BARGAIN!
NO SELLOUTS!
FIGHT BACK UNTIL WE WIN!

Fightback exists to unite those who fight for the victory of the working class, connecting our day to day struggles to the winning ideas of Marxism - ideas that come from more than a century and a half of revolutionary experience and socialist thought. **If you agree with our demand for a general strike, we invite you to discuss with us, visit our website at www.marxist.ca, subscribe to our regular paper, and JOIN US!**
Contact us at fightback@marxist.ca