

Students Fight the Hikes, From Page 1



Over 300 Rutgers Students Walk Into Action on April 13, 2011 protesting tuition hikes

them in 2010. But the B.O.G. broke the contract, and none of the faculty or staff have received the money that is owed to them.

For Rutgers employees working for companies under subcontracts, the situation is also bleak. For ten years, Rutgers hired bus drivers Academy Bus. When this started ten years ago, the drivers were paid poorly. But they unionized, pushed their wages to much higher levels, and won better health coverage from Academy. Now, Rutgers has given the bus contract to First Transit instead. Under the new contract, First Transit can slash wages and benefits, does not have to let the bus drivers keep their jobs, and the union is no longer recognized.

So, these employees, their unions, and the student movement united as the Rutgers One coalition. On July 14, this coalition rallied at a meeting of the Board of Governors, over the B.O.G.'s refusal to freeze tuition, their breach of contract by withholding promised wages, and their union-busting of the bus drivers.

The B.O.G. has made it difficult for people in the university community to talk to them. They insist that people sign up to comment at meetings over 24 hours ahead of time. They have shut students out of meetings which were supposed to be public, and have suddenly built makeshift walls around themselves when people have said things to them that they did not like. Nonetheless, on July 14, many people went inside to talk to the Board members, before rejoining the larger crowd of about a hundred protesters outside.

It was at this rally that Board Chairman Izzo

announced that the proposed tuition raise would be cut in half. Tuition has gone up by around 7% per year since 2001. But this year, the raise is just 1.8%, which is less than inflation.

Many students reacted with surprise to this victory. Certainly, it is a concession that the Board would not have made if there had not been such intense pressure on them. But why this particular maneuver by the Board?

Trying to pacify certain sections of social movements by giving them concessions like these is a typical move for college administrations—and governments—to make, so that they can marginalize those who they are still oppressing. Even before the tuition hike was dropped, the administration had long been using divide-and-conquer tactics in its negotiations, telling students that the high wages of workers were the reason they had to pay so much and telling workers that they should support higher tuition because it was the money that their wages came from.

But wages have not risen with tuition—rather, both have gotten worse. And trying to convince people otherwise has been a futile task on the administration's part. The students and workers at recent rallies were clear on this, carrying signs such as, "Freeze Tuition, Not Wages," and there have been widespread objections to the amount of money that is being wasted on athletics, administrative salaries, and inflated pay and conspicuous benefits for sports coaches.

It is typical for college administrations-and governments- to try to appease people with concessions like this, so those still fighting

exploitation can be marginalized. Even before the tuition hike was dropped, the administration had often used divide-and-conquer tactics, telling students that their tuition was being raised to pay for the high wages of workers, and telling workers that they should support higher tuition because it would lead to them being paid more.

But telling people that they have no common interest has been a futile task by the administration. The crowds at recent rallies were clear on what was happening, carrying signs such as, "Freeze Tuition, Not Wages." And the understanding that neither group has anything to gain by siding with the administration is by no means limited to Rutgers. On April 13, while hundreds of students shut down College Ave, protests against both wage cuts and tuition hikes also swept Sonoma State University.

Now, seeing the way that unity and persistent action can reverse the pattern of soaring tuition at one school, we should look at reversing the same trend on the national level, and explore how the student and workers' movements can best amplify each other.

Fortunately, we have many good examples of the latter. Groups like United Students Against Sweatshops have, for years, been organizing boycotts to help workers fight for better pay internationally. And the AAUP was instrumental in reaching out to other chapters nationally and coordinating rallies on April 13 Day of Action.

In California, too, the Education Crisis Movement focuses on making public colleges, like the University of California, accessible to all. In Los Angeles, home to the largest of UC's twenty campuses, the tuition fightback includes many local youth who don't know if they'll be able to go to college at all. They and their communities are besieged by a power structure which continuously murders civilians, the Oscar Grant case being the most publicized but far from unique, so the push for accessible education is rooted in broader social resistance.

Nation-wide frameworks for student activism, like the USSA, can be very helpful for learning from each other, building solidarity, and encouraging organizers to better understand the different circumstances faced in each university and each state.

For more info, about the Rutgers movement, see

<http://rutgerssu.com/content/rutgers-unioned-student-coalition>

and about the California movement, see <http://occupyca.wordpress.com/>

Wanted:

Writers
Bloggers
Organizers
Activists
Photographers and Filmers
People Who Care
Immigrant Rights Supporters
Anti-Imperialists
Musicians, All Talent Levels
Donations

What we Want:

End Imperialism
Troops Home Now
Free Public College
Immigrant Amnesty
No ICE No Raids
No Deportation
Recruiters Out
Stop Youth Incarceration
Workers Rights
Collective Bargaining Restored
Stop the Austerity Clamp Down
Fund Health Care and Education
Not War and Occupation
End Police Brutality
Respect Our Democratic Rights
End Police State Tactics Against the Movement
System Change

<http://NJYouthUnited.org>

Blog with us:

<http://NJYouthUnited.org/wp>

Contact us NOW!

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NJYU@NJYouthUnited.org

On Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/64557814666/>

Suggested Steps for Forming Youth Outreach Effort For Your Group

NJ Youth United Against War and Imperialism believes that no matter how old are the members of your organization, you have the ability to support the youth in your geographical reach to engage in a greater level of struggle - and we also believe it is your duty to help youth do just that! The following are some suggested First Steps for Anti-War / Social Justice Organizations to organize together with youth of your area:

1. Form youth organizing committee involving youngest organizers of your group
2. Initiate at least one youth outreach project. This could mean adopting a local high school or area where youth congregate to begin outreach, organizing a youth oriented event, etc.
3. Brainstorm within organization to identify members with middle school through college age siblings or children, relatives, children of friends, etc. and reach out to them.
4. Make contact with other youth organizations (like ours) and use available resources (like YO! paper)
5. Provide training, mentorship and support but allow youth to develop their efforts on their own terms. Help with logistics like meeting space, expenses, materials, dealing with system contact points, etc..
6. Be patient and resilient. Youth have many demands on time and our role in struggle is not being reinforced by existing societal structures. We need to continued support and encouragement. If we do not show up one day or immediately respond to your efforts - it does not mean that we never will - it only means that you need to keep trying.

NJ Youth United Against War & Imperialism
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YO! accepts ads especially from allied organizations like Central Jersey Coalition Against Endless War (see below). Assuming we are successful in distributing the bulk of the 5000 copies of this our first run, we will likely run a next issue. So if you are interested in having your message of solidarity or outreach printed on our pages, contact us immediately to find out the details.

Central Jersey Coalition Against Endless War www.againstendlesswar.org * NoEndlessWar@gmail.com

- * We support YO! and understand the importance of youth in shaping our future.
- * We are a peace group that supports local, state, regional, and national demonstrations.
- * We work to end war, support immigrant rights and civil liberties, and for racial, economic, and environmental justice.
- * Join us at our monthly "Marc's Place Coffeehouse" held at the First Reformed Church of Highland Park.
- * Join us at our weekly Anti-War Vigil held every Saturday from 11:30 am - 12:30 pm on the Highland Park side of the Albany Street Bridge in Highland Park.