

Buffalo Forum



Local Publication of the
U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization

Workers of all countries, unite!

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June 19, 2015

Vol. 19 #6

If Receivership is Legitimate, Why the Need for Blackmail?

It is a norm of democratic governance and discourse to engage in reasoned debate and argumentation. A legitimate proposal can be argued out on the basis of its merits, on how it serves to solve a given problem. It is a norm of mafia-style efforts to impose blackmail and bribes. "Do it because I said so and I have the power so you can't refuse."

Given this, consider the following facts: Governor Cuomo only succeeded in getting the *Education Transformation Act of 2015* passed using blackmail and bribes. The bill, which includes

Why Blackmail? • 2

WHEN INJUSTICE IS LAW, RESISTANCE IS DUTY

Refuse Receivership and Organize for Our Rights!

Cuomo and the New York State Commissioner of Education are finalizing plans for imposing receivership on 27 Buffalo schools starting in September. Receivership gives unprecedented powers to the Commissioner. These include unilaterally deciding contracts for schools

in receivership, imposing school plans based on the hated Common Core testing and curriculum regime, and keeping a receiver in place indefinitely. Power is being concentrated in the hands of an appointed executive and receivers accountable to

Refuse Receivership • 3

EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION ACT

Education Commissioner and Receiver Given Broad Powers

The *Education Transformation Act of 2015* deals with a number of different issues, including teacher assessment and receivership. This article will focus on the issue of receivership, which represents an undemocratic assault on

Broad Powers • 6

Commissioner to Decide Contracts for Schools in Receivership

An important part of the education law recently passed concerns the powers of the receiver when it comes to contracts. Buffalo teachers have gone ten years without a contract stemming from the refusal of the school board to negotiate in good faith. Now, for the 27 Buffalo

Commissioner Decides Contract • 4

INTERNATIONAL NIGHT AT LAFAYETTE P.10-11



G7 SUMMIT IN GERMANY

Meeting of Big Powers Confirms Agenda for War and Occupation

K.C. Adams

The leaders of the Group of Seven big powers (G7) met on June 7 and 8, in Elmau, Bavaria, Germany for their annual Summit. This is the second Summit since expelling Russia in 2014 from the Group of Eight in retaliation for the overwhelming agreement of the people of Crimea

through a referendum to leave Ukraine and rejoin the Russian Federation. This leaves as members the United States, Japan, Germany, France, Britain, Italy and Canada with the European Union also represented.

Agenda for War • 10

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UPCOMING EVENTS

REFUSE RECEIVERSHIP! DEFEND OUR RIGHT TO DECIDE!

***Tuesday, June 23
3:15pm - 4:30pm***

***Buffalo Elementary School Of Technology (BEST)
4414 S. Division St.***

27 Buffalo public schools are scheduled to be taken over by a receiver. Some could be converted to charter schools. The Buffalo Elementary School of Technology is one of them, along with Marva J. Daniel Futures Preparatory School, West Hertel Academy, South Park, Burgard, East, McKinley, Lafayette High Schools and more.

Receivership is anti-democratic, giving the receiver and State Education Commissioner broad powers to dictate curriculum, budget and hiring and firing, with many experienced teachers and staff to lose their jobs. This is an attack on the public and the struggle waged in Buffalo demanding Our Schools, We Decide! Teachers, staff, parents, and students, join in and rally against receivership and for our rights.

SPEAK OUT AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

***Wednesday June 24, 5:30pm
City Hall, Room 808***

Rally to Refuse Receivership and demand the School Board and Superintendent join in Refusing. Receivership is an unjust takeover of our public schools by and state. It is meant to divide and divert the solution put forward by the public, Our Schools, We Decide. It is said that we cannot stop it because it is law. We say, when Injustice is Law, Resistance is Duty.

I • WHY BLACKMAIL?

receivership, an unjust teacher assessment regime and other attacks on rights, was widely opposed. Superintendents, principals, teachers, staff, students and parents all across the state opposed it on an organized basis, fully elaborating why receivership and the assessment regime were not no solution. This reasoned argument of the majority was ignored. Cuomo used the bribe of state funding and the blackmail of withholding it if the law did not pass. It did pass.

More recently, the same bribe and blackmail method was used against the Board of Regents. The law contains \$75 million in funding state-wide for “persistently failing schools.” This is the bribe used to convince the Regents and community organizations to accept receivership. At their June meeting, the Regents voted against passing the Commissioner’s Regulations for receivership and expressed reservations about receivership. They were then told that the state would withhold the \$75 million. A second vote was imposed which then passed the regulations.

If receivership and everything that goes

with it, including the “Community Engagement Teams” are solutions, why the need for blackmail and bribes?!

It is also the case that it is this same method of bribes and blackmail that was used by the federal government to impose the Common Core testing and assessment regime. Competition among schools was imposed, the federal government decided, and funds were provided only if Common Core was accepted. Most districts then spent far more than they received on a program that has proven itself harmful and anti-education in all respects.

Now the state is using the same bribe and blackmail method and also imposing a competition for the \$75 million. The state decides who gets funds, how much and how they are to be spent — not the schools, not the school board. And, as the Regents vote shows, the funds will only be provided if receivership is accepted.

It is important not to be drawn into these mafia-style methods and to instead stand firmly for democracy and rights and our own programs for raising the quality of the Buffalo schools.

I • REFUSE RECEIVERSHIP

that executive. How can such an undemocratic arrangement that further disempower the people raise the quality of public schools? How can going backward, to rule by a single individual, serve the needs of a modern education system?

Raising the quality of the public schools requires modern democracy, which means expanding and enhancing the role of parents, students, teachers and staff in decision making. Consultation is not enough. *Public Control of Public Schools* is needed. The experts in education are the teachers, students, parents and staff and public as a whole. And these experts have already put forward a far better solution, starting with the stand, *Our Schools, We Decide!*

The existence of receivership in law does not change the fact that it is unjust, undemocratic and unacceptable. *We say Refuse!* Buffalo has a long tradition of



rejecting unjust laws, such as opposing slavery and participating in the underground railway, opposing the exclusion of women from voting and other rights, opposing segregation and defending voting rights for all. These stands all went against unjust laws and refused to accept them. Today, defending the equal right to education means refusing receivership and all such efforts to wreck our public schools.

It cannot be considered an accident that Governor Cuomo forced this legislation through now. Teachers, parents and students have organized and demonstrated, demanding their right to decide, as is most evident in Buffalo. . Hundreds of thousands refused the Common Core tests this past year. Superintendents and principals have also joined in opposing the new law.

Receivership aims to overwhelm this resistance and to direct it into support for receivership. The law includes the bribe of \$75 million statewide, and the

blackmail that it will only be provided if the dictate of receivership is accepted. It includes the carrot of consulting the community and appointing "Community Engagement Teams," along with the stick that whatever the community may say, the receiver and Commissioner decide.

The Buffalo public has made its demand clear: *Our Schools, We Decide!* To prevent being overwhelmed and diverted what is needed is keeping the initiative in our hands, through advancing our own organizing efforts. Let us work to strengthen links with the teachers, students, parents, staff in all of the impacted schools. Organize united actions and information meetings, Receivership aims to split and divide our collective strength and eliminate the district as a district. Refuse! Let us also organize our own forums to elaborate all that is needed now for raising the quality of our public schools. Strengthen the efforts to broaden our unity by fighting for the equal right to education for all. Let us debate and discuss what a modern education should look like and take steps to create it. Let us hold the government accountable for its failure to provide the full funding and resources needed and stand firmly for our right to decide!



I • COMMISSIONER DECIDES CONTRACTS

schools targeted for receivership, the state is intervening. The receiver can require a “receiver agreement,” with each school. This agreement can cover “the length of the school day; the length of the school year; professional development for teachers and administrators; class size; and changes to the programs, assignments, and teaching conditions in the school in receivership.” The professional development and changes to assignments and conditions are not defined so are up to the receiver.

The law then states the following for schools branded “persistently failing:” “The bargaining shall be conducted between the receiver and the collective bargaining unit in good faith and completed not later than **thirty days** from the point at which the receiver requested that the bargaining commence. The agreement shall be **subject to ratification within ten business days by the bargaining unit members in the school**. If the parties are unable to reach an agreement within thirty days or if the agreement is not ratified within ten business days by the bargaining unit members of the school, the parties shall submit any remaining unresolved issues to the **commissioner who shall resolve any unresolved issues**

within five days, in accordance with standard collective bargaining principles, (emphasis *BF*).

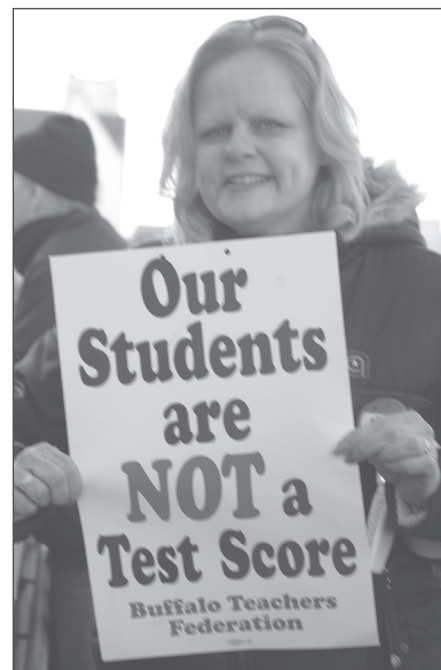
For schools branded “failing,” the law calls for the same time constraints, but it allows for a conciliator to be appointed. The conciliator has five days to resolve any outstanding issues, and failing that, the Commissioner decides.

In this manner the state has given the Commissioner the power not only to approve (or disapprove) a given agreement, he is also the one to decide any unresolved issues. Given the long experience with the powers of the Control Board to dictate terms, and given the powers now being given to the Commissioner, does anyone doubt these agreements will be contrary to the interests and needs of the students and teachers? There is no incentive for the receiver to even negotiate since he can count on the Commissioner to decide whatever he determines is required.

The state has also decided the length of negotiations, something that has long belonged to the local school board and union. It is also dictating to the union how long it can take to ratify a given agreement. This is something to be decided by the union. It is the union that can best decide what is needed to inform its membership, how voting should occur, and how long the process takes.

The state is also demanding separate agreements for teachers and staff in each building, thus undermining their collective strength and increasing competition among the teachers and schools. This is especially true given that the receiver starts by firing all the teachers and staff and rehiring those he chooses. Undermining the collective strength of teachers undermines the quality of their teaching conditions and the schools more generally.

While the receiver is supposed to re-hire 50 percent of those fired, he also sets the criteria for all positions in the school. “The receiver shall have full discretion regarding hiring decisions but must fill at least fifty percent of the newly defined



positions with the most senior former school staff who are determined by the staffing committee to be qualified.” The staffing committee is the receiver, his two appointees and two people from the union — meaning he has a majority. Thus he could decide there are not enough qualified teachers to rehire 50 percent.

Further the law states that for those not rehired, they “shall not have any right to bump or displace any other person employed by the district, but shall be placed on a preferred eligibility list.” This is a backhanded way of eliminating senior teachers and staff, especially those rejecting receivership, and eliminating use of seniority district-wide. It is a further example of efforts to weaken the collective strength of the teachers and students.

No evidence or examples or experience is provided to justify why such measures will improve the quality of teaching conditions, which are students’ learning conditions. On the contrary, the evidence is that without engaging teachers, parents and students in solving the problems, and providing the funding and resources and programs needed, the quality of the schools deteriorates and inequality for the students increases. That is Buffalo’s reality and receivership will necessarily make it worse.



A Seat at Whose Table? For What Purpose?

There are times when taking a “seat at the table,” with government or corporate bodies, presents itself for those organizing for rights. In some cases the issue is very clear. A seat at the table with Nazis, for example, or the KKK, would be immediately rejected — it is clear the outcome would be harmful. In other cases, the answer is not so clear. Governor Cuomo and the New York State Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia are now implementing the recently passed *Education Transformation Act of 2015*. The law calls for imposing receivership on 27 Buffalo schools, and includes a seat at the table, in the form of “Community Engagement Teams.”

It is worth asking, whose table and for what purpose is a seat being offered?

It is also useful to keep in mind the context of this offer. The Buffalo public has been demanding decision making by parents, teachers, students and staff. They are the experts on matters of education. This public has broadly mobilized, involving all concerned with raising the quality of Buffalo schools by defending the equal right to education for all. Its solution is clear: *Our Schools, We Decide!*

A seat at whose table?

So whose table is it? The receivership law requires the Buffalo Superintendent to become the receiver of 27 different schools (see list p.3). These schools have been designated by the state as “failing,” based solely on New York State Common Core testing.

Each of these schools is required to have a state approved “intervention model” that includes “rigorous performance metrics and goals,” designed to “maximize the rapid achievement of students.” These plans take as their starting point the much hated and broadly opposed Common Core testing and assessment regime. These tests are the primary “metric.”

Several hundred thousand students and parents statewide refused the tests this year because they are harmful and anti-education. The scores are rigged to guarantee “failure,” and used by the state to claim children and teachers are failing. In fact it is the state that is failing, failing

to provide needed funding, failing to uphold the equal right to education for all.

The receiver is accountable to the Commissioner and both have been given broad powers. For the receiver this includes budget, curriculum, discipline, hiring and firing teachers, length of school day and year, and converting schools to charter schools or community schools. The Commissioner has the final say on all decisions by the receiver. The Commissioner also determines what constitutes progress and if progress has been made and whether a school is to remain in receivership. In short, the receiver and Commissioner decide, with the Commissioner given unprecedented powers (see p.1 for more on the law.)

A seat for what purpose?

The receivership law includes what are called “Community Engagement Teams” or CETs. CET members are appointed by the district, can include teachers, parents, students and community members, and must include representatives with “direct ties” to the given school.

The receiver is required to *consult* the CETs, through meetings and in writing, including a hearing for each school. According to proposed regulations, “The CET will review, assess and report on the *implementation* of the school’s plan and modifications to the plans,” (*BF* emphasis, see Proposed Commissioner’s Regulations, June 15, 2015). The Commissioner will annually “consult and cooperate with the district, school staff, and CET” in deciding whether to keep a given school in receivership. The CET can also hold hearings to solicit feedback. The CET has no decision-making power, is *consulted* about *implementation*, and organized to “solicit feedback” not about what is needed, but about the plans decided by the Commissioner and receiver.

Keeping Initiative in Our Hands

The CETs are the “seat at the table” that is being offered. Can such a seat contribute to solutions given: 1) It is a table whose purpose is imposing receivership and Common Core and 2) It is a seat whose



purpose is to engage all in *responding* to the plans and “rapid” goals dictated by the receiver and Commissioner?

Given experience with such “advisory boards,” such as those for police, it can be predicted that the CETs are a means to take initiative out of the hands of the currently organized and mobilized public and put it into the hands of the receiver and commissioner. It is an effort to divide and divert the movement for the equal right to education for all, which has given the necessary starting point for raising the quality of our schools — decision making by the students, teachers and parents.

The alternative is to keep initiative in our hands by organizing to *Refuse the Tests! Refuse the Receiver!* Rather than react to their backward plans, let us persist in developing our own. As one example the teachers’ union has urged teachers to take initiative to elaborate what is *needed* in their schools to improve conditions for teaching and learning. That is what should be debated and discussed and then demanded. Another is to organize our own forums now to inform everyone about the harm and danger of receivership and advance our own vision for what a modern education should look like. For example, we already know music, art, physical education and shared projects are needed. Let us build on our unity by taking initiatives from our standpoint: *Our Schools, We Decide!*

I • BROAD POWERS

elected governance and the equal right to education for all. It serves to put in place governance appointed by the executive, in this case the New York State Education Commissioner while blocking the modernization of school governance, which demands decision making by the people themselves.

The law allows the Commissioner, currently MaryEllen Elia, to appoint a receiver with full powers to decide all matters of significance for the given public school. This includes: school budget, replacing and imposing curriculum and programs; firing teachers, staff, principal of the school and requiring them to re-apply; determining criteria necessary for positions at the school; expanding school day and/or year, and power to reject decisions by the school board and implement his own. The only exception is the school board can still fire the superintendent, but not because of his actions as a receiver.

The law, which removes power from elected school boards, anticipates possible resistance and states that “It shall be the duty of the board of education... to fully cooperate with the receiver and willful failure to cooperate or interference with the functions of the receiver shall constitute willful neglect of duty,” and thus grounds for removal by the state.

The receiver can also “order the conversion of a school in receivership” into “a charter conversion school,” provided that such “charter conversion school shall operate consistent with a community schools model.” The charters would also have to consult with the community and create a state-approved intervention plan. Several schools on the Buffalo list, like East, Bennett, MLK and Waterfront are much desired by the private charter schools and the receiver and Commissioner can simply now convert these schools into charters.

The law allows the Commissioner to designate schools as either “persistently failing” or “failing,” making them subject to receivership. Schools among the lowest 5 percent for three consecutive years based mainly on the rigged Common Core state test scores are considered “failing.” The “persistently failing” schools are those that

have been among the lowest, again based on state test scores, for ten consecutive years. The Regulations for implementing the law do permit schools to appeal the designation, but the final decision rests with the Commissioner. All such designated schools are to be taken over by a receiver at the start of school in September 2015. The district or Commissioner “shall hold a public meeting or hearing for purposes of discussing the performance of the school and the construct of receivership,” before this occurs.

According to Cuomo, there are an estimated 178 schools statewide in the two categories, with about 77 “persistently failing.” More than half of the total are in New York City. Buffalo has the next highest number, 27 so far, 5 branded “persistently failing” and 22 “failing,” (see list p.3). This compares to 18 for Syracuse and 15 for Rochester. Final lists, which could increase these numbers, will be issued by the state in July.

Initially the law also said that the receiver “shall convert the school into a community school,” providing various social services. However the Commissioner’s Regulations do not require this. The receiver can still do so. The regulations, to be published July 8, also provide more specifics as to what a community school entails.

Superintendent and Independent Receivers

The law provides for two types of receivers. One is the superintendent of the district, who is given the powers of a receiver and called on to exercise them. The second is an independent receiver, which can be an individual, or a non-profit, or another school district. The receivers are contracted with the Commissioner and accountable to him, not the school board or public. The receiver can be removed for “a violation of law or the commissioner’s regulations or for neglect of duty,” as the Commissioner decides.

For schools designated now, the superintendent will be the receiver. For schools designated after the 2016-17 school year, an independent receiver will take power. This means that for Buffalo, the 27 schools will have the superintendent as receiver, and future schools designated will have the independent receiver. The Commissioner



could still appoint a superintendent if he decides.

For “persistently failing” schools, the receiver will have one year to show “improvement,” after which the Commissioner can decide to keep the superintendent in place as receiver or appoint an independent one. The “failing” schools have two years to “improve.” The independent receiver will have three. The Commissioner has complete power to decide what constitutes improvement, targets to meet for the year and whether they have been met. He is to consult with the community, but he decides.

State-Approved Intervention Model Required

In addition, the law specifically states, “the local district shall continue to operate the school for an additional school year **provided** that there is a department-approved intervention model or comprehensive education plan in place that includes rigorous performance metrics and goals,” (*BF* emphasis). It is not clear what happens if there is not an approved plan in place. The Commissioner’s June regulations also now indicate that the superintendent does not have to create the plans, which likely

Broad Powers • 7



As Buffalo Forum goes to press, the issue of mayoral control for the Buffalo Public Schools remains a possibility. The Governor issued a statement saying "Negotiations on a range of issues important to the people of New York State remain ongoing and are moving in a positive direction toward a resolution. Cuomo imposed receivership and mayoral control, where the mayor appoints the superintendent who will be the receiver, facilitates this undemocratic state takeover. Teachers organized daily demonstrations the first week of June, firmly refusing mayoral control and emphasizing, *Our Schools, We Decide!*"

6 • BROAD POWERS

means the district could be required to do so, with the Commissioner still having power to approve, disapprove, change, etc. Or the Commissioner could simply impose a plan. The law authorizes him to "establish a model intervention plan."

All such plans take as their starting point the Common Core testing and curriculum regime. A district can modify the plan, subject to approval by the Commissioner and the Commissioner can also require that it be modified. Emphasis is also given to maximizing "rapid academic achievement," as distinct from maximizing quality and equality. State test scores will primarily be used to decide "achievement, though other means can be included. The Commissioner has final say in what constitutes such achievement.

The plans are to "consider" community recommendations and include "measurable annual goals including, but not limited to, the following: (a) student attendance; (b) student discipline including but not limited to short-term and long-term suspension rates; (c) student safety; (d) student promo-

tion and graduation and drop-out rates; (e) student achievement and growth on state measures; (f) progress in areas of academic underperformance; (g) progress among the subgroups of students used in the state's accountability system; (h) reduction of achievement gaps among specific groups of students; (i) development of college and career readiness, including at the elementary and middle school levels; (j) parent and family engagement; (k) building a culture of academic success among students; (l) building a culture of student support and success among faculty and staff; (m) using developmentally appropriate child assessments from pre-kindergarten through third grade, if applicable, that are tailored to the needs of the school; and (n) measures of student learning." If the Commissioner "determines that the school has not met one or more goals in the plan," he can require modification.

A school plan developed by an Independent Receiver is to be based on a "comprehensive school and community needs based assessment and created in consultation with

community based organizations." The independent receiver is also to regularly consult with the "Community Engagement Teams," (CETs) and community organizations. However the receiver decides and the Commissioner has final say over the receiver's decisions. The CETs are appointed and include parents, teachers, students, staff and community members (see p.5 for more)

A final school intervention plan is to be submitted by the receiver to the Commissioner for approval within six months of the receiver's appointment. Each plan is authorized for three years and can be renewed for another three years. They are also to have annual goals. The Commissioner is to make annual assessments and can remove the receiver and appoint another one. Only the Commissioner can decide if a school is to be removed from receivership and the law does not prevent such receivership from continuing indefinitely. It is up to the Commissioner, not the public, not the teachers, students and parents, but an appointed executive.

Schools Chiefs: Suspend NY Education Bill

Swapna Venugopal Ramaswamy, *The Journal News*, May 28, 2015

Superintendents representing 40 local school districts want an immediate suspension of the state's recently enacted education reform legislation, saying it puts into place a flawed system that will ultimately harm students.

Nearly 200 educators and parents gathered the morning of May 28 at Harrison High School [Westchester County near New York City] to denounce Governor Andrew Cuomo's signature *Education Transformation Act of 2015*. Elements of the bill, which deal with teacher evaluations, the use of testing and teacher tenure, run counter to research and will result in loss of local control, they said.

"It's time for New York State to get it right," said Harrison Schools Superintendent Louis Wool. "We are not looking for a delay. We are looking for this to go away."

The Harrison conference was one of two held simultaneously. The other, with school officials and parents from Nassau and Suffolk counties, was hosted on Long Island. An online petition asking for the bill to be suspended has been signed by more than 24,800 people [as of June 19].

Cuomo and the Legislature approved a new set of laws pertaining to the teacher

evaluation system and tenure in the state budget adopted April 1. The state Education Department is charged with implementing the specifics of the law by June 30. Districts would then have until November 15 to adopt the new standards.

In a first draft of the regulations released by the Education Department earlier this month, schools could seek a two-month hardship waiver to delay the implementation of evaluations. Districts could seek additional two-month delays after the current one expires.

Under the proposal, a teacher's evaluation would be based on a complex matrix that decides a teacher's score based on student performance and classroom observations by administrators.

The test score measure is structured so it becomes the most significant determinant in a teacher's overall rating. For example, if a teacher is rated highly effective in classroom observations, but has an ineffective rating on the test scores, the teacher can only be rated ineffective or developing.

"The draft regulations are trying to implement a broken, punitive law," Valhalla Schools Superintendent Brenda Myers said. "There is no hope for the regulations be-

cause they are based on a broken theory."

The legislation prohibits the use of all other measures of teacher practice, including student and parent conferences, lesson planning and goal setting, which allow administrators to have a more accurate picture of a teacher's quality, the superintendents said.

The high reliance on student growth scores based on tests has the effect of narrowing the curriculum while over-emphasizing tests, they said.

Byram Hills schools Superintendent William Donohue said the scores do not always indicate teacher quality.

"We'll see some teachers who are not qualified be fired, but we'll also see some teachers who are competent become victims of these scores," Donohue said.

South Orangetown interim schools Superintendent Harry LeFever, who also is the Board of Education president of the North Rockland school district, said the education bill is "problematic."

"Trying to evaluate teachers using tests that are not developed as a tool for measuring teacher effectiveness is not reasonable," he said. "We should start the whole process over again. Let's reboot."

Suspend and Amend the Education Transformation Act of 2015

(The petition below has signed by more than 24,800 people since May 28, including School Superintendents, School Board members and parents)

* * *

We the undersigned request, that in order to prevent further damage to the education of public school children across our state, legislators must immediately:

1. Suspend the Education Transformation Act of 2015 and maintain the current system for one year.

2. Amend the Education Transformation Act of 2015 to require that a panel comprised of experts in the field of psychometrics, teacher evaluation, and seasoned education leaders be convened to design a researched based teacher evaluation system to be implemented in 2016-17 school year.

We repudiate the false narrative persistently perpetuated about public education by NYSED, and further, reject the poorly researched and misguided reform agenda they have pursued. We are unequivocally committed to systems of accountability for teacher performance and student growth, but these systems must be constructed carefully and aligned with research, not political rhetoric.

As parents, school board members and leaders in public schools, we are acutely aware of the damage that has been perpetrated on children as a result of these mandates, and that the damage will expand and accelerate unless there is an immediate suspension of the latest recklessly formulated statutes regarding teacher evaluation and the use of state assessments.

There have been too many rushed and

ill-considered changes in New York K-12 education policy. It is time for the Board of Regents to consult experts -- educators and researchers -- in order to create a system that meets the goals of improving teacher practice and student learning. Our 3.1 million children deserve a sound basic education based on evidence-based education policy.

It is not too late to get it right, stop wasting time, energy, resources, and instructional opportunities for students.

We seek your support to create a coherent and thoughtful process to improve teacher practice and the opportunities afforded our children.

This is a chance for parents, legislators and leaders to do what is right; we need your support and courage to make this a reality.

Parents Reject Common Core Curriculum and Say Teachers are What They Like Best About Their Schools

A BPTO Organizer

At the recent Family Zoo Night organized by the Buffalo Parent Teacher Organization (BPTO) thousands of families enjoyed a fun and educational time together. Parents and children from schools throughout the district participated. As part of its organizing efforts, BPTO conducted a survey of parents, mostly women, randomly selected as they rested or waited in line. An effort was made to get a representative sampling with about 40 surveys done in all. Many schools were represented, including Bennett, City Honors, Hamlin Park, Hillary Park, Lovejoy Discovery, MLK, Performing Arts, Waterfront, Schools 17, 53, 81, 89, 91 and more.

The survey asked the following questions:

1) What kinds of activity would you like to see organized to encourage more parent involvement?

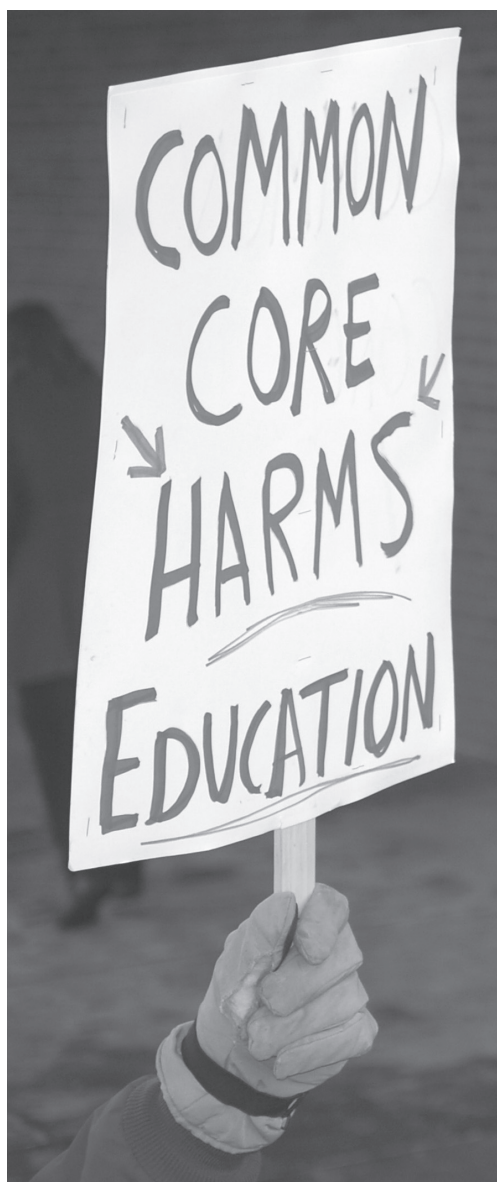
2) What topics do you think are important to address? Curriculum? Suspensions? Testing? Homework? Other? (more than one could be chosen)

3) What do you like best about your school?

4) What changes do you think are most needed to improve the quality of education?

When it came to what they liked best, 15 said their teachers, by far the most common answer. Others included field trips, music programs and the diversity of students at their school.

In terms of topics to address, twenty-two parents felt curriculum was key, the single largest number for any one item. Many specifically spoke about the Common Core, the harm it is causing



and the need to eliminate it. Sixteen felt homework was critical. Many felt the Common Core based homework, especially the math, was not helpful and that schools needed to do more to assist parents in helping their children.

Fourteen named suspensions as important and fourteen named testing. These numbers include parents who named all four as critical.

Some parents expressed a relationship between so much testing and suspensions, with students feeling humiliated and frustrated and that school was no longer about learning. Many also related the issues to the basic problem of the lack of funding.

The parents had a variety of ideas about involving parents more. These included suggestions for family reading nights at their school library, working with teachers to design better curriculum, volunteering in their children's classrooms, movie night at the school and generally more evening activities. Several suggested the need for more field trips that parents could participate in as well as a need for more sports. Others raised that parents also act as teachers and need to be seen as partners in educating students. People also asked for day care at events, transportation to events and staggered times for them, including later start times. Several suggested teach-ins, on the Common Core and issues like suspensions and homework, to both inform and involve parents more.

In terms of changes, the main responses were to eliminate Common Core and to provide more sports and music. Smaller class sizes, less testing and more hands-on activities for parents together with their children were also suggested. Overall parents expressed the need to foster a love of learning and to recognize that parents play a key role in educating our children and need to be given a greater role and greater respect.

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INTERNATIONAL NIGHT AT LAFAYETTE



INTERNATIONAL NIGHT AT LAFAYETTE



International Night at Lafayette

brought together the many cultures and nationalities of students from the school. Performances of dances and songs from Thailand, Congo, Puerto Rico and the U.S. along with food from many more countries of Asia and Africa enlivened the evening and were enjoyed by the enthusiastic crowd of students, families and friends. The warm and welcoming atmosphere that characterizes Lafayette was also felt by all. The cafeteria bubbled with the many languages spoken by those present, with the laughter and exchanges jumping from one table to the next. It was a wonderful night appreciated by all and not to be missed next year!



The concluding communiqué of the June G7 Summit makes it clear that the values and principles of the leaders are jointly shared. The communiqué says, “Guided by our shared values and principles, we are determined to work closely together to meet the complex international economic and political challenges of our times.”

G7 Summit Final Declaration

The communiqué lists what the G7 leaders see as challenges to their monopoly capitalist economies: “Many of our economies are still operating below their full potential.... Overall G7 unemployment is still too high [with] prolonged low inflation rates, weak investment and demand, high public and private debt, sustained internal and external imbalances, geopolitical tensions as well as financial market volatility.”

To deal with these challenges, the Summit vows to continue the same neo-liberal direction, “By protecting intellectual property rights, supporting private investment with a business friendly climate promoting quality infrastructure investment to address shortfalls through effective resource mobilization in partnership with the private sector and increasing productivity by further implementing ambitious structural reforms. [...] We have identified the following priorities: full, consistent and prompt implementation of agreed reforms will be essential to ensuring an open and resilient global financial system.”

Strengthening Monopoly Right Globally

In response to the widespread criticism of pay-the-rich schemes to bail out favored monopolies using money from the public treasury, the G7 leaders agreed to change the name of companies considered “too-big-to-fail” and instead call them “global systemically important.” Specifically concerning their financial institutions, the G7 leaders said, “We remain committed to finalizing the proposed common international standard on total loss absorbing capacity for global systemically important banks.”

With respect to the obvious problems caused by the parasitism and decay of the imperialist system where enormous social wealth is traded globally, draining the socialized economies of funds necessary for their development and to meet the needs of the people, the leaders stressed the importance of enhancing their global monopoly control and combating all efforts to restrict monopoly right. The communiqué says, “To help reduce systemic risk and increase transparency, we also stress the importance of enhanced cross-border cooperation in financial regulatory areas to enable regulations to be more effective particularly in the areas of resolution and derivatives markets reform.”

To bolster their interference in the affairs of all countries and to control their financial transactions and spy on their activities, the G7 leaders declare, “We commit to strongly promoting automatic exchange of information on cross-border

tax rulings. Moreover, we look forward to the rapid implementation of the new single global standard for automatic exchange of information by the end of 2017 or 2018, including by all financial centers.... We also urge jurisdictions that have not yet, or not adequately, implemented the international standard for the exchange of information on request to do so expeditiously.”

Using tax evasion and the widespread corruption of the rich as a weapon to extend their control over others and to enforce their economic sanctions and blockades against all those who oppose them,

the G7 leaders write, “We recognize the importance of beneficial ownership transparency for combating tax evasion, corruption and other activities generating illicit flows of finance.”

Promoting Free Trade, the Economic Spear of Imperialist Globalization to Attack the Sovereign Rights of Nations and Peoples Everywhere

Despite massive opposition in all countries involved, the G7 leaders reiterated their neo-liberal views on free trade as a means to enforce monopoly right globally and attack the sovereign rights of nations to develop their own economies as they see fit, restrict monopoly right and serve the public interest: “Fostering global economic growth by reducing barriers to trade remains imperative and we reaffirm our commitment to keep markets open.... We remain committed to reducing barriers to trade and to improving competitiveness by taking unilateral steps to liberalize our economies.... We also welcome ongoing efforts to conclude ambitious and high-standard new bilateral and regional free trade agreements (FTAs) and look forward to swift progress in plurilateral negotiations, including the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA), the expansion of the Information Technology Agreement (ITA) and the Environmental Goods Agreement (EGA).... We welcome progress on major ongoing trade negotiations, including on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the

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Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the EU-Japan FTA/Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).... We welcome the conclusion of the negotiations on the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and the EU and look forward to its timely entry into force.”

The G7 countries stated their intention to do everything in their power to continue their domination over the economic affairs of the world and subvert the sovereign right of nations and peoples to be. They pledged to strengthen the use of their existing political, military and economic institutions including NATO, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and Central Banks. IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Secretary-General Angel Gurría were participants in the Summit. They reaffirmed their determination to enforce sanctions, embargoes, blockades and military pressure against all those countries that defy the will of the G7.

Countries Singled Out for Abuse

Targets of the G7 singled out for specific abuse in the communiqué include China, Russia, Iran, the DPRK, Libya, Palestine and Syria.

The G7 leaders pointed their finger at China as an offender of the “Rules-Based Maritime Order” and the “free and unimpeded lawful use of the world’s oceans,” for allegedly raising “tensions in the East and South China Seas” through “the use of intimidation, coercion or force, as well as large scale land reclamation.”

The U.S. military, enthusiastically supported by U.S.-occupied militarist Japan, is engaged in a “pivot to Asia” to put 60 per cent of U.S. military assets around China and the Korean Peninsula. An aspect of the U.S. military pivot is to employ the old colonial tactic of “divide and rule” by stirring up trouble between



China and its neighbors and actively undermining any steps towards the development of friendly relations amongst the peoples of Asia.

The U.S. imperialists still occupy Japan and south Korea with multiple military bases and openly interfere in their political affairs. They prowl the waters throughout Asia with nuclear-armed submarines and armadas with aircraft carriers at their core engaging in constant war games directed at China and the DPRK but also the peoples of Japan and south Korea. The U.S. imperialists summarily dismiss the growing recognition that the biggest obstacle to peace and good relations amongst the peoples of Asia is the ominous presence and activity of the U.S. armed forces.

G7 Attacks Russia

The G7 leaders blame Russia for the fascist coup d’état in Ukraine and the subsequent war of the Kiev coup regime against its own people living in the eastern and southern regions of the country. The G7 countries are specifically upset that the people in Crimea resisted the Kiev fascist coup regime and voted overwhelmingly in a referendum to leave Ukraine and rejoin Russia, which is their democratic right. For this act of rebellion on the part of the people of Crimea, and as part of their long-term strategy to impose regime change in Russia, the G7 big powers led by the U.S.,

Britain and Germany vented their anger by imposing sanctions on Russia and moving an increased number of NATO armed forces closer to Russia’s borders.

The G7-based monopolies and institutions such as the IMF and in particular the monopolies of the U.S., Germany and Britain are using the cover of the fascist coup regime in Kiev to increase their hold over the land, resources and general economy of Ukraine. They want to use an annexed fascist Ukraine as a base to bring all the former Soviet Republics and Russia itself and its enormous natural resources under their control and domination.

Contradictions within the G7 took only days following the Summit to become manifest, with Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, in the words of the mass media, “warmly greeting” President Putin during his June 10-11 visit to Milan and Rome. President Putin spoke of the “special relationship” between Russia and Italy, while the Italian Prime Minister pledged to step up their economic cooperation and lauded Russia as a “great country” with which dialogue must continue.[1]

In spite of the agreement to blame Russia for the problems in Ukraine, the contradictions show that not all G7 countries are following the U.S. dictate on this issue. Some countries, such as Germany and France are instead attempting to deal with the problem on the basis of the

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European interests.

G7 Continues Economic War Against Iran

The G7 big powers are actively engaged in undermining the independence and sovereignty of Iran and imposing regime change. Attacking Iran's right to use nuclear energy and to defend itself is part of the overall assault. While the U.S. imperialists are armed to the teeth with all manner of weapons of mass destruction and use their military bases and economic embargoes throughout the world to attack, intimidate and dominate the people, the G7 big powers turn truth on its head and demand of "Iran to cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency on verification of Iran's nuclear activities and to address all outstanding issues, including those relating to possible military dimensions" or continue to suffer the consequences of economic sanctions and military pressure.

DPRK Under Attack

The G7 big powers have imposed draconian sanctions against the DPRK in an attempt to deny its right to be. The U.S. imperialists refuse to sign a peace treaty to end their war of aggression and occupation of Korea and constantly threaten the DPRK by staging war games on its land and sea borders and other provocations. The communiqué says with the utmost hypocrisy, as if the peoples of the world do not have the right to defend their right to be: "We strongly condemn North Korea's continued development of nuclear and ballistic missile programs."

The Horrors of a Conquered Libya

After destroying the anti-colonial Qadafi regime in Libya, the G7 cries crocodile tears about the horrible situation they have created through NATO's naked aggression against a sovereign country under the hoax of "responsibility to protect." The communiqué says, "In Libya, we are deeply concerned about the growing terrorist threat, arms proliferation, migrant smuggling, humanitarian suffering and the depletion of

state assets. Unless a political agreement is reached, the ongoing instability risks prolonging the crisis that is felt most keenly and acutely by the Libyan people themselves. They are already suffering as terrorist groups attempt to expand into ungoverned space and criminal networks exploit the situation by facilitating irregular migration through Libya."

After violently dismantling the existing anti-colonial Libyan state, which was the most advanced in all of Africa in terms of the material and social infrastructure, the G7 leaders say with the most appalling hypocrisy, "We stand ready to provide significant support to such an inclusive and representative [Libyan] government as it tries to build effective state institutions, including security forces, to restore public services, to expand infrastructure, strengthen, rebuild and diversify the economy and to rid the country of terrorists and criminal networks."

The War on Terror — Pretext for Imperialist War Against the Peoples of the World

The G7 big powers, especially the U.S. and Britain, with their destruction of state structures in so many countries through predatory war and political interference, have created an atmosphere of global anarchy and violence. The G7 big powers refuse to end their exploitation of the world's peoples and theft of their natural resources. Their nature is to pillage and rob rather than engage in civilized friendly relations and trade for mutual benefit and development.

The G7 big powers, in particular the U.S. and Britain, are responsible for the growth of groups that engage in indiscriminate killing, violence and anarchy, serving the nefarious ends of those who finance and pull their strings, but which sometimes tumble out of control or favor and return to bite the hand that nurtured them. Once again turning truth on its head, the G7 leaders say, "In light of the Foreign Terrorist Fighters phenomenon, the fight against terrorism and violent extremism will have to remain the priority

for the whole international community. In this context we welcome the continued efforts of the Global Coalition to counter ISIL/Da'esh.... The fight against terrorism and terrorist financing is a major priority for the G7."

The high-sounding ideals of the global fight against terrorism are being used to impose regime change and anarchy and violence to perpetuate U.S. imperialist exploitation, destroy competitors and suppress the rights of the peoples of the G7 countries themselves. Under the guise of fighting terrorism the countries of the G7 and the entire world are being dragged into lawlessness and might-makes-right.

Expanding Imperialist Exploitation and Competition for the Resources of the Oceans

Extending their interests throughout the deep seas and declaring for the most powerful monopolies open season on the natural resources found in the waters common to all, the G7 big powers in their communiqué state, "We, the G7, take note of the growing interest in deep sea mining beyond the limits of national jurisdiction and the opportunities it presents.... Key priorities include setting up regulatory certainty and predictability for investors."

Climate Change Accounting Put Off Until Next Century

One of the biggest farces of the G7 Summit was the hot air on climate change. The G7 leaders' concept of the "urgent and concrete action needed to address climate change" is to put off any accounting of the problem to the end of the twenty-first century! Of course, in the interim, the G7 monopolies want "carbon derivatives" concocted, commoditized and traded so that the parasites can further fleece the economies of the world of their social wealth.

Note

1. "In Italy, Putin hears warm words -- and chalks up a win," Christian Science Monitor, June 11, 2015.

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