



NO! to cutbacks and tuition hikes at CUNY

Governor Mario Cuomo has launched a vicious assault on CUNY students. Cuomo is proposing a \$500 per-year tuition increase, \$400 per-award Tuition Assistance Program cut, massive faculty and staff layoffs and \$92 million CUNY-wide budget cuts. The tuition increase would come on top of a \$200-a-year rise that took effect this spring.

These measures will be devastating for a large number of CUNY students who come from working class and poor families and simply cannot afford a 30% tuition hike to \$1,950 a year.

Cuomo and co. say there is no money to pay for education. But this is just not true. The government always finds the money to bail out the S&Ls and banks or to fund aggressive wars against Iraq and Panama or to build more prisons and maintain the police forces. Over the years Cuomo has been rolling back state taxes on the capitalist corporations and the wealthy. Why doesn't he tax the rich to pay for the budget crisis?

The truth of the matter is that the government, whether at the federal, state or city levels, headed by either Democrats or Republicans, serve the interests of the rich. For them, the budget crises are addressed by placing the burden on the backs of the working people.

CUNY students fight back!

But CUNY students are not taking these attacks lying down. As in previous years they have responded with a series of building takeovers and protests marches and rallies.

City College students took over the large North Academic Center on Monday, April 8th. Over the course of that week the protests and building takeovers spread to Lehman, Hunter, Borough of Manhattan Community College, Bronx Community College, Kingsborough Community College, Hostos, New York City Technical College, Brooklyn College and La Guardia Community College. As of Friday of last week the students were occupying buildings at 12 of the 21-campus system.

The CUNY administration, as well as Mayor Dinkins,

Governor Cuomo, and a whole host of establishment figures, denounce the students for supposedly disrupting the educational process with their protests and building takeovers. But who is really disrupting the educational process? Cuomo's budgets cuts and tuition increases will throw scores of students out of college, and will close the doors to education to thousands more. A \$92 million budget cut will mean further deterioration in the quality of education. What right does the CUNY administration have of denouncing the students, who are fighting these cuts, of disrupting classes?

No to a crackdown on CUNY students' protests! For a militant struggle against cutbacks and a tuition increase!

CUNY Chancellor W. Ann Reynolds and Board of Trustees Chairman Joseph Murphy have called on college presidents to enforce disciplinary procedures against the protesting students. Already the police have been called to evict students occupying buildings at New York Technical College, Bronx Community, York, Baruch, and La Guardia Community College. Moreover, there is an injunction pending against students occupying a building at the Borough of Manhattan Community College.

Last year John Jay College students were viciously attacked and beaten by the police when protesting against budget cuts. This shows that the city and state governments, with the aid of the CUNY administration, are determined to ram these budget cuts and tuition increases down the throats of City University students.

This is all the more reason for the students to stand firm in their protests. It shows that Cuomo will not listen to reason, but that only the militant action of the students stands a chance of turning things around. We must recall that only after City College students chained themselves inside the administration building two years ago, and protests and takeovers spread to more than a dozen campuses, did Governor Cuomo veto a proposed \$200 yearly tuition increase that had been approved by the state legislature. ■

Build the movement against cutbacks!

A movement is breaking out across the country to fight the cutbacks against the workers and poor. State and municipal workers, hospital workers, teachers, students, welfare recipients, homeless people and the unemployed are going into action to defend jobs and basic social programs from the budget ax.

Solidarity

An important feature of the current protests is the solidarity being shown among different sections of the workers and poor.

The capitalist politicians are trying to split up the working people, making the government employees, the homeless, the sick and aged compete over who will get some inadequate crumbs. In Michigan, for example, Governor Engler has actually threatened that if his layoffs and pay freeze for state workers is blocked, then he will drain all the funds from the AFDC welfare.

Such high-handed blackmail cannot be tolerated. It is imperative that the better positioned unionized workers defend the less organized workers and poor. All working people must stick together in a united struggle against the entire cutback offensive.

No more cheap talk from the politicians!

It is also essential to build up this movement independent from both the Republicans and Democrats.

The Republicans are gloating over the cutbacks. And the current crises in the states and cities has been caused, in part, by a decade of budget cutting by the Reagan and Bush administrations. One study indicates, for example, that direct federal aid to local governments was cut by 52% between 1978 and 1989, plummeting from \$37 billion to \$18 billion.

The Democrats have gone along with Reagan and Bush every step of the way. Indeed, the current round of federal budget-cutting is based on the Gramm-Rudman agreement between the two parties that there will be no raise in funding for one social program unless funding is cut from another.

Meanwhile, in a number of cities and states it is the Democratic Party bigshots who are directly wielding the budget ax. Look at New York, for example, where the presidential hopeful Mario Cuomo is heading up a program of cutbacks for the workers and poor to protect the tax breaks of the capitalist corporations and the wealthy.

Many of the union officials and "respectable minority leaders stand at the front of the demonstrations and preach

faith in the Democratic Party or talk about reforming it. We cannot agree. The Democratic Party cannot be a tool for the working people. It is a capitalist party, just like the Republicans. Our movement will become strong the quicker we do away with any illusions in the Democrats. We need a movement of the working masses, independent of the political bibwigs and capitalist fakery.

Make the rich pay!

We must put on our banners: "Make the capitalists pay for the budget crisis!"

Time and again we are told that there is no money to pay for jobs and social benefits for the masses. But it is just not true. The government always finds the money to bail out the S&Ls and banks or to fund aggressive wars against Iraq and Panama or to build more prisons and maintain the police forces.

The issue is spending in whose interests — relieving the suffering of the masses or propping up financial sharks and U.S. imperialist spheres of interest around the world?

No cutbacks! Tax the Rich!

On March 19 20,000 people descended on Albany to protest against statewide cutbacks in New York. Under the slogans "No cutbacks! Tax the rich" demonstrators vented their wrath against Cuomo's budget, which slashes education, health and social services to the bone, and deeper still for cities like NYC, where bone-deep cuts are already taking place. NYC municipal workers, workers from the voluntary hospitals, CUNY and SUNY student, and concerned people from the communities took part. Over a hundred university students took part in a sit-in in the governor's office. Eight of them were arrested.

In 1984 Cuomo's keynote speech at the Democratic convention won him fame for posturing against Reagan's cuts in social services. But now this apostle of liberalism is swinging a very Republican budget axe.

The fiscal crisis in New York takes place against the background of years of Reagan and Bush cutting domestic expenditures and shifting the burden of everything from welfare to highway maintenance onto the states. But this story doesn't begin and end at the federal level.

The federal, state and local governments serve the interests of the rich. Indeed, another source of the current crisis is the tax breaks that have been systematically handed out to the capitalist corporations and the wealthy. For years the big monopolies have been holding the state budgets for ransom — threatening to shut down and move elsewhere if they are not given huge tax incentives. In fact in some states, like Massachusetts and Michigan, even in the midst of severe fiscal crisis, the governors are planning to hand over further tax breaks to the business people.

Some liberal Democrats are pushing for increased taxes to "limit" the budget cuts. But they are simply joining with the Republicans to increase taxes on the working people. A few liberals may sugarcoat it with a slight increase on taxes on the rich, but this turns out repeatedly to be a fraud.

The present system is in crisis. Its promise of prosperity for all is being torn to shreds in the depressing rounds of more cuts, more fees, and more police. We must build the fight against cutbacks into a class struggle against the whole rotting system. ■

Ten years ago taxes on corporations accounted for over 9% of state revenues. Today they are a little over 5%. While reviling Reaganism in Washington, Cuomo and Co. have been rolling back state taxes on the corporations. They did the same for personal incomes in the higher brackets.

Cuomo's slash-and-burn budget cutting is neither an aberration nor a temporary necessity. It is the logical conclusion to a fiscal policy of catering to the corporations and the rich.

It is fitting that — after spending all day hiding out from the demonstrators, Cuomo reappeared in the evening on the platform of a conference of "business leaders".

And where was our mayor in all this? Why, up on the dias rubbing shoulders with Cuomo — a few hours after having announced that the cuts planned for the city budget were being nosed up from \$3 billion to nearly \$4 billion.

It seems these gentlemen know what interests they stand for. It is going to be up to working people in New York to stand up for their own, by building the mass fight against cutbacks and layoffs. ■

"Friend of labor" Cuomo steps up attacks on city workers

Nationally, Mario Cuomo continues to cultivate his oh-so-liberal image as a friend of the working class and poor. Meanwhile at home, Cuomo has stepped up his attacks on the working class in the service of the rich and the banks. He has joined Mayor Dinkins' call for the city unions to give back health, holiday, and vacation benefits.

Fresh from his demands that state workers accept a wage freeze and unpaid furloughs, Cuomo is demanding more sacrifices from city workers. "The Mayor is going to come to us for a whole lot of help," said Cuomo, who has already cut \$600 million in state aid to the city. "There is no conceivable way we could provide that help unless the unions make some contributions first." (NY Times, 3/27/91) Cuomo calls this an issue of "fairness."

So what kind of "help" is Cuomo promising in return for concessions? Does he call for making the rich pay too? Does he call for increases in the corporate tax rate? Not on your life! According to the Times, he might sell more bonds — which we'd have to pay off later — or part of the money-making Battery Park City Authority. In other words, make

concessions now and, in return, we can pay for them later too.

Cuomo presents the Democrats' program for the recession. In good times, cut the taxes on the rich. In bad times, eliminate basic services and demand concessions from the working class. This is no different from the Reagan-Bush agenda. It is the program of monopoly capitalism which both the Democrats and Republicans serve.

The working class has no interest in this program. Nor should we support the various "share the burden" schemes that the union leaders float. Already, basic services in the city and our real (inflation adjusted) wages are lower than where they stood at the start of the 1976 fiscal crisis.

While the workers and poor never recovered, the rich made out like bandits over the past 15 years. They wallowed like pigs in an orgy of speculation and greed. Now that their financial house of cards is tottering, they want us to bail them out again. No way! No concessions! Make the rich pay for their crisis!