

## University strikes need broader focus

A growing number of strikes by students and faculty members at colleges and universities around the United States reveals outrage against budget cuts and the deteriorating quality of education. The ferment is intersecting with the rapidly growing opposition to the Anglo-American Persian Gulf adventure. But recent developments in several of the strike situations show that, unless the broader issues of American domestic and foreign policy are taken on effectively, and clear national policy alternatives are presented, the strikers cannot succeed.

### University of the District of Columbia

On Oct. 5, the students at the UDC who had occupied a campus administration building for over a week, voted to end their strike. It had been catalyzed by the students' frustration with the Board of Trustees' inability to provide basic educational services, while agreeing to pay \$1.6 million to feature the work of feminist sculptor Judy Chicago, titled "Dinner Party." This "work of art" consists of a dinner table with 39 elegant place settings, at each one of which is a replica of the female genitalia.

The strike ended with an administration agreement to withdraw the pornographic monstrosity, but without the demanded resignation of the members of the Board of Trustees responsible for having "diverted UDC's internal funds for individual board members' elitist art hobbies and pretensions," as the students had earlier charged.

Rev. James Bevel, a civil rights leader who spearheaded a parents' and community strike support committee, reports that "the students were manipulated into losing their focus." But those who "were not playing at fame, who were serious about education, grew tremendously," he said. "Their experience will be invaluable in the anti-war movement unfolding before us. I commend those students who dare challenge the nation for its policy of miseducation."

### Temple University

An appeals court on Oct. 8 upheld an injunction against the Temple University strike in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and ordered striking faculty members back to work, ending a 29-day walkout. The ruling upheld a precedent-setting decision by the lower court, which for the first time held that a strike at the college level could be terminated under terms of

a state law that permits courts to end by public employees when they constitute a "clear and present danger" to the public welfare.

The issues of the strike involved wages and health care payments. Union representatives said they would appeal the injunction to a higher court.

### Los Angeles City College

On Oct. 8, a "week of action" began at this predominantly black and Hispanic community college, where 322 classes have been cut under austerity pressures. Students formed a group called "SOS" (Save Our School) to organize the protest. The head of the organizing committee of SOS emphasized at a student rally that the issue was not simply the personal hardships and setbacks suffered by students because of the class cuts, but that education is being destroyed, especially on the community college level, and what does this mean for the future, for those who come after us?

Amelia Boynton Robinson of Tuskegee, Alabama, 1990 recipient of the Martin Luther King Freedom Medal and an activist with the Schiller Institute, sent a message to the striking students, endorsing their mobilization:

"The strike at Los Angeles City College, like similar strikes now breaking out around the country in response to budget cuts and austerity measures, is an important demonstration of resistance. Our nation is now facing a crucial period of testing: Will we submit to the austerity conditions demanded by Wall Street's bankers and their representatives in Washington, to stave off their inevitable bankruptcy, or will we stand up, as the people of Eastern Europe and China have done, and as the people of South Africa are trying to do, and say, 'There is a limit to a tyrant's power'?"

"The right to a quality education is fundamental in a free nation. Without guaranteeing that right, no nation can expect to remain free for long, for only an informed and educated electorate will fight for democratic institutions. That truth was known to the slave masters in this nation little more than a century ago, who made it a crime to teach a black person to read.

"Many of the young men and women being sent to the front lines in Saudi Arabia today, to fight for the rights of the oil multinationals, joined our nation's armed forces because they had no other way to get an education. Your battle for quality education must embrace those 200,000 Americans—most of them very much like you—whose lives this nation seems willing to sacrifice for the so-called American lifestyle. They, too, as well as their brothers and sisters in the developing nations of the Middle East, deserve the right to a quality education and a decent living standard.

"This is what I fought for with Martin Luther King in Selma, Alabama. This is what we are fighting for today with Lyndon LaRouche and the Schiller Institute all over the world. I send you warm greetings and support in your fight today at Los Angeles City College."