



TEACHERS FOR A
JUST CONTRACT
Not just an opposition, an alternative.

www.teachersforajustcontract.org

March 2009

(212) 831-3408

No Layoffs! No Givebacks! No Cuts to Education and Social Services!

Mayor Bloomberg was clearly laying out a worst-case scenario when he said on January 30 that if the state did not give the city money from the stimulus bill, he would lay off 15,000 teachers. But the UFT turned all its fire against Bloomberg, gave the threat credence, and deeply upset thousands of new teachers by saying that all first-, second- and third-year teachers could face layoff.

Over and over, the UFT leadership evoked the 1970s, when thousands were laid off and class sizes skyrocketed. But these are not the 1970s, and our union leadership should not have used scare tactics. Back then, federal and state governments told New York City to “drop dead,” in the words of the famous *Daily News* front page. This time, we had every reason to expect help from those quarters.

The March 5 rally is a good start. But we need a much deeper, wider struggle if we want to stop givebacks and cuts.

With much fanfare, UFT officials had signed people up to receive “email notification about ways that you can contribute to the fight.”



But while the stimulus package was being debated and amended in the Senate and finalized in Conference Committee, the information they collected was not used to mobilize us. We weren't even sent a single email! The UFT should have called a giant rally in D.C. to fight against the gutting of social spending and reliance on tax cuts, and to make sure that an optimal stimulus package passed. Instead, we just had a "wear blue" day, which had been planned back in February.

It has become clearer and clearer that the package that passed, although not optimal for the nation's economic recovery, restores all aid to city schools. “We have no choice,” complained “friend of labor” Governor Paterson on February 12. Now that it is absolutely certain that the money is there, we should not let the city, the state, or the UFT leadership frighten us into accepting givebacks. Our union leadership has spent too much time fear mongering and little time organizing.

The leadership has focused exclusively on the worst-case scenario: layoffs. Now, it's clear there is no threat of layoffs to scare us into paying for our health care, or accepting a worse pension for future hires, or merit pay, or involuntary transfers. We, the members, have to demand that the UFT reject any and all givebacks! We have to tell our union leaders we absolutely will not start paying a percentage of our healthcare costs. If we start now, we'll be paying these costs forever, whether the economy is good, bad or indifferent. We must absolutely reject a new pension tier that would reduce benefits for our future colleagues.

The aid from the stimulus package rescues the future of our city's kids. Why should we give up our rights so the schools stay afloat? The whole city needs these schools!

Our union is right to demand the end of funding for overpriced bells and whistles like ARIS. But it should have mobilized us in force to do this and demand the money go to educational purposes like school construction and lowering class size.

The March 5 rally is a good start. But we need a much deeper, wider struggle if we want to stop givebacks and cuts. We need school-based actions and demonstrations in the neighborhoods. And on the citywide level, we need to break out of the pens and march through the city, joining all unions to save all social services, and to refuse to pay the penalty for Wall Street's greed.

To win these battles, UFT members must be involved mind, heart and soul. This is hard as long as the union is so top-down, undemocratic, and ineffectual. Whether it's the Delegate Assembly, the *New York Teacher* union newspaper, or the school chapters, Weingarten's ruling Unity Caucus imposes one point of view on all its members. It allows those outside the caucus very few opportunities to be heard. It either patronizes rank-and-file members, or treats us with outright disrespect. When UFT members are harassed, removed to the "rubber room," made ATRs, or their schools are closed or their rights are violated in any way, we hear over and over that there is nothing the union can do to help.

More members would get involved in a democratic UFT dedicated to fighting for us on the job. We have to change our union, so it can protect and advance our interests. Teachers for a Just Contract is one of the organizations of rank-and-file UFT members, and we have been active for more than fifteen years. If you agree with what you've read, please contact us.

For more information, visit our website at [www. Teachersforajustcontract.org](http://www.Teachersforajustcontract.org). You can email us at justcontract@yahoo.com, contact us by telephone at 212-831-3408, or send the coupon below to Teachers for a Just Contract, P.O. Box 1346, Bronx, NY 10471.

My email address is below. Send me your email updates, including meeting notices
 Send me _____ (number) leaflets to give out in my school
 Enclosed is a contribution of \$ _____ to help

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Email _____ Tel _____
School _____ Boro _____