

Timing of the Chicago School closings?

March 24, 2013

Rahm Emanuel has timed these school closings to frighten Chicago teachers, to punish them for their successful challenge to the rich and powerful who control Chicago's schools, to make Chicago teachers doubt their strength — and to sway the upcoming union election. The Caucus of Rank and File Educators, (C.O.R.E.), which now leads the Chicago Teachers Union. (CTU) is facing its first test for re-election. The stakes in this election are very, very high, for Chicago kids, parents, and teachers — as Chicago teachers no doubt realize. What may be less apparent is what's at stake for the rest of us outside of Chicago who want to save public education. I'm often asked how we to push back successfully on these "deforms" to education. Our opponents are so powerful. They control the world's productive resources and now use their power and wealth to make schools do their bidding. They aim to dictate what is taught, who is taught, and what is learned. They aim to do away with elected school boards and with public control of schooling. As they edge closer in accomplishing their goal, people are beginning to mobilize. This is not just about test scores or even school closings. It's about whether the wealthiest people in the world will have their way in controlling what our society looks like. This struggle is really about democracy and teachers unions have to be in the forefront of this struggle — which they have not, unfortunately, done so far in this country — with the exception of the CTU. Praise for CTU President Karen Lewis is well-deserved. What an articulate, passionate, intelligent defender of teachers and public education! What's often missed is that when she speaks, she is heard because of the collective power and courage of CTU members. That collective voice and strength has been organized by C.O.R.E. This group of activists has shown the world what happens when a union really trusts its ideals of social justice, its members — and democracy. Chicago teachers have displayed inspiring courage. It's not every day that a group of ordinary people have the opportunity to make history. They've done so already and I urge them to do it again. So here's a personal request to CTU members: You've made so many of us proud to be teachers. Do it again, please, by resisting these school closings with all your heart and soul. And by voting for C.O.R.E. to continue this struggle that is being watched by teachers around the world.