

February 16, 1984

Message to Ethnic Studies Students:

We, the faculty of the Ethnic Studies Program, would like to explain our decision to support and participate in the impending public workers' strike.

We believe that the wage demands being sought by the public workers are an effort to meet basic cost of living expenses in Hawaii, which has the second highest cost of living in the U. S. after Alaska. The offer by the Hawaii State Government for 0% wage increase in 1983-84 and 2.88% in 1984-85 is totally unreasonable. It will not even meet the percent increase of the cost of living over these two years and will actually result in the decline of the real income that we public workers earn.

We recognize that the State government is facing a fiscal crisis which has resulted in drastic cutbacks. However, we believe that the State surplus as well as available taxable resources can be used to meet the basic demands of the public workers. Such taxable resources could include a hotel room tax and other forms of corporate taxes.

The State's financial crisis is an outgrowth of the national fiscal crisis which has been severely exacerbated by the policies of the Reagan administration. Reagan's decision to redirect federal monies out of education, health and social services and into the biggest military buildup since World War II is clearly a major factor in the State's financial crisis. The burden of meeting the costs for Reagan's chauvinistic policies of military intervention in Lebanon and Central America, complemented by the insane buildup of the U. S. nuclear arsenal, has been passed on to persons dependent on government-funded programs to meet their health and living expenses and to public employees. This is unfair and unnecessary. Consider the absurd fact that the cost of one Trident (nuclear) submarine is more than the total biennium budget of the State of Hawaii.

We feel that the State should negotiate with the public workers' unions and offer a compromise. We, as public employees, do not want to strike. However, striking is the only alternative available to us to meet our minimum living expenses.

We regret the inconvenience that our strike will cause you as students and will do everything in our power to ensure that you will receive full credit for the semester. Our faculty is committed to cooperating with suggested plans to work through the spring recess or beyond the end of the semester so that no credit hours will be lost to students for this semester. We believe that the State's failure to meet our minimum wage demands will result in demoralization and could lower the quality of teaching and related services which the University provides. Resolving the strike in the interest of the public workers will, in the long run, contribute to greater enthusiasm and a higher quality of service.

We are encouraged by the formation of a coalition of public workers' unions and will show our solidarity with our fellow employees by withholding our labor and joining them on the picket lines until the State has met the demands of the workers of all four unions.

We urge you as students to give us your moral support. We ask for your understanding and cooperation during this very difficult period. We welcome your participation on the picket lines and in passing on our concerns to others.

Aloha,

Faculty and Staff of the Ethnic Studies Program
University of Hawaii-Manoa