



No to anti-union laws and budget-cutting across the country!

Solidarity with the fight of Wisconsin public workers!

Workers in Wisconsin have been waging a massive protest against the efforts of the new Republican state administration to essentially abolish collective bargaining rights for unions in the public sector and impose major cuts in benefits and working conditions. Like any good dictator, Governor Walker wants to impose cutbacks and concessions by banning the opposition.

Workers everywhere, public and private sector alike, are being hammered with job cuts and slashing of their wages and benefits. What we need is class solidarity against these attacks. We call on all working people to stand in solidarity with the Wisconsin public workers and workers in other states who are facing similar attacks.

Wisconsin workers take to the streets

Tens of thousands of Wisconsin public sector workers and their supporters have been marching and rallying in the capitol, Madison, day after day. On February 19th and 26th their numbers swelled to 70 to 100 thousand. The state capitol building has been occupied by the workers. Private sector workers have joined in, including workers in construction, steel, auto and other industries. In many cities and towns, Wisconsin teachers for a time refused to report to work. And sympathetic students have walked out of school in solidarity. At one point, the Milwaukee school system was shut down. Schools in Madison and surrounding areas were shut down for several days and this has happened in a number of other school districts across the state. Thousands of college students from Madison and other campuses have lent spirited support as well. Solidarity rallies have taken place across the country.

A bill to crush the workers

The demonstrations are targeting a Republican bill that would yet again reduce government spending for employee health care and pensions and force workers to foot the bill. It will also ban collective bargaining.

Governor Walker has made it clear that he wants the state and city governments to have a free hand to drive down the workers whenever they feel like it. Under the anti-union bill, public sector workers would no longer be able to bargain on pensions, health care or working conditions. Any demand for wages higher than the rate of inflation would have to be approved in a public referendum. And each year the unions would have to have membership votes for recertification. Clearly, Walker and his Republican cronies hope that banning the unions from doing anything will eventually lead to workers abandoning unions.

Meanwhile, Walker has threatened to call in the National Guard to suppress the protest. And in a prank call from someone impersonating Walker's billionaire backer, David Koch, Walker talked about sending provocateurs into the demonstrations to provide a pretext for attacking them.

While assaulting the workers, Walker is pretending to really be pro-worker. He says it's unfair for public workers to have better wages and benefits when other workers are being hit hard by the economic crisis. This is the old capitalist logic that what's "fair" is for *all* workers to be driven down to the lowest conditions. The truth is private and public workers both have long been suffering at the hands of profit-hungry corporations who have been slashing jobs, wages and benefits and the Wall Street sharks. But Walker exempts the capitalists from sacrifice. Instead, he rewards them, the real culprits, with a handsome tax cut of \$140 million.

By essentially making normal union activities illegal, Walker has taken the capitalist drive against the workers to a new level. But the protestors are not cowering. They have seen the Egyptian masses drive out the tyrant Hosni Mubarak. And placards in the demonstrations have slogans like "Walk like an Egyptian" and denounce "Hosni Walker."

The Democrats and the union leaderships prepare a betrayal

The public workers and their supporters have shown their determination. But they face a great danger that the struggle will be subverted by their supposed friends, the Democratic politicians and their own union leaderships. The Democratic state senators made headlines when they prevented the Republican anti-union bill from coming to a vote by leaving Wisconsin. But they agree with Walker's measures to drive down the benefits and working conditions of the public employees.

The union leaders are singing the same tune. The leaders of the Wisconsin State Employees Union and the Wisconsin Education Association Council, and the national AFL-CIO leadership, are all campaigning that the workers must accept Walker's economic demands. They want legal unions, but subservient ones that accept concession after concession.

Bipartisan austerity across the country

The battle in Wisconsin is being repeated across the country. On one side are the capitalist parties, and on the other are the workers, the poor, students and others under assault. The capitalist parties want to make the workers pay for the economic and budget crises caused by the capitalists. An array of Republican governors and legislators are not only

for austerity measures, but outright bans on collective bargaining for public workers in Indiana, Ohio, Tennessee and elsewhere.

The Democrats are also out to make the workers pay for the capitalist economic crisis. President Obama is leading the charge. First he agreed to Republican demands to keep Bush's massive tax breaks for the rich. Now his recent budget proposal will cut a trillion dollars over ten years, largely in social programs, slashing the budgets for home heating assistance, food vouchers for the poor (WIC), grants for students, etc. Meanwhile Obama has imposed a two year wage freeze on federal workers. Democratic governors in New York, California and other states are cutting public sector jobs and demanding big cuts in worker benefits.

In Detroit, the public school system is being dismantled with Republicans and Democrats working hand-in-hand. Former Democratic governor Granholm placed Detroit schools under an emergency financial manager who devised a four-year plan to close half the schools and create class sizes of 60 students! New Republican governor Snyder is now implementing this. Meanwhile, he's proposing a \$1.8 billion tax cut for big business.

Why is it that not only the Republicans, but the Democrats are running roughshod over the masses? Behind both parties lies the capitalist class. Whatever political party they prefer, all the capitalists share the drive to maximize profits. This is true whether we're talking about the Koch brothers, the ultra-right wing billionaires who finance Republicans like Walker in Wisconsin, or the representatives of Wall Street who have been appointed by Obama to run the economy. In the face of the economic crisis, the capitalists of all stripes demand austerity for the masses, but yet more tax breaks and government bailouts for themselves.

A crisis rooted in capitalism

The root cause of the economic crisis is capitalism itself. A capitalist economy is anarchic by nature. It's production for profit where each capitalist tries to grab as much of the market as possible for themselves. Technological advances take place, but the drive for profit means that they don't ease the burden on the workers, but increase it. Technology replaces human labor, driving unemployment. Meanwhile, the remaining workers are squeezed harder than ever, for the heavier the work burden, and the lower the wages and benefits, the higher the profit margin. Productive capacity rises along with growing exploitation of the workers, and eventually production outstrips the ability of the market to absorb it. So every capitalist boom creates the conditions for an eventual economic collapse. Capitalism cannot but give rise to crises.

Capitalism has fueled the uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa, massive protests in Europe against austerity, and our struggles here. These struggles are not directly threatening capitalism. But they lead workers to think about that. Capitalism will not last forever. It can be overcome if the workers rise up, take power, and run the economy and social institutions for their own benefit.

Such a socialist vision might seem repudiated by what happened in the former Soviet Union, in China or Cuba, etc. But those societies were communist in name only. The revolutionary uprisings got rid of the old capitalists' power, but a new type of state-capitalist order eventually developed. The workers didn't run society. Instead, new class inequalities arose, with privileged officials and enterprise managers lorded over the workers. In fact, though much of the economy was government run, the ruling officials more and more imitated the methods of market capitalism. These societies don't discredit socialism, a society run by the workers, but the state-capitalism that took hold under a fake socialist banner.

Build the class struggle against austerity measures

The capitalist austerity drive is drawing more and more workers into struggle. The outpouring of protest in Wisconsin is a sign of the anger brewing among workers everywhere. Thousands are now protesting in Indiana and Ohio against austerity budgets. Students are joining in with workers. We need to build up mass actions across the country. Strikes, walkouts, marches, rallies and other forms of protest are the order of the day.

We cannot rely on Democrats or Republicans. There are no saviors in the capitalist parties who will rescue workers from the austerity drive. As we have seen time and again, whichever capitalist party rules, the workers pay.

Neither can we rely on the present trade union leaderships. Year after year they lecture the workers to trust their fate mainly to the Democratic politicians. And instead of really fighting austerity, their main demand is they be allowed to negotiate away the gains of the workers' past struggles.

The fight against austerity measures can only be done by the working masses themselves. This process has begun. The Wisconsin workers have inspired similar protests in other states. Let's work to spread and coordinate the mass actions. What we need is a class struggle to beat back the capitalist offensive.

We need to develop organization among the rank-and-file workers and activists. It's vital to establish networks among those who not only want to beat back union-busting, but also the austerity drive. The more such worker-activist groups spring up, the more the rank-and-file workers will have their own independent voice.

Down with union busting!

No to the bipartisan austerity drive!

Social relief for the masses!

Tax the rich!

The class struggle is the way forward!

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