

It's Time for Solidarity Day III –

Wisconsin Workers Standing Up Strong To Save The Unions!

**Statement of the Revolutionary Organization of Labor, USA
February 26, 2011**

Washington Post columnist Harold Meyerson aptly entitled a recent column: *“Workers Toppled a Dictator in Egypt, But Might Be Silenced in Wisconsin”*. In mid-February newly elected Wisconsin governor Walker announced a “non-negotiable” state budget plan that substantially cuts the benefits and eliminates nearly all collective bargaining rights for state workers. As a police state tactic, he put the National Guard on alert, in case state workers rose up in protest.

In their tens of thousands, they did! Workers from both the public and private sector (joined by many supporters) took off from work, took to the streets and occupied the state house in Madison, WI, peaking at some 70,000 participants, and now continuing into its second week. Thousands more have been demonstrating in support all over the U.S. At least one Wisconsin Central Labor Council has raised the need for a general strike. These “fight back” actions (undoubtedly partly inspired by the popular successful uprisings of the Tunisian and Egyptian people) are encouraging and needed. It's in sharp contrast to the anemic response of the Labor movement's leadership to the increasing corporate and government assaults on unions and workers in general in the context of the economic crisis, caused by the greed and speculation of finance capital and the resulting massive job and home loss. **Wisconsin is now a battleground state for the survival of Unions in the United States.**

It is high time to revive and rebuild the weakened U.S. Labor Movement on a militant and democratic and worker controlled foundation. These significant battles in Wisconsin are a very encouraging step in that direction. The backdrop:

- Capitalists always try to maximize profits and unions are an obstacle to this end. Any chance to weaken and break unions, which are vital self defense organizations of the workers, will be seized upon by capitalists and their government benefactors.
- The deep economic crisis, has given new fuel to the bosses and their government to go for the jugular. The “Republicrats” are united in their trillion dollar bail-outs of the Wall Street criminals and billions in tax breaks for the wealthiest. The stock market and corporate profits are soaring. Wall Street compensation is near record levels. The bi-partisan imperialist wars of occupation for control of oil and energy resources escalate. The smoke-screen of “balancing budgets”, “shared sacrifice” and “deficit reduction” are efforts to solve the crisis on the backs of the workers after a massive transfer of wealth to the banks, investment firms, etc.
- The U.S. Labor Movement has been in alarming decline due to labor bureaucrats' reliance on the anti-union (but “lesser of two evils”) Democratic Party and refusal to “organize the

unorganized.” (In the 1950's the U.S. unionization rate was about 35%. The current rate stands at 11.9%. The private sector rate is 6.9%; the public sector rate is 36%. Thus public sector workers are Corporate America's prime target.)

- The declining strength of the U.S. labor movement is reflected in the widespread reinstatement of two tier wage/benefit scales at many companies, even profitable ones like Caterpillar and Delphi. The economic crisis was used by the federal government to coerce auto workers into agreeing to a permanent lower tier equal to the non-union auto plants for all future workers. Generations of sacrifice and struggle were wiped out with the stroke of a pen. Recently, the three biggest unionized manufacturers in Wisconsin – Harley Davidson, Mercury Marine and Kohler have all compelled permanent two tier wage systems. The American Postal Workers Union leadership seems poised to take the same path in current contract negotiations.
- The “Union Busters” new divide and conquer “big lie” is to blame state budget shortfalls on unionized government workers: that public sector workers (our teachers, sanitation and public health workers, etc.) are “fat-cats” at public taxpayer's expense. A study by the Economic Policy Institute shows that at every comparable level of education/experience, public sector workers in Wisconsin are compensated less than private sector workers.
- In Wisconsin two-thirds of corporations paid no taxes last year! Undoubtedly similar conditions exist in other states.

The political struggle in Wisconsin is not about balancing the budget. The governor has already gained Republican, Democratic (note well) and unfortunately even some union leadership support for his dictated deep cuts to workers' benefits. No -- this is a monopoly capitalist power struggle to break the unions and spread the assault state by state, including in former union bastions of Ohio and Michigan.

The Revolutionary Organization of Labor, USA supports the just struggle of the Wisconsin workers. **No more cutbacks or concessions – make the rich pay.** Let's tax the corporations, speculators and Wall Street finance capital. As part of the struggle to “**Save Our Unions**” an immediate Labor Movement-led nation-wide “**Solidarity Day III**” should be held in the streets of Wisconsin. Workers, fighting for democratic rights, can defend and improve the standard of living for the working class today. Through this process we'll see the need for **real workers' power**, socialism, and develop our ability to win!

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