

On Wisconsin:
Calling Foul Play

Compiled by Mary Beaudoin

A “A \$3.9 billion budget deficit in Wisconsin was cited as the reason for attacking the public worker unions. That claim is phony. What Walker did not say was that Wisconsin taxpayers have been forced to pay billions to fund U.S.-led wars and occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan, send drones to Pakistan, support dictators, and maintain more than 800 military bases worldwide (costofwar.com). In addition, more billions have been given to the wealthy and powerful in massive bailouts and tax breaks. Truly, the demand ‘Money for Jobs, not for War!’ has never been more appropriate or timely.”— United National Antiwar Committee, “Solidarity with Wisconsin Workers”

“The bulk of our growing inequality has been a product of skyrocketing incomes among the richest one percent and even more dramatically—among the top 0.1 percent.”—Kevin Drum, “Plutocracy Now: What Wisconsin Is Really About,” Mother Jones, March/April 2011

“Middle-class and working people have paid higher taxes—especially local property taxes—to make up for corporate tax cuts... It’s not public workers---teachers, firefighters, nurses, garbage collectors or social workers that are creating budget deficits in Wisconsin or anywhere else. It’s the relentless demands by corporate ‘persons’ to be exempt from paying their fair share while government is expected to work for them educating the workforce, providing transportation, infrastructure, and cleaning up pollution corporations create... These legal thieves are now calling themselves ‘the job creators,’ but 75 percent of all new jobs are created by much smaller business, who don’t get subsidized like Big Business does.”—Lydia Howell, “Wisconsin Resistance: Divided and Conquered No More?” Evergreen Digest, February 21, 2011

“According to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, corporate tax income has fallen by half since 1981 and over two-thirds of Wisconsin corporations pay zero taxes.”—Josh Healey, The Progressive (online), February 18, 2011

“Accepting Gov. Walker’s assertions as fact, and failing to check, created the impression that somehow the workers are getting something extra, a gift from taxpayers. They are not. Out of every dollar that funds Wisconsin’s pension and health insurance plans for state workers, 100 cents comes from the state workers. How can that be? Because the ‘contributions’ consist of money that employees chose to take as deferred wages – as pensions when they retire – rather than take immediately in cash. The same is true with the health care plan. If this were not so, a serious crime would be taking place, the gift of public funds rather than payment for services.

“Thus, state workers are not being asked to simply ‘contribute more’— to Wisconsin's retirement system (or as the argument goes, ‘pay their fair share’ of retirement costs as do employees in Wisconsin’s private sector who still have pensions and health insurance). They are being asked to accept a cut in their salaries so that the state of Wisconsin can use the money to fill the hole left by tax cuts and reduced audits of corporations in Wisconsin.”—David Cay Johnston, “Really Bad Reporting in Wisconsin: Who ‘Contributes’ to Public Workers’ Pensions?” February 24, 2011, Tax.com

The Union Makes Us Strong!

“A well-known Egyptian labor organizer, Kamal Abbas, made a video telling Americans from Tahrir that ‘we and all the people of the world stand on your side and give you our full support... I want you to know,’ he continued, ‘that no power can challenge the will of the people when they believe in their rights. When they raise their voices loud and clear and struggle against exploitation.’” —Mark LeVine, AlJazeera.net, February 26, 2011

What the polls say--Pew Research Center poll: nationwide 42 percent sided with unions versus 31 percent with Walker. Gallup poll: Americans oppose weakening collective bargaining rights, 61 to 33.

FBI Raids Related

Union and antiwar activists are interrelated in the struggle for justice and peace. Many labor groups have issued solidarity statements against the subpoenas of peace and justice activists and peace and justice activists support labor. Here is just one example: Labor negotiator and attorney Joe Burns reported that at the AFSCME Council 5 Convention expressed “its grave concern that the recent FBI raids are reminiscent of the Palmer Raids of the 1920s, the McCarthy hearings of the 1950s, and the FBI’s harassment of the civil rights movement, and our grave concern that these raids be the beginning of a new and dangerous assault on the First Amendment rights of every union fighter, international solidarity activist or antiwar campaigner. (In These Times online October 16, 2010)”.