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Workers turn Wisconsin battle into epic uprising

By Teresa Albano

While 10,000 people continued a four-day occupation of the Wisconsin state Capitol building today, tens of thousands outside chanted their approval when AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka declared: "You are stronger than the governor. You are stronger than his CEO buddies. You are the strongest movement in America."

Politicians like Republican Gov. Scott Walker "want to take away our freedom," Trumka told the roaring, sign-waving crowd.

"We won't give it to you, governor, and you can't take it away from us," Trumka said.

"I've never been in a workers' uprising like this in my life," said a middle-aged woman as everyone around her broke into cheers. Their cheers were for 200 firefighters making their way through the crowds, playing bagpipes and carrying signs that read, simply, "Firefighters for Labor."

The Capitol was completely taken over by the workers, students and families on the fourth day of the protests. The Republican-controlled state Senate was unable to approve the governor's proposal to kill union bargaining rights for public employees because the Democratic minority remained out of state, at undisclosed locations. The lawmakers said they will stay away until the Republicans take the union-busting measure off the table.



Right-wing state legislators and governors in other states have been keeping a close eye on Wisconsin because they too would like to weaken organized labor in their states. But the mass outpouring of rank-and-file workers here may be giving them pause.

The crowd broke into prolonged cheers and chants when Trumka said, "The Michigan governor just announced that he doesn't want to pick a fight." - meaning he will not push anti-collective-

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bargaining legislation in his state, or not now at least.

Huge sections of the crowd, inside and outside the Capitol, frequently broke into chants of "This is what democracy looks like" and "Recall Walker."

In addition to the firefighters and teachers and other public workers, thousands of private sector workers were in the crowd.

Firefighters and law enforcement officers were treated like rock stars whenever people spotted them. Crowds cheered, whistled and yelled their support.

Teachers from all over the state were among the demonstrators, forming the backbone of the protests. There were so many in attendance that the Milwaukee public school district, Wisconsin's largest, had to close down. At least six school districts in the state have had to cancel all classes.

In addition to the firefighters and teachers and other public workers, thousands of private sector workers were in the crowd. There were sheet metal workers, Teamsters union members, steelworkers, electrical workers, meat cutters and many more.

Keith Kemper, a sheet metal worker from Racine, was here with his two sons and their friends. "We've had rallies in Racine where schools were closed yesterday," he said. "It's not about the money. It's about workers' rights. Workers deserve a right to bargain. If you tell a public employee he has to pay more for health care, they deserve the

right to bargain over it."

Rick Clayton, a pipe installer, added his voice to the tens of thousands who have been saying the issue driving the protest is the attack on collective bargaining, not money. "If he [Gov. Scott Walker] would delete collective bargaining from the bill, this would be all over," said Clayton."

Among the demonstrators were many who were not union members. They were people like Nick Grobarchik, a freshman at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. His mother teaches in Green Bay, the town in which he used to live. "I'm afraid she'll lose her job," he said.

Since then, more people have joined the demonstration, and workers in other states have begun their own actions.

A teacher got on her cell phone, urging colleagues back home to come to Madison. "You've got to come up and bring everybody," she said.



Teresa Albano was on location in Madison.

Editorial: Stop the attack on Planned Parenthood

By PW Editorial Board

No question about it: Republicans in Congress are waging war on women.

In the Republican-controlled House of Representatives slashed the entire \$317 million program of aid for family planning, known as Title X, in the 2011 spending bill, HR 1. A proposed amendment to the bill, introduced by Rep. Mike Pence, R-Ind., specifically barred Planned Parenthood from receiving any federal funds for any purpose.

These programs provide vital health care and health education to an estimated 5 million women and teens. Planned Parenthood, in particular, is the nation's largest provider of health care and family planning education to low-income women, serving some 1.85 million women each year.

The Senate, which retains a slim Democratic majority, may not pass these cuts, but Republicans say they will keep introducing similar bills. Their aim is to kill the programs by a thousand cuts and a barrage of lies, hoaxes and intimidation.

Abortion is their main target, but not the only one. Birth control, sex education - all are in their firing sights. If these folks were so concerned to limit abortions, you'd think they would want to expand such programs, which help prevent unintended pregnancies.

Planned Parenthood President Cecile Richards said this week, "Under the guise of deficit reduction, the House Republican Leadership is pursuing the most politically driven assault on women's health in American history."

"Cutting off millions of women from care they have no other way to afford places them at risk of sickness and death," Richards said.

If Sarah Palin needed an abortion or cervical cancer screening, she would not have to rely on a federally funded provider. With the millions she is raking in via her self-promoting efforts, she could quietly pay top dollar to a private doctor to obtain these services.

The Republican leadership is pursuing the most politically driven assault on women's health in American history.

Black unemployment, working class unity

By Sam Webb

Except for the upscale urban neighborhoods and suburbs where the moneyed elite live, nearly everyone and every community is showing the effects of the economic crisis. What isn't so obvious is the uneven impact of the crisis on various sections of the population and country.

Take, for instance, the economic conditions of the African American people. Black unemployment rates are uniformly higher than the unemployment rate of white working people.

In St. Louis it is twice as high, in Memphis three times as high, in Los Angeles and Philadelphia 1.7 times as high, in New York and Atlanta metropolitan areas 2.1 times as high, in Baltimore and metropolitan Miami 1.9 times as high and so on.

Interestingly, of the 18 metropolitan areas from which data was gathered the lowest ratio of Black to white unemployment was Detroit where misery has plenty of company. There, Black unemployment was 20.9 percent - the highest of any metropolitan region - and their white counterparts topped off at 13.8 percent.

Overall, the average Black unemployment rate in the study of 18 metropolitan areas was 14.3 percent, while white unemployment was 7.4 percent.

In other words, as bad as the crisis is for the American people of every nationality and race - and it's terrible - it is at the same time exacting extra pain from African Americans and other communities of color.

Thus general appeals for jobs and relief, for public works jobs programs and for full employment legislative measures have to be combined with targeted job creation in those communities



where the hardship is the most severe.

Such measures are not divisive, as the ideologies of racist division and oppression claim. They are, in fact, at the core of racial justice and working class unity, essential to the struggle against the economic crisis. In the 1930s, it was no accident that the slogan of the unemployed movement, "Black and White, Unite and Fight," was heard where working people gathered to press their demands for jobs and relief.

Millions realized that only their unity could win some measure of economic reform.

Our enemies understand this. It's why the racist offensive after the election of Barak Obama shows no sign of subsiding, and has been accompanied by a coordinated effort to reboot segregationist and discriminatory measures, designed to roll back civil rights and cause racial divisions.

The purveyors of racism will be no more successful than they were in the Depression years. More to the point, the election of an African American president two years ago is proof positive that the possibilities of building a united, multi-racial, multi-ethnic movement are enormous.

What isn't so obvious is the uneven impact of the crisis on various sections of the population and country.

Montana versus Republican assault on families, environment

By Jesse Jack

Montanans from Helena and across the state assembled at the State Capitol here on President's Day to reject the ultra-right state legislature's assault on working families.

Among what are considered the worst pieces of legislation to be introduced this session are bills to privatize veterans' homes, roll back public employee salaries to 2005 levels, criminalize abortion and prohibit its coverage by insurance plans, cap state employee salaries, slash budgets for the Montana university system, gut state environmental law, repeal incentives for renewable energy - and even declare global climate change to be beneficial for the state.

With Republicans in Montana's legislative bodies going to town on the State budget with what the protestor's categorize as reckless abandon, it would be easy to assume that the state was in the midst of a financial crisis. However, Montana has over \$350 billion in the bank, a luxury previous governments secured by not deflating surpluses through handouts for the rich. Furthermore, Gov. Brian Schweitzer, a Democrat, has proposed a budget that maintains funding levels for public programs and still allows the government to live within its means.

The Republican attack on Montanans brought people from all walks of life from all around the state, to Helena, beginning with an assembly on the Capitol lawn under a banner reading "For love of Montana", and featuring a spirited crowd of environmental activists. Hunters, families and concerned citizens of all types gathered to join in song and discussion within view of the lawmakers who were debating these bills.

Estudio: Leyes antiinmigrantes el problema, no la solución

Por Emile Schepers

Gracias al negativo del Congreso Estadounidense a aprobar ni una amplia reforma inmigratoria ni la mas limitada "Ley Sueño" ("Dream Act") en el 2009 o 2010, se ha creado una situación muy difícil para las comunidades inmigrantes.

Los Republicanos en el Congreso han introducido leyes anti-inmigrantes draconianas (H.R. 140). Y algunas jurisdicciones locales ya están haciendo fila para participar en programas gubernamentales facilitando la cooperación entre estados, condados y policía local por una parte, y el departamento federal de Seguridad de la Patria por la otra. Un nuevo estudio muestra cómo estas estrategias, que son solamente de aplicación de leyes, causarán interrupción y sufrimiento a gran escala mas que resolver el problema de la inmigración indocumentada.

Los programas 287 (g) son arreglos de cooperación entre agencias policíacas locales, estatales o del condado y la I.C.E., agencia federal encargada de aplicar la ley migratoria. En estos programas, oficiales de policía reciben entrenamiento y apoyo de la I.C.E. y luego cuentan con autoridad para interrogarles a personas detenidas sobre su estatus migratorio durante el curso de sus investigaciones de infracciones mayores o pequeñas. Personas que ofrecen respuestas insatisfactorias pueden ser consignadas a la I.C.E. y sujetas a procesos bajo las leyes migratorias.

Existen varios modelos distintos de los programas 287 (g). En algunos

programas se trata de amplias redadas en la comunidad, en las que son generalmente detenidas personas que no hayan sido acusadas de ningún crimen.

El enfoque de estos programas está supuestamente sobre las personas que se consideran como sospechosos criminales (incluyendo a personas con múltiples infracciones de leyes migratorias como las de no haberse presentado a una audiencia de deportación, o que han regresado al país luego de ser deportados). Pero el gobierno federal clarifica que aún cuando detengan los oficiales autorizados por los programas 287 (g) a inmigrantes indocumentados no criminales, estos serán consignados a la I.C.E.

Como resultado, han habido quejas acerca de discriminación racial en instancias en las que oficiales de policía persiguen a Latinos en espera de que sean indocumentados, buscando la posibilidad de procesarlos bajo los programas 287 (g). Algunas jurisdicciones ya parecen haber fijado cuotas para el número de personas procesadas mediante el programa, lo que presiona a los oficiales a que se pongan más agresivos en sus interrogaciones y detenciones a la gente.

En las jurisdicciones analizadas del Sudeste parece haber un patrón orientada principalmente a la comunidad Latina. Peor aún, "los oficiales locales y estatales operan programas 287 (g) de acuerdo a prioridades formadas en gran parte por presiones políticas".

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