

Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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May 2011

MAY DAY 2011: PUSH ALL WORKERS UP!

Union workers' wages and benefits push all workers up, and the more union members, the greater the push. Since public workers make up more than half of all union workers in the U.S., when they lose wages, benefits, and rights, all workers, both union and nonunion, lose. In 1959, Wisconsin was the first state to allow public workers to bargain collectively. In 2011, a Republican governor and legislature took that away.

When Wisconsin public workers stood up in March against losing the right to bargain, they did not stand alone. A labor-community-student coalition spontaneously arose to support them. Firefighters and police, whose collective bargaining rights were not under attack, joined in solidarity. On the two biggest days of protests, over 100,000 people demonstrated at Wisconsin's state capitol, as well as tens of thousands around the country. The occupation of the capitol building was organized by teaching assistants. The demonstrations even gave 14 Democratic legislators the spine to leave the state and to stay away for three weeks, temporarily preventing the quorum required in the legislature to pass the anti-worker legislation.

And it wasn't just Madison. Demonstrations bloomed all over the state. In Gays Mills, a town of no more than 100, people packed a diner to confront their state senator. The protests were the most impressive response of U.S. workers to an employer offensive in many years. The May Day 2006 walkout and demonstrations by immigrant workers were larger, but the Wisconsin actions were more sustained. The stunning support from nonunion workers distinguishes it from most other labor struggles. The stage was set by the teachers' illegal two-day strike, which swelled numbers at the capitol, prompted hundreds of high school students to walk out, and showed the depth of opposition to governor Scott Walker's attack on union rights.

The bill passed anyway and was signed into law by governor Walker.

Implementation is temporarily blocked the courts. The law seems more about destroying the unions that didn't support Walker for governor, rather than balancing the budget. Firefighters and police, who did support him, are not covered by the law. The law ends collective bargaining for university workers, childcare and home care workers. Other public employees can bargain for wages only, but any raise over the increase in the consumer price index must go to a voter referendum. The bill also ends dues check-off (union dues deducted automatically from paychecks) and "fair share" payments from workers who don't join the union but receive their benefits. Each public sector union must hold an annual vote of members to "re-certify" that workers still want the union, and a majority of the workers in the unit must vote to keep their union, not a majority of those that vote.

Governor Walker and the Wisconsin legislature bet that most workers, who have seen their wages decline and who rarely see the benefits of union contracts, would not support public workers. They bet wrong. Turns out people in the U.S. love public workers. A recent poll showed that 60% of those polled strongly opposed taking away bargaining power from public employees. And 56% opposed cutting pay or benefits of public workers in the name of deficit reduction.

Wisconsin, like other states, claims a budget shortfall. Polls show that voters favor raising taxes on corporations and the rich to fund government. In 1955, the richest 1% of people paid 50% of their income in taxes. Now they pay 18%. The average federal income tax rate paid by the rich has not been so low since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

In these days of great inequality and increasing suffering we must continue to stand together.

VOICE FROM INSIDE

Crescent City CA

May 4, 2011

Beginning July 1, 2011, some of the inmates housed in the Security Housing Unit (SHU) will be conducting an indefinite hunger strike, to bring attention to the inhumane treatment they are forced to endure by the California Department of Corrections (CDC). This will peacefully protest the 26 years of torture and isolation via arbitrary, illegal and progressively more punitive practices and policies of the CDC.

The five core demands are:

- 1) Individual Accountability. This is in response to "group punishment" used to with individual's rules violations.
 - 2) Abolish Debriefing Policy and Modify Inactive Gang Criteria. The debriefing policy is illegal and redundant. The Active/Inactive gang status criteria must cease the use of innocuous association to deny inactive status and cease the use of informants to deny inactive status unless their allegations are supported by factual, corroborating evidence.
 - 3) Comply with U.S. Commissions 2006 Recommendations Re An End to Long-Term Solitary Confinement. Ensure that prisoners in SHU and AD Seg have regular, meaningful contact and freedom from extreme physical deprivations, make segregation a last resort, provide SHU inmates immediate, meaningful access to natural sunlight, and quality health care
 - 4) Provide Adequate Nutritious Food
 - 5) Expand and Provide Constructive Programming and Privileges for Indefinite SHU Status Inmates. Including visiting, photos, phone calls, packages.
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Copies of this Newsletter will be included in all correspondence we send out. To receive our monthly issues regularly, send us self-addressed, stamped envelopes (with the CPR return address)-- up to 12 at one time

Please continue to send us address changes and renewal requests in order to receive the year-end holiday card/new calendar. This is especially important for those in California and Texas.

Also, please note that the ONLY address to use to be sure to reach us continues to be: PO Box 1911, Santa Fe NM 87504.

Many, many thanks to the Real Cost of Prisons Project for making our Newsletter available on-line for free downloading and distribution. It is at:

<http://www.realcostofprisons.org/coalition.html>. An excellent site!

A reminder: None of us at the CPR are lawyers or legal workers.

DIA MAYO 2011

Los salarios de los trabajadores sindicalizados y sus beneficios ayudan a todos los trabajadores, entre mas miembros esten sindicalizados, mas será el apoyo. Los trabajadores publicos constituyen mas de la mitad de los trabajadores sindicalizados en Estados Unidos, cuando estos pierden salarios, beneficios o derechos, todos los trabajadores, tanto sindicalizados como no sindicalizados pierden. En 1959, el estado de Wisconsin fue el primer estado que permitio a los trabajadores publicos hacer negociaciones colectivas. En el 2011, el gobernador Republicano y las legislatura quitaron estos derechos.

Cuando los trabajadores publicos en Wisconsin protestaron para no perder el derecho a negociar no estuvieron solos: una coalición comunitaria de trabajadores y estudiantes les dio su apoyo. Bomberos y policias, quienes no estuvieron en la mira de los ataques a su derecho de negociacion también se solidarizaron. En los dos dias mas grandes de protestas mas de 100,000 personas acudieron al capitolio de Wisconsin y miles mas en toda la nación. Las manifestaciones, incluso les dió a 14 legisladores democratas la oportunidad de salir del estado y mantenerse alejados durante tres semanas, impidiendo temporalmente el quórum necesario en la legislatura para aprobar la legislación anti-trabajadores.

Las manifestaciones florecieron en todo el estado. Las protestas fueron la respuesta más impresionante de los trabajadores de EE.UU. a una ofensiva patronal en muchos años. La huelga de mayo del 2006 y las manifestaciones de los trabajadores inmigrantes fueron enormes, pero las acciones de Wisconsin fueron más sostenidas. El apoyo de los trabajadores no sindicalizados se distinguió de entre otras luchas laborales. El escenario estaba listo para la huelga ilegal de maestros de dos dias; llevó a cientos de estudiantes a protestar y mostró la profundidad de la oposición hacia el gobernados Scot Walker de atacar los derechos sindicales.

El proyecto de ley fue aprobado y se convierte en ley por el Gobernados Walker. La ley parece favorecer mas la destrucción de los sindicatos que no apoyan a Walker para gobernador en vez de equilibraaar el presupuesto. ;Pero la llucha continua!

