

# DEMOCRACY IN THE STREETS!

## MADISON MOBILIZES TO DEFEAT THE ANTI-LABOR WALKER

by Omar Mohamad, Socialist Party of South Central Wisconsin and Billy Wharton, co-chair Socialist Party USA

The mass protests led by public employees unions in Madison, Wisconsin have been presented by some mainstream commentators as a labor's last stand. They are not. They are a spark, a spark with the potential to create a new protest movement capable of revitalizing our unions, radicalizing student organizing and creating a space for democratic socialist politics. As socialists, we stand steadfastly in solidarity with this protest movement. We pledge to support the immediate goal of blocking Governor Scott Walker's reactionary and draconian anti-union legislation and the longer-term project of building a serious left-wing political movement in the US.



Walker's proposal to strip workers of collective bargaining rights is an extreme example of the budget cutting strategies being prepared by state and local officials throughout the country. More than 31 states are in the process of implementing deep cuts to basic public services. The local budgetary situations have been made worse by the ending of Federal stimulus funds. Much like at the Federal level, most of these states have, for decades, refused to properly tax their richest residents and corporations. In the case of Wisconsin, corporate tax rates have not been increased since 1972 and a myriad of loopholes and tax credits allow these companies to further evade taxation.

But the budget cuts are not about the fiscal balancing of budgets. They are, instead, an ideological attack on the rights of working people, on the opportunities for public university students and on the public programs that millions of people rely on. Gov. Walker and the other politicians, Democrats and Republicans alike, have refused to cover deficits by spending from reserve funds or increasing taxation on the rich and corporations. This is a political choice, driven by free market ideology, to defend the wealth of the elite at the expense of the vast majority of people in our society.

As socialists, we understand that public employees are not the problem. Their work helps to enhance the public good. The problem that is gripping all of American society is that 5% of the population controls 85% of the productive wealth and this 5% has no intention of returning this wealth to those who produced it. As a result, politicians will violate any democratic right – union rights, civil rights and economic rights – that threatens this wealth. Walker

# SOLIDARITY



demonstrated just how far he would go by putting the National Guard on notice in the event of mass unrest.

No wonder then that the protesters in Madison compared the Governor to the deposed dictator of Egypt Hosni Mubarak. This comparison is not only because the protesters see a bit of Walker in Mubarak, but more importantly, they see themselves in the massive street protests that gripped Egypt and in the occupation of Tahrir Square. And what great lessons to learn from this brave movement that faced down the police and forced a dictator out. The fighting spirit of Tahrir Square represents a global wave of unrest in which people are exercising and demanding their democratic rights. Democracy, in Cairo or Madison, is about more than elections. It is about creating a society based on economic democracy – where working people who create the wealth can claim that wealth.

Democratic socialism offers the best hope to make the aspirations of these protests real. We believe that society can best be run through direct democracy – where people have a direct say in how the society runs. Scott Walker and the Wisconsin Legislature should not be the ones determining how the budget is crafted. A system of participatory budgeting in which those who will be affected by the budget are given a direct decision making voice in how the funds are spent would be the most democratic and efficient process possible. Here, the true will of all those people mobilizing to stop Walker would be heard.

Until we are able to build the political will to create such a democratic structure, the political focus must be placed on taxing the rich and corporations to cover the immediate budget deficit in Wisconsin. In the short term, this will mean employing all possible forms of civil disobedience and non-compliance on our worksites, our schools and in our communities. Simply put, if a small group of politicians attempts to strip us of our rights in the service of protecting the wealth of the elite, we are more than justified in using all of the social power we can muster to bring the society to a stand still.

The Socialist Party USA has initiated a national campaign to fight against budget cuts and the attack on public workers. We are calling on all of our members and our supporters to join local campaigns to defend jobs, education, and services. As socialists, we bring with us a firm conviction about taxing the rich and a vision of a democratically run society in which people regain control of their lives from the logic of the market, from the workings of capitalism and from the elite 5% who benefit from our labor, while offering little in return.

Solidarity with the Madison Protests!  
Kill the Anti-Union Bill!  
Defeat the Anti-Labor Walker!



## Get Organized!

In Madison contact - [omarbmohamad@gmail.com](mailto:omarbmohamad@gmail.com)  
Other areas visit - [www.socialistparty-usa.org](http://www.socialistparty-usa.org)