

# the Socialist

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## The Fighting Spirit of A. Philip Randolph

May Day is traditionally a time to revive Socialist heroes of the past in order to be inspired by lives spent struggling for justice. Most often this means summoning heroes who lead thrilling movements. What's lost is the grinding determination exhibited by most political activists. Long struggles lack the inspirational qualities of the big moments in history. A. Philip Randolph is one historical figure whose life captures both of these qualities. While he certainly soared to the heights of mass movements for change, he also operated with a patient determination that offers much to socialist activists of today.

Randolph began his political life being inspired by the great Socialist Party of America leader Eugene Debs. In Debs' radical message of socialist democracy, he saw the best hope for African-Americans to relieve the deep burdens of economic exploitation and racial prejudice. These ideas were tested immediately, as major Black leaders such as W.E.B. DuBois rallied around the call for US intervention in World War I. Randolph refused to support the War. "The Negro may be choosing between being burnt by Tennessee, Georgia or Texas mobs or being shot by Germans in Belgium." For this, the newly minted socialist earned a place in jail.

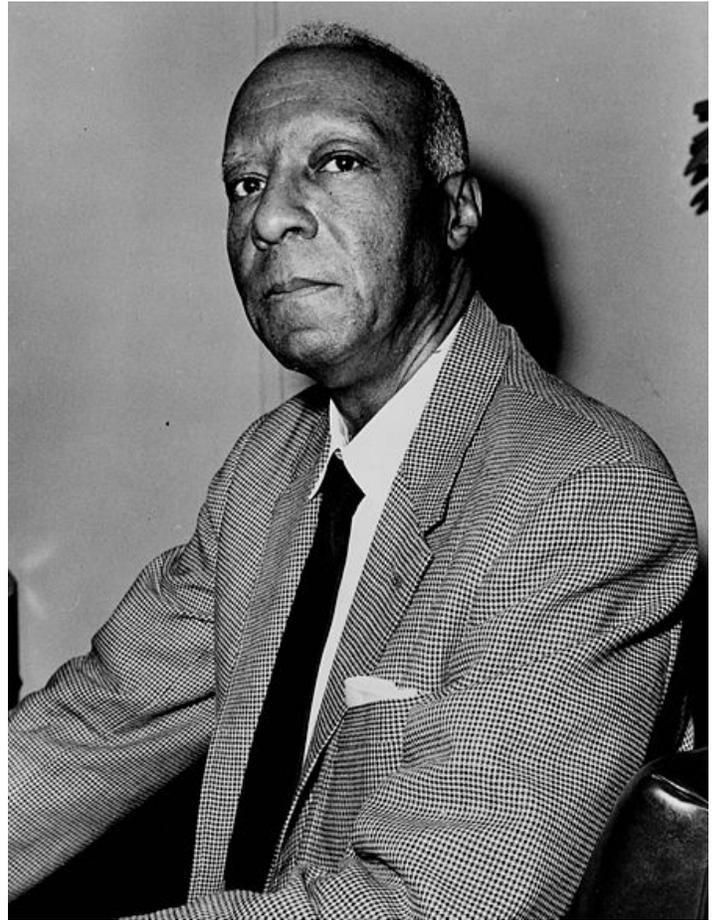
Randolph's position on World War I was an early example of his great contribution to Socialist theory and practice in America. He held a perspective that was equally informed by race and class. This placed him in the ranks of innovative early American socialists and radicals in the Black community such as Hubert Harrison, W.E.B. DuBois and Chandler Owen. What distinguished Randolph was his firm commitment to the trade union movement. The working class would always be at the center of his strategies for social change.

The organization of the Sleeping Car Porters Union was the great accomplishment of Randolph's life. Here, his patient determination as an organizer was just as important as the worker-centered perspective provided by his socialism. As John Nichols skillfully argued in his recent book *The S Word*, Randolph was up against more than just economic exploitation when it came to organizing the porters. Decades of racial oppression on the worksite also had to be challenged.

For example, train porters were subjected to being called "George" by customers – a generic named used to dehumanize them by reducing them to the first name of railroad founder George Pullman. This, in addition to a hostile management and a union movement intent on keeping locals race segregated, presented serious obstacles to organizing.

Randolph and the Porter organizers relied on a community strategy – using a network of Black churches as meeting places and relying on support from the Socialist Party and other sources. Twelve years after he initiated the organizing campaign, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was finally organized. Randolph had translated the youthful militancy of anti-war politics into a concrete organizing victory that challenged both race and class oppression.

The country's most noted socialist then took this perspective into the national trade union movement. As early as 1933 he pre-



sented a resolution at the American Federation of Labor's Convention calling for the integration of union locals. Randolph wanted to "remove from the hands of the employing class the weapon of race prejudice." His resolution was ultimately squashed, but Randolph's patient determination would outlast the labor segregationists in the same way he had defeated the railroad bosses.

In the 1940s, Randolph used the government's dependence on war industries as a wedge to advance the cause of racial integration. He and other radicals began to mobilize black workers to demand that the government end discrimination in the war industries and the military. This pressure from below at a sensitive time resulted in an Executive Order ending discrimination in state industries and, perhaps more important, led Randolph to the idea that would define the second half of his life.

The March on Washington Movement was the brainchild of Randolph and built momentum toward a mass occupation of Washington D.C. A flyer advertising the movement denounced both Jim Crow and Poverty and quoted Randolph, "Winning Democracy for the Negro is Winning the War for Democracy." These words carried a remarkably clear vision of the future as the Black struggle for freedom became the cutting edge of the overall movement for democracy in post war America.

Though the march was called off in 1942, it became a framework for the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 60s. By then, Randolph was the elder statesman of the movement, but still carried the belief that the movement for socialism needed to work from a race and class perspective. Behind the scenes of the 1963 March on Washington, Randolph served to temper the language of John Lewis, then a young radical in the

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# Another Front in the War Against Workers

By Sally Joyner

As we join youth and the workers in the streets this spring against bills designed to destroy both public sector unions and the standard of living for every worker in America, a similar battle is being waged in California state courtrooms, which could ignite an employers' movement to bring back the era of "government by injunction."

This timely assault on workers by the judicial branch is unsurprising—there has been no greater weapon employed by the capitalists against the people than the common law itself. Fashioned in the context of individual property rights by judges who candidly admitted their class biases, the common law provides no framework on which to structure substantial collective rights. This renders union rights particularly vulnerable to legal challenges.

In 1825, England nominally recognized unions as legal in order to quell rising social unrest, although there was no end to the ways in which union organizing and activity could be criminalized. In 1868, the courts adapted the equitable remedy of the injunction—used to halt or prevent injury to property by maintaining a status quo—to apply to concerted actions involving labor disputes, such as strikes, peaceful picketing, or the mere advertisement of a dispute.

The theory was, because such actions caused inestimable harm to the employer's right to do business, his business' reputation, and his profits, this was an appropriate use of the injunction. Prior to this use, injunctions were only granted to protect tangible property; legal scholars criticized the use of the injunction in a labor context from its inception.

The injunction was so successful at preventing unionization and stripping workers of collective power that it was the primary means of regulating labor disputes in the United States by 1910, long after England abandoned its use as unsound in law and unfair in practice. The injunction was particularly effective because it requires neither a trial nor a jury.

Juries generally sympathized with unions and would not convict workers of "criminal conspiracy in restraint of trade" or "tortious interference with property." Injunctions were also desirable for employers because one could be jailed for contempt for violating a court order, again without a

jury. The reputation of unions suffered as a result of this criminalization.

The injunction also had a radicalizing effect; it was Eugene V. Debs' time in jail for violating the injunction against the Pullman workers' strike that led him from trade unionism to socialism. The use of the injunction laid bare the biases of the judiciary and thus the entire legal system—there was no veneer of justice to placate workers.

Throughout this era there were liberal voices—including then-Professor Felix Frankfurter and Justice Louis Brandeis—calling for an end to the use of the labor injunction, and unions fought for decades for the implementation of anti-injunction legislation.

In 1932, they got it in the form of the Norris-LaGuardia Act (NLA). The NLA set out the policy of the United States as being in favor of workers acting peacefully to assert their collective bargaining rights and opposed to interference from the courts, and it set forth strict rules on when federal courts could issue an injunction during a labor dispute.

A labor dispute was defined broadly by the NLA, but its protections were limited to those people acting in "self-interest," meaning within the same workplace or industry. This language was explicitly used by its liberal authors to ensure the continued criminalization of class-based solidarity and the general strike.

At least twenty-six states have adopted similar laws that limit state courts' ability to issue injunctions against peaceful concerted actions related to a labor dispute. Anti-injunction laws were initially challenged on the theory that they violated the Equal Protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

Employers argued that these "special protections" for labor privileged unions over other groups by allowing them to "trespass" where other people could not. Furthermore, they said that taking away the right to obtain an injunction to halt damage to their intangible property violated due process.

Courts responded that the laws were written to avoid court interference into labor disputes and that no property right had been taken from the employ-

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### PRINTING

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# After Madison: Labor Radicals Begin at the Beginning

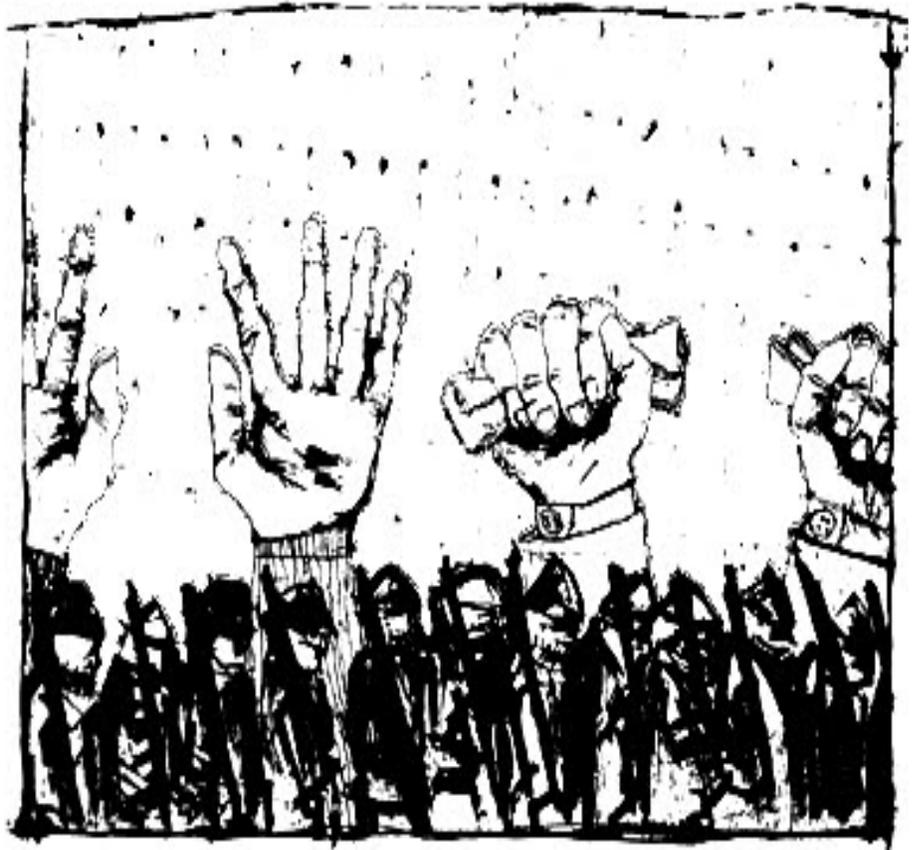
by *Billy Wharton*

It wasn't supposed to be this way. After a week of the largest labor mobilizations in recent history and militant declarations from previously passive organized labor leaders, Madison, Wisconsin seemed headed toward a political explosion. Once the Budget Repair Bill was signed, an escalation of the struggle seemed imminent. A video of the head of the Firefighters Union declaring his support for a General Strike, fueled the optimism of outside observers to the events in Madison. Yet a week after the passage of the Bill, the mobilizations have mostly ended – all of the dissent funneled into a longer-term campaign to recall Governor Scott Walker and other Republican leaders. So what are the lessons of Madison?

Two lessons seemed to be lingering in the air at the annual meeting of leftists and progressives at the Left Forum. The first, an excited and optimistic sense that the protests in Madison marked a new moment in popular resistance to budget cuts and anti-union measures was clearly evident. Madison protestors seemed to throw off old restraints thereby fueling a feeling that anything was now possible when it comes to political mobilization. The fairly high visibility of pro-Wisconsin fist t-shirts, Wisconsin buttons and excitement when the “spirit of Wisconsin” was mentioned advertised this position.

A different sense prevailed in the ranks of veteran leftist labor movement activists. We lost. And the loss was monumental. Madison represented a kind of Waterloo for the American trade union movement. What began in the late 19th century with militant strikes and struggles to integrate union locals, ended in Wisconsin with the stripping of collective bargaining rights and the end of dues check off. 100 years of progress gone with a single stroke of a right-wing pen.

Union leadership, even when faced with the loss of their gravy train of member's dues, wouldn't fight. In a pinch they chose the path of lesser resistance. A re-



call of the public officials made sense to them. It allowed union leaders to avoid assessments of their relationship with the Democratic Party, to dodge questions about signing no-strike pledges in contracts and to resist the temptation of listening to rank-and-file leaders demanding militant action. For long-time labor radicals, this was a worst case scenario come true – the masses of workers not yet able to act independently and the leaders employing the same old failed strategies to demobilize the demonstrations.

The message from the labor radicals circulating through the tables and panels at the Left Forum was that we are beginning now at the beginning. A new labor movement will literally have to be re-created from scratch. This means breathing in the wretched air of worker exploitation, discrimination and demoralization just as the 19th century pioneers of the labor movement did.

The old methods of person-to-person and worksite-to-worksite organizing will have to be recovered – though in a manner that is enhanced and supplemented by new forms of communication from the electronic media. The very notions of a union, of worker's solidarity and of striking should be treated as new concepts that require edu-

cational campaigns before they can be re-born. No assumptions about historical memory can be made inside this new movement.

Perhaps, the sense of slightly naïve optimism expressed by the folks inspired by Madison can end up as a great asset in the process of beginning to create a new labor movement. The willingness of protesters to look beyond national borders for influences – to be inspired by events in places like Egypt – is a positive one that can be built upon. Yet, there can be no shortcuts. What's left of the organized trade union movement shows few signs, even upon threat of extinction, of either the willingness or the ability to organize a substantial fight back. We must begin at the beginning again and create new structures for economic and social justice built out of the real experiences of working people.

The great lesson of the 20th century is that democracy is a useful idea. The great challenge of the 21st century is to apply this good idea to all sectors of society. The task of radicals everywhere is to make good on this hefty promise. After Madison, it seems clear that the old strategies and old structures just won't get us there.

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ers. While the Supreme Court has never ruled on the constitutionality of the NLA itself, it has found similar state laws to be constitutional, which discouraged attacks on the NLA and its state progeny.

However, in June 2010 the Third District Court of Appeal of California declared the California anti-injunction acts to be unconstitutional “content-based restrictions on speech” in violation of the First and Fourteenth Amendments. The California anti-injunction statutes were closely patterned after the NLA.

Until now, only laws that restricted speech in public places based on the speech’s content were considered to be content-based restrictions on speech. These types of restrictions violate free speech and equal protection because they do not treat all types of speech the same.

For example, it is unconstitutional to allow all forms of speech in a park except speech concerning environmental degradation. For the same reasons, it is unconstitutional to disallow all speech on sidewalks near schools, except speech concerning a labor dispute. In both cases, the government is impermissibly prioritizing certain speech over other types, controlling public discourse.

Anti-injunction legislation, however, is purely procedural in nature and does not specifically address speech. It merely limits the courts’ ability to allow employers to restrict labor speech on their own property during a labor dispute—this is hardly analogous to government restriction in public areas. However, the Court of Appeal deemed this “a distinction without a difference.”

The twisted think-tank logic of the court is accompanied with the same flowery defense of property rights found in the most reactionary 19th century judicial opinions. The employers’ theory is clearly a dressed-

up version of the equal protection claims that were deemed meritless decades ago, but this does not mean that the California Supreme Court or United States Supreme Court will not take this opportunity to once again subordinate the collective rights of workers to the individual property rights of employers.

In the United States, only workers’ rights are “collective” in nature rather than “individual,” compounding their precariousness—a precariousness usually reserved for rights protecting women or minority groups. As the ephemeral nature of reforms is once again being revealed in every state capitol building and as public unions experience increasing vulnerability, the means by which the few remaining

private union workers can assert their demands through power rather than appeasement are being challenged.

The California Supreme Court will be making its decision on the issue later this year, which will likely trigger an appeal to the Supreme Court. If either court affirms, the NLA and state anti-injunction laws across the country may become the latest casualties of the war on workers.

The answer is not to continue to play the capitalists’ game as they change the rules, but to agitate for a revolutionary change in social relations that ends the reign of the individual rights of employers, while ushering in an era where collective rights form the basis for new social, political, and economic systems.

## Why Unions are Good for Children

by *Kristin Schall*

**W**ould you feel safe leaving your child with an over-stressed and underpaid person working at an uncertified Day Care Center? The gut reaction of any parent is “Hell No!” Yet, every day, hundreds of thousands of parents in America place their children in just such a scenario. The plight of child daycare workers is one of the many silent crises of American society, a subtle inequity with a potential for disaster at any moment. Though often unnoticed by the general public, the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ (BLS) description of childcare workers accurately captures their oppression “Child day care workers may become dissatisfied with their job’s stressful conditions, low pay, and lack of benefits and eventually leave.”

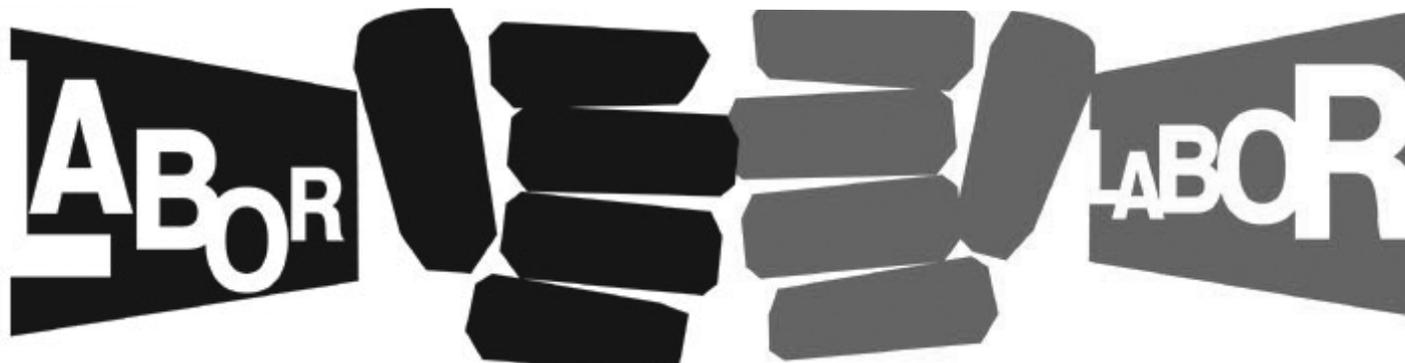
The vast majority of Child daycare workers are young and untrained. They work long hours for a mean salary of \$17,440 per year. Because daycare is a largely unregulated industry, there are no requirements for becoming a daycare

worker. It is possible to work in this field possessing only a high school diploma and thus be without even a rudimentary understanding of child development and psychology.

Not surprisingly, given the poor conditions, the unionization rate for this field is an abysmally low 5 percent, compared to the 14 percent for all industries. The 5 percent includes public school kindergarten and pre-k teachers, which likely make up a large portion of the unionized, considering that child day care is a largely private sector field. As a result, the BLS paints a much rosier picture of the work environment when discussing kindergarten and preschool teachers separately from childcare workers as a whole. Having a union matters.

The demand for childcare is clearly rising. A quarter of all children in the US are cared for by non-relatives, either in center-based daycare, home-based daycare or by

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nannies. This makes child daycare workers responsible for the education and well being of hundreds of thousands of children.

Since the field is largely unregulated as far as education, training, and curriculum goes, there is great disparity in the quality of care being provided to children. For those who can afford to pay, there are high quality centers and preschools that are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). These centers tend to employ qualified teachers who have studied or are in the process of studying early childhood education. They implement developmentally appropriate curriculum and draw on child development as the basis of their philosophies. On the other hand, poor and working class children tend to get dumped into unregulated home-based daycares or other forms of informal childcare arrangements.

The lack of regulation and availability of public childcare opens the field to be largely dominated by private, for-profit companies – from small-scale home-based centers to large childcare chains. These businesses employ typical capitalist models of paying low wages and providing as few services as possible in order to maximize profit. To do this, companies hire only those workers who will work long hours for low pay and no benefits. This tends to eliminate anyone with advanced degrees in child development or even familiarity with early childhood curriculum. The reality at many of these for-profit daycares is that children are subjected very early on to the logic of the cost-benefit ratio, where each developmentally positive activity is measured against the owner's potential for profits. As in the society at large, the children of the poor and working class come out on the short side of the equation.

The basic fact that parents and childcare workers must insist upon is that working in a childcare center is not just babysitting. A babysitter is a short term substitute for a parent or guardian. A childcare worker spends most of the day with the children they tend to. And this time occurs at an age when children are growing and developing rapidly, when they are most in need of nurturing and consistent relations with adults. It is essential then, that those responsible for children's care be highly trained, certified professionals operating in a safe workplace that affords them living wages and benefits.

By allowing corporations to em-

ploy a cost-benefit ratio on our children, we are putting them at risk. The low wages and lack of job security for childcare workers alone is directly detrimental to young children, who need to be able to form attachments with their caregivers. However, childcare workers are constantly driven to look for better, higher paying work, which results in the potential traumatization of the children they are forced to abandon. This occurs daily, yet receives little of the attention that high profile cases of abuse or the physical injury of children do.

The simple solution to this looming national crisis is to make a public commitment to attach childcare services to the public school system so that children infant through 4 years old have the same benefits of highly qualified teachers that children in kindergarten through 12th grades are afforded. Allowing the unionization of the sector would produce immediate benefits for the deeply underpaid workers while also enhancing the developmental prospects for our children. As education historian, Diane Ravitch, pointed out, children in states with high union density among teachers perform better than children in right to work states.

Unionization allows for collective bargaining of wages, benefits, working hours and other job conditions and provides job security. Giving childcare workers this same right that is afforded to many public school teachers across the country would serve to attract the same highly qualified professionals to the field. By giving workers the right to make collective demands

and organize in their interest, children are better served by teachers who have made a commitment to childcare as a career and who are given the support and benefits necessary to do their job well.

Making childcare a public service would also come with the requirement that childcare workers receive some amount of training in child development and psychology. It also means greater regulation of things like the conditions of the childcare centers and the curriculum being implemented.

Early childhood educators are often forgotten in discussions about education. And they are entirely invisible in the growing popular literature about parenting. As a result, K-12 teachers are often stuck trying to fix damage that was already done to children who were not provided quality early childhood education. And as they become young adults, the children that have been placed in such precarious situations confront the long-term damage done to their educational development and emotional well being.

Putting unionized childcare workers in every publicly administered childcare center would go a long way toward living up to the noble ideals this society holds about children. If we are indeed to fulfill the promise of equality made so clearly as a result of the Civil Rights movement, a good place to start would be with our children. Let the educational development of our children become a primary public concern and our society will become richer for it.



# GREETINGS FROM THE HOME OF MAY DAY

# Expanding What We Child Care Workers Know About Empowerment

by Susan Dorazio

Activists are used to grappling with the subject of leadership, so are child care workers, which is why numerous workshops, key-note addresses, courses, and forums are devoted to this topic. Many of these enhance our interactions with co-workers, children, families, and allies in the community. However, few of them raise the concept of leadership to its full stature as a route to empowerment-- the basis for helping build a mass movement for social change. Without these ongoing, interrelated efforts of workers, families, and communities, our goals will never be achieved. Without placing leadership in a broad social, political, and economic context, all the nifty power points will stay detached from our concerns and our ideals.

Fortunately, what we already know about how young children in groups solve problems is a good way to expand our definition and practice of leadership into the arenas of political action and social change. For example, as we watch children play, we notice that leading and following aren't the exclusive domains of certain group members. In fact, those attributes and actions switch back and forth frequently-- and in the case of a dispute, often in the midst of our best mediating behaviors.

I learned this concretely as a student of the wonderful artist of creative dance, Barbara Mettler-- training I used to its fullest as a teacher of young children, as a shop steward, and as a community activist. Her unique teaching method was large group improvisation. Central to this was the concept of leading and following. What a joy when we dancers got to the place where we could move easily from one role to the other!

So it is with the process of empowering ourselves as child care workers-- individually and collectively. Along the way, we discover that leadership is a means of empowerment to the extent that it is viewed as something to be shared and rotated, with leading and following trading off project by project-- in some situations, moment by

moment. And again, like the children in group problem-solving situations, we find out that sometimes a particular individual or group of individuals has the skills/energy/interest that will kick-start the process. Other times, the whole group gets the process going from the beginning. One way is the more "top down" model and the other the more "bottom up" model (or the "leaderless group" as Barbara called one of our large-group-improvisation options). In either case, collaboration via a "diversity of tactics" is a good recipe for successful problem solving.

The point is that leadership in practice is dynamic. It's malleable, with a strong improvisational element. It's quirky and intricate, and can be ambiguous and frustrating. Basically, it is a creative and empowering activity that is fun, exciting, and challenging. Anybody can do it. Everybody does do it!

Ultimately, leadership springs from within. It recharges through external interactions, returns to its inner space, and continues back and forth as long as we let it. As a favorite children's book says of one child's journey, leadership wends its way "inside, outside, upside down". It derives from passion, values, principles, and commitment. It motivates change and is inspired by visions of the possible. In this way, leadership is a call to action.

Indeed, as a collective process, with such potential for insight and action, leadership by child care workers can and should contribute significantly to the struggle for a society that guarantees the rights of children and families to high-quality programs and services based on, but going way beyond, their basic needs. However, the success of our efforts strongly depends on broadening the base of the fight for free, public care and schooling from infancy through post-secondary and adult education.

Building alliances, as the Wisconsin teachers have been doing, is of the utmost importance. Together, we must demand, besides free tuition, well paid and well trained staff; low student-teacher ratios; maximum class sizes; a full range of course offerings and support services; and worker, student, and community control of center and school curriculum and management. All school personnel must have the right to work in a safe and healthy environment, bargain collectively, and strike.

This empowered, activist outlook is particularly crucial right now when, in the aftermath of the economic meltdown of

2008, recovery refers to the corporate profit line not to the lives of ordinary people. What's called for is a militant effort by working people to stop budget cuts while putting forward our own program of fully-funded health, education, and social services. As an integral element of this strategy, child care workers must take the time and make the effort to connect with individuals, organizations, and cultural and political projects that offer and model alternatives to the status quo. Reciprocally, peace and justice activists must put the rights and needs of child care workers and families on their agenda.

The time has come for us child care workers to acknowledge the fact that after decades of relying on the promises of "good" Democrats, we remain far from our goal of Rights, Raises, and Respect. Instead of wasting our energy on lobbying, photo ops, and mainstream political campaigns, let's take an active role in the global drive for the creation of, and full participation in, truly democratic systems and structures where human rights and social justice for all workers and communities come first.

This is not as grandiose as it sounds. The process starts the way our Worthy Wage and Education for All campaigns did, by defining quality care and curriculum, and quality wages, benefits, and working conditions. Reams of paper are full of information and opinions on this. As we compare notes with others in the public and non-profit sectors, as well as the industrial and service sectors, we will undoubtedly find out that we are not alone, as far as governmental and corporate priorities go. This is where we start teaming up with other workers and activists to demand what we deserve.

It's important that we proceed from this basis. The expressions, "This is what democracy looks like" and "Another world is possible", coined by the anti-globalization movement of the late 1990's, can guide us. They represent both short-term demands and long-range goals rooted in knowledge of how the capitalist system operates, along with the history of people, worldwide, who have fought back and continue to do so, as we've seen recently in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. This information and related analysis is available, and we should seek it out. A big eye-opener for many of us are the statistics regarding distribution of wealth in the U.S. and in the world, along with a tax structure that basically excludes rich

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# Two Futures for Labor

by Zelig Stern

*For the last three decades  
the strategy of American labor  
unions can be summarized by the  
word “concessions”*

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The scenes of massive protest spreading across the Midwest are familiar to everyone by now. The most intense of these fights is taking place in Madison Wisconsin, but others are being staged in many states around the country, including Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan. Republican legislatures are attempting to pass bills that limit or eliminate public sector union rights to collective bargaining. These laws constitute a direct attack on the working class, and aim to eliminate some of the last high paying jobs available to working people. With union density (percent of wage and salaried workers who are members of unions) down to 6.9% in the private sector, from a high of above 35% in the mid 1940s, the public sector remains the last stronghold of the union movement. It is no surprise then that these laws have been met with heavy resistance from unions and their supporters.

These laws come as part of a broader strategy by big business and its allies in government to deal with the economic crisis in a way that best suits their interests. Businesses are struggling to maintain the high profit margins they have reestablished since the collapse at the end of 2007. Meanwhile, with unemployment high and wages low, local, state, and the federal governments are bringing in far less tax revenue from working and middle class families. This leaves government with two choices, raise corporate taxes and taxes on the ultra rich, or implement austerity programs across the country. The choice was obvious, and now working class families are facing massive cuts to services they depend on. A key piece of these austerity measures is to slash the pay and benefits of public sector workers. In every state, Democrat and Republican law makers are in agreement on austerity and on the attack on public sector worker compensation. Even President Obama has implemented a wage freeze for federal employees.

For the last three decades the strategy of American labor unions can be summarized by the word “concessions”. While bosses have been energetically attacking unions, union bureaucrats have responded by making concessions in the hopes that

they will be able to restore a peace with the bosses. This strategy has led to defeat after defeat. While public sector unions in states (usually with Democrat controlled legislatures) where public sector worker's benefits are being slashed but their rights to collectively bargain have not yet been challenged remain more or less passive, unions in states such as Wisconsin seem to be waking up. The difference is that in these latter states it is not just the well being of their members that is threatened, but the very institution of the union is at stake. There is little doubt, however, that states such as Wisconsin are only the testing grounds. If these laws are successfully passed there, more “liberal” governors like Cuomo in New York will surely try similar things in the coming years.

The labor movement must now make a choice. On the one hand, we can return to a strategy where struggle is the rallying cry, where the strike is employed in a serious way, and where we fight not just to defend what we have but to make new gains. If we do this, there is a chance that we could not only overcome the current attacks being made by Republican governors, but maybe even bring growth back to the labor movement. On the other hand, we can stick with the same strategies, watch public sector unions be stripped of their right to collectively bargain, and watch the last of the labor movement fade away.

These drastic measures taken being taken by conservative lawmakers go beyond the battle over how best to deal with the current economic crisis. They are part of a more protracted war, which was launched in the late 70's to permanently defeat the labor movement. Starting in that period, in response to falling profit rates that had led to severe economic crisis, corporate bosses, along with their allies in government, launched an all out attack on the working class and its unions. This attack took two forms. First, employers and lawmakers directly attacked the unions by attempting union busting tactics in organized workplaces and by passing anti union legislation. The crushing defeat of the PATCO workers by Ronald Reagan was the most dramatic of these kinds of tactics. Bosses

also attempted to defeat unions by simply eliminating union jobs through outsourcing or employing new labor replacing technology. Lawmakers aided this process through the passage of free trade agreements such as NAFTA and the WTO. The result of these attacks is that for the last thirty years the power of unions in society has declined along with their density and the total number of members.

History, however, is not one sided. Capitalists will always try to weaken the power of workers, but workers also resist and fight for their own interests. Therefore, to explain the thirty year decline in the power of the labor movement, it is not enough to point to globalization and stronger anti union activities of bosses and the government. We must also explain why organized labor was not able to resist these attacks. This story begins in the period directly after WWII. As a result of the war the economy was booming. Labor had just come out of twenty years of intense struggle and was large and powerful. Capitalists had two choices, either they could attempt an all out war with labor, which there was a good chance they could lose, or they could offer workers a deal. A deal was offered. In exchange for allowing bosses to maintain complete control over the worksite, and a guarantee that the nature of the American capitalist system would not be challenged, workers would be able to unionize more or less freely and high wages and benefits would be granted. Labor took the deal. For the next three decades, things went smoothly. Workers were happy with their growing wages, and businesses were happy with their growing profits uninterrupted by aggressive union activity.

This was called the labor management accord. This accord led to a change in the nature of American unions. At their height in the 1930s and 40s the unions were fighting organizations of the working class. Under the labor management accord they became bureaucratic organizations that provided a service for their members, much like a business. Rank and File participation in unions fell and the bureaucracies began to develop their own interests, which consisted of collecting dues to pay their large

salaries and preserving peace with the bosses. When economic crisis hit in the 70's and the bosses and lawmakers changed tactics, the unions no longer knew how to fight. For the past thirty years unions have been acting like the labor management accord is still in effect, while bosses and lawmakers have been carrying out a full assault on the unions.

While the labor movement as a whole has been in retreat, public sector workers have maintained a strong union presence. Union density in the public sector is 36% compared to 6.9% in the private sector. While the public sector unions are already weakened by a number of federal and state laws that limit their ability to strike, their large size and density poses a threat to lawmakers trying to create a healthy climate for unrestricted corporate profits. This has become especially true as lawmakers attempt to overcome the current economic crisis by pushing austerity measures on all levels of government. With communities disorganized and shell shocked from the effects of unemployment, the public sector unions remain the last line of defense against the plans for austerity. However, up to this point the public sector unions have,

like their counterparts in the private sector, continued to operate as though the labor management accord was still in effect.

It is in this context that Scott Walker and his counterparts across the country are attempting to strip public sector unions of their rights to collective bargaining. It is their hope that this struggle will signify for the public sector what the defeat of the PATCO strikers in 1981 did for the rest of the union movement. And there is good reason to suspect that they are right. There is also some hope that things may play out differently this time. Throughout the 70's and early 80's the union bureaucracies, who hold the key to the financial and organizational resources of the unions, remained committed to their labor management accord strategy. So while the rank and file rebelled, they did so with a handicap. In 2011 there is some indication that the bureaucracy may finally change its tune.

Like during the last round of struggle, it is the rank and file who have taken the lead in confronting the attacks. The occupation of the capital building in Madison, the mass demonstrations, all of this was lead by rank and file workers. But unlike last time, the bureaucracy has the benefit of

hindsight. They saw what happened when they did nothing in the 70's and 80's. Additionally, unlike the last round, for the public sector unions it is not just a particular contract or worksite that is at stake, but the very institution of the unions. Without these institutions, they can no longer collect the dues that pay their paychecks. So, for the first time in decades, the union officials are speaking of general strikes again, and, at least for a while, endorsed the occupation of the capital building in Madison.

It is no accident that unions were the largest and most powerful at a point in time when they employed aggressive tactics. Union density was at its highest when the strike was in regular use. When plant occupations were in the news frequently. When unions didn't just fight to maintain what they had, but fought for more, not just in wages and benefits but for worker control on the shop floor. The union bureaucracies will not adopt these tactics on their own. But a determined and aggressive rank and file uprising could bring them along. If there was ever a time these strategies could effectively be brought back into use, the time is now. And not a moment to late because the alternative looks bleak.

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## Unemployment and War

*by Lydia Howell*

High unemployment is good for war. Whether it's debt-ridden college graduates working as baristas or small town youth with only fast-food and Wal-Mart as post-high school career options, high unemployment keeps a volunteer military ranks full.

Underemployment, whether the problem is low wages or part-time hours, makes the National Guard and military reserves attractive for essential cash for (the promised) one weekend a month. Unfortunately, more and more "weekend warriors" are finding themselves in combat when they thought they'd be helping with disaster relief in their local communities.

In spite of the current parroting that "only the private sector can create jobs," government plays a critical role directly and indirectly.

Building roads, bridges and other major infrastructure, running public transportation, creating community-based services from daycare to clinics and schools, investing in new technology such as clean, renewable energy or research, such as the National Institute of Health---all this government spending includes contracts to the private sector that create jobs. Cut the spending and, inevitably, you cut jobs.

So, debates about the federal budget (as well as state and local ones) are labor issues. That includes debating what gets a priority and what does not.

When seemingly endless wars and weapons-makers are given sacrosanct status in budget discussions, workers lose.

Yes, corporations like Lockheed Martin have made sure that bombers and the parts needed for them are made in as many states as possible, in order to insure no cuts are made in their bloated, no-bid contracts.

When the newest high-tech plane doesn't work or there's no real need

for a particular Cold War-era weapons system, the cry of "You're CUTTING JOBS" can always be raised to defend funneling billions into what President Dwight Eisenhower called "the military-industrial complex".

Saying "Just put it on the charge card!" for the longest war in U.S. history (Afghanistan) and the latest war-based-on-a-lie (Iraq) has escalated the federal deficit. The Tea Party mantra "cut spending" means, to the political right, cutting other (non-military-related) jobs. The "trickle-down" economics produces federal aid cuts to states, then local government aid gets slashed, too, leading to...more job cuts.

This is a downward spiral that hurts workers, families and communities---while not only not contributing to our security but, instead, creating more enemies. How many Americans wake in the middle of the night, worrying about terrorists as opposed to the millions who've lost jobs or had their home foreclosed?

(continued on page 14)

***Change does not roll  
in on the wheels of  
inevitability, but comes  
through continuous  
struggle.***

**- Martin Luther King Jr.**



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## **Socialist Party of California: Back in Action**



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### **The Working Class Struggle is Still Alive... And What Are We Doing About It** *by Matty O'Dea*

Mayday is here once again and I'm excited. It's the only day when I can look my boss in the face and say, "I'm not coming into work today because I have better things to do." When asked what do I have to do that's more important than making him wealthy. I reply, "It's Mayday! The day of the Working Class, The Proletariat, and the Immigrants. This is Labor Day the one day a year when I can stand in solidarity with workers all over this vast world and here in this country who are being exploited bought and sold out for the sake of profit that's why I can't come into work today".

Without workers, these fat cats would be nothing. There would no industry, there would be no shops, no restaurants, no food, no clothes no nothing! With millions of people homeless, employment through the roof, houses being foreclosed on, families starving and dying because of no health

care or food, we can say that capitalism is turning the world into a wasteland.

Crime rates are soaring, places are being robbed, communities are being destroyed. And who's to blame? The worker who goes to work everyday - does nothing, says nothing, but just keeps focused on their job to make sure it's done correctly while all the while being watched by cameras controlled by the managers, security guards and the bosses. Knowing at any minute their jobs can be taken from them.

Or is it the boss who is to blame? The boss who fired his whole staff and moved their work to other poor countries where they can exploit workers because there are no labor laws. The right-wing likes to blame the unions. Saying it's the unions demand for decent wages that is tearing apart the workforce in this country. I actually heard someone say that at a Tea Party

Rally in Madison Wisconsin last April on Tax Day when the Tea Party Express came rolling through town.

That's not the case at all The upper class enjoys the finer things of life - fancy dinners at \$1,000 dollars a plate, fine wine, dancing, smoking cigars and talking about how many profits they made over the last quarter. While their workers are at home with their families eating hot dogs, mac and cheese and potatoes. Wondering how they are going to make ends meet and living from paycheck to paycheck.

In fact, we are the exact same people who make it possible for their employers to go out and hob-knob with other executives, in fancy suits and evening gowns. There they make their funny little jokes about the little people - about the "silly" workers who don't understand much, about the "welfare chiselers" who are living off "the system" or about the great "sacrifices" they make as businessmen. May Day is the day to end these jokes!

Sure we can take to the streets we can rant and we can rage about how we are  
(continued on next page)



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being screwed and yet it's not getting the job done. We need to look towards a better future for ourselves. It's time for Direct Action. We need to follow the examples of the folks at Republic Windows and Doors in Chicago, or the workers in Buenos Aires who occupied their factories and showed that workers don't really need bosses.

As Socialists we struggle along side our fellow workers who are being locked out, exploited, harassed, threatened, and terminated. We need to stand as human beings and let all struggling workers know that they have our support. On the sit down strikes and picket lines. While scabs are being brought in we need to man the gates and doors and every place they can enter and shout the same words the Spanish Anarchists shouted at the Fascists, "NO PAS-SARAN" They shall not pass.

And that is what May Day is. A day to say no more, enough, basta!

Happy Mayday! Solidarity to you all!  
Workers of the World Unite and Fight back!

(continued from "childcare," page 7)

people. Another is the amount of U.S. tax revenue that is war- and military-related, as opposed to what is spent on education, child care, housing, health care, mass transit, libraries, environmental protection, and social services.

If today, with our skills and experiences, we reached out to others increasingly disturbed as we are by the accelerating assault on the public sector, plus the other injustices faced by poor and working people, we would have a global movement for change that would not only be daunting to the rich and powerful right now, but also would lay the foundation for a new kind of society for future generations.

*Susan Dorazio was a long-time Western Massachusetts child care worker and advocate, and community activist. She is currently dividing her time between Washington state, New York/New England, and Glasgow, Scotland, all the while maintaining her attachments to children, their families, and their teachers and caregivers; and her membership in the Socialist Party USA. She can be reached at doraziosusan@gmail.com.*

# COMRADELY MAY DAY GREETINGS

ARTHUR S. KAZAR  
FOREST PARK, ILLINOIS

# Review of *Postmodern Geographies*

by *Matthew Sundin*

Verso books has made available one of Edward W. Soja's first published works as part of its radical thinkers series. *Postmodern Geographies* is an early meditation on the question of space in capitalism and geography in modern critical theory. One might wonder about the relevancy of this to radical politics while wading through passages on spatialized ontology, but in fact the refocus on this work comes at a perfect time to help rethink political upheavals that have occurred in just the last few weeks.

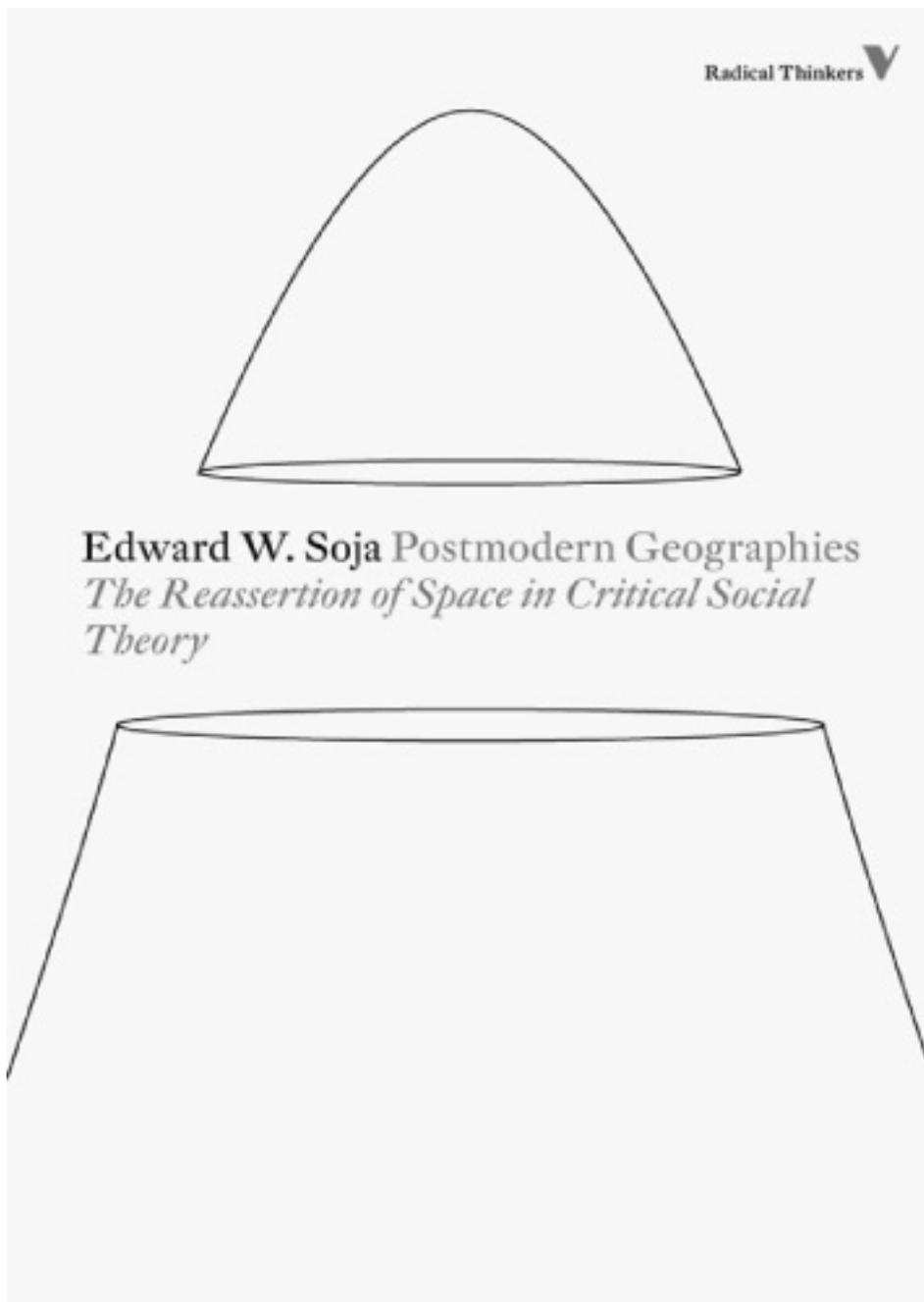
In the recent uprising in Egypt which ousted the octagenarian thug Hosni Mubarak, Tahrir Square became the symbolic and literal center of the aspirations of a wide-range of Egyptians hoping to awake from the oppressive doldrums of 30 years of emergency laws and neo-liberal social decay. World-wide television viewers were treated to daily images of endless crowds of protestors, dramatic street battles, and eventually the jubilation that filled the square when Mubarak begrudgingly stepped down. Reporters were on hand to

record the slogans, the acts of social solidarity, and the faces of Egyptians themselves; many of whom were experiencing the freedom to assemble freely for the first time in their lives.

For an uprising that is credited as having been originally started online using social media, it is remarkable to see how important a physical geographical place became in deciding the fate of the movement in Egypt. Despite any praise on the part of the media that served to fetishize technology and the role of these new online forms of communication in reshaping social movements, in the end it was people on the ground, occupying central squares and factories across Egypt, which brought about tangible change. Further revolts have brought to our attention similar locations in other World capitals. And in America, the capital building in Madison, Wisconsin was more a focal point by being occupied by public employee unions and supporters staging a protest against anti-labor legislation meekly disguised as budgetary policy measures. It seems as though taking control of public space in order to create a central point of resistance has done more in a few weeks in these situations than merely blogging and tweeting could have ever done.

There is something refreshingly old fashioned about seeing this kind of street politics reemerging. Of course we cannot be grateful for the outrageous injustices that have brought people out to the streets. But seeing the classic images of marching columns of protestors, barricades, and grassroots rallies is something never seen before by a young leftist raised almost entirely after the collapse of the USSR. There was an aspect of immediacy, something so human, about seeing people stare down the institutions of state oppression face to face. And in reading Soja's insights into the ways in which oppression is now veiled more by geography than history, we can begin to understand the novelty of seeing direct political confrontation in public space.

*Postmodern Geographies* is a collection of 9 essays each of which deal with aspects of space in critical social theory. Starting with a history of the resistance to the conceptualization of space in critical theory, Soja explains how geography was often neglected for being considered to be stilted, empirical, and thoroughly undialectical as opposed to the preferred focus on time and history. He gives a thorough summary of why space has often been pushed to the side by the injunction to "always his-



toricize”. Showing the extent of this resistance, he is able to exhibit the originality of Henri Lefebvre's thought in approaching space as well as tracing the awakening of Michel Foucault to the usefulness that geography would have in his own investigation of social institutions. We are also shown how other big names in critical theory have incorporated spatiality into their works. In a motif that continues throughout the book, in this historical explanation we begin to see for ourselves how thinking about space offers new perspectives on understanding how the survival of capitalism depends on the creation of space. At this point it is at the micro-level of everyday life, what Lefebvre calls the “bureaucratic society of controlled consumption.” The essay offers a wealth of academic sources for anyone interested in how an individual exists within a space constructed to induce consumption and quiescence. Anyone raised in the suburbs can find a fair deal that resonates with this approach to thinking about space.

In following essays, Soja goes on to narrate the various debates that come with incorporating the concept of spatiality into critical theory. For instance, in the chapter on the “Socio-spatial Dialectic,” we see how difficult it is to conceptualize how exactly social relations of production produce space. Is the built environment a product of this process, or merely part of the “superstructure”? How do we understand a struggle over public space, or rent, using a Marxist form of analysis that is more immediately concerned with the struggle going on in the workplace? Soja provides some fascinating viewpoints and directs our attention towards an understanding of why controlling public space is still important in our contemporary age. Political power is not only interested in controlling what goes on at the point of production or in the realm of ideology, but indeed aims to create a built environment conducive to the survival of capitalism. Class struggle, therefore, must include a fight over the production of space and its “territorial structure of exploitation and domination.” By taking over public space, these recent uprisings in places like Wisconsin and Egypt have made a powerful assertion that a democratic and free sense of space is not one in which capitalism is able to roam “freely,” but instead one where democratic deliberation is present and central.

Soja's strengths definitely lie in bringing together theories of space that have as

their subject the urban environment. At other levels he doesn't seem as convincing. Although necessary to the stated goal of a comprehensive reassertion of space at all levels of critical theory, his passages on “spatialized ontology” and Anthony Giddens' concept of “structuration” seem particularly unhelpful. He also takes a step in the opposite direction by becoming less theoretical and applying his and other critical theorists' ideas on spatiality to a geographical portrait of Los Angeles. Soja offers some spectacular figures on the immense economic output of Los Angeles, and shows empirically just how fractured and unequal the built environment is. However, after such an excellent explanation of the dialectic of space in capitalism and a strong critique of the resistance to the role of space in critical theory, it seems ironic

that his move to exhibiting the real-life example of the capital of postmodern geography seems much more like dry empiricism than dynamic analysis.

As political struggle goes forward, Edward Soja's book will be useful by giving us another approach to envisioning resistance to the logic of capitalism. Using his excellent examination of how capital produces and controls space, it is up to us to work out the implications. Especially given the preliminary and open-ended nature of *Postmodern Geographies*, the ways in which we can reassert space into our political strategies is ample. When thinking about a fight over use of a public square, or the fate of a marginalized urban group, foreign wars, or even our own individual place in everyday life, it will be fruitful to remember a new injunction: always territorialize!

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## Memphis SP Challenges Anti-union Hearing

**Nashville-** Members of the Memphis SP and activists from the Memphis/Mid-South area joined over a thousand in Nashville and rallied on the plaza in front of the Tennessee capitol building in protest of legislation designed to break the backs of unions in a bid similar to those in WI, OH, and elsewhere. Labor activists and union members entered the Senate Commerce Committee meeting to express concern over the anti-labor bills. After the committee stalled for over an hour, people began to chant, “Union busting has got to go”. Seven activists, including Memphis Socialist Party

members Sally Joyner, Bennett Foster, and Paul Garner, were forcibly removed, detained, and arrested by TN Capitol Police and charged with disorderly conduct and resisting arrest. They were not being heard, and when they raised their voices, they were silenced by the state.

The Memphis SP stands in solidarity with our comrades, and with all those whose voice is silenced by the business as usual violence of capitalism rolling on. We stand in solidarity with the workers of TN and the workers throughout the world who are standing for their rights.



(continued from "War," page 9)

War is good for Big Business.

Corporations like Haliburton/KBR and Parsons have made out very well with their "cost-plus" contracts to "re-build" in Afghanistan and Iraq. They are guaranteed profits--whether they finish the job or not. Often, they do shoddy work or have failed to do what they were hired for, but, there's been little accountability. The Associated Press reported \$5 billion wasted in just this way in Iraq.

<http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/2010/08/ap-iraq-legacy-of-reconstruction-083010>

Wouldn't the money have been better spent at home with contracts going to small businesses that actually create 75 per cent of all new jobs? Fraud-prevention and oversight of small, local businesses would be a lot more possible---as opposed to huge multinationals working in a country thousands of miles away deploying their armies of lobbyists and "consultants" in Washington.

With Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker and other rightist governors and Republican legislators assaulting workers' rights to union representation and bargaining rights, another kind of war is heating up at home.

Actually, the war on workers has been going on (sometimes covertly) for more than thirty years:

Since the late 1970s, corporations have been reversing the post-World War II American middle-class, largely created by the unionization of one-third of workers in the 1950s. For the first time in the nation's history, more everyday people than ever could have a fair share of the profits their labor produced. For African-Americans, unionized private sector and government jobs have been the primary way they've made economic gains in the last 50 years. Exporting factories and government budget cuts have a disproportionate impact on them.

But, when 75 percent of American workers make \$46,000 or less, have lost health insurance, had pensions

turned into 401k accounts that are vulnerable to Wall Street speculators, an old saying has new truth: we came over here in different ships but, we're all in the same boat now.

When workers' leaky row boats are struggling to stay afloat in choppy economic waters, does it make sense to build more warships to attack other countries---or for that matter to give more tax breaks to the richest 400 people so they can have bigger yachts?

The war being waged on American workers could (finally) open a debate about the wars being waged in our names. Instead of shoveling the annual hundreds of billions to weapons-makers, overseas bases, occupations and the who-knows-how-much in corporate welfare and tax-giveaways, national priorities are in desperate need of re-thinking.

In a time where the catch phrase used by both President Obama and the Republicans is "shared sacrifice," working people have already sacrificed too much: jobs, homes, college educations, healthcare--and for some, a son or a daughter on battlefields they should never have seen.

*Lydia Howell is an independent Minneapolis journalist. She is producer/host of "Catalyst: politics & culture" on KFAI Radio at <http://www.kfai.org>.*

## NJ Update

by *Greg Pason*

The Socialist Party of New Jersey has been organizing and just chartered a new Local in Monmouth/Ocean counties (northern shore area). The Northern NJ Local members worked to reorganize Take Back Trenton to build a movement to combat budget cuts and build a community/student/worker movement outside the two capitalist parties. Take Back Trenton will organize a teach-in on budget issues in April.

The Party is also looking to contest some local and state Assembly or state Senate elections. Our membership has jumped about 20% in the state and Northern NJ and Monmouth/Ocean County locals are meeting monthly.



- Charlotte Bleistein

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(continued from “editorial,” page 2)

Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, while pressuring the more conservative sections of the Civil Rights movement to finally acknowledge Martin Luther King Jr. as their spokesperson.

When Randolph rose to speak to massive crowd that day he once again displayed his perspective on the interconnections between class and race. “Yes,” he began, “we want all public accommodations open to all citizens, but those accommodations will mean little to those who cannot afford to use them.” In words as poignant today as they were in 1963, he denounced unemployment, indicted the system for poverty and declared the need for a “massive moral revolution for jobs and freedom.” That day in Washington, A. Philip Randolph was the living representative of three generations of American radicals. He brought every bit of the militant spirit of Eugene Debs to the podium that afternoon.

And Randolph was not confined to just movement organizing. Especially as a young radical, he recognized the importance of independent political action. A short article in 1944 mapped out the need for broad left electoral challenges from outside of the main-

stream parties. In it, he decried the “Alice-in-Wonderland system of poverty” that existed while the economy was at a point of over-production. The window of opportunity was small, but Randolph believed that significant support existed for such an effort – “From farm and factory, from kitchen and classroom will come people ready to work hard to build a party which carries hope of a better social order.” And the cost of failure was high, inaction would leave voters much in the same place they are now in 21st century America choosing “...between slightly varied shades of reaction.”

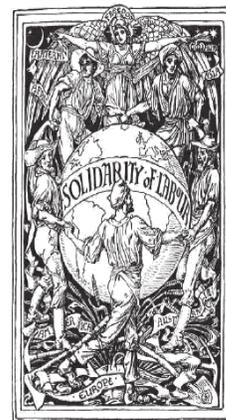
On this momentous May Day, when the need for democratic socialism is greater than ever, the patient determination of A. Philip Randolph can help to guide our current struggles. Randolph proved definitively that a radical perspective that mixes race and class analysis combined with an impulse toward to building organizational strength can be a potent formula for social change. “Nothing counts” he stated, “but pressure, pressure, more pressure, and still more pressure through broad organized aggressive mass action.” Let this be a lesson for May Day 2011 and let us re-dedicate ourselves to completing the project initiated by people like Debs, and Randolph and King.

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## Statement of Principles

**THE SOCIALIST PARTY** strives to establish a radical democracy that places people’s lives under their own control - a non-racist, classless, feminist socialist society... where working people own and control the means of production and distribution through democratically-controlled public agencies; where full employment is realized for everyone who wants to work; where workers have the right to form unions freely, and to strike and engage in other forms of job actions; and where the production of society is used for the benefit of all humanity, not for the private profit of a few. We believe socialism and democracy are one and indivisible. The working class is in a key and central position to fight back against the ruling capitalist class and its power. The working class is the major force worldwide that can lead the way to a socialist future - to a real radical democracy from below. The Socialist Party fights for progressive changes compatible with a socialist future. We support militant working class struggles and electoral action, independent of the capitalist controlled two-party system, to present socialist alternatives. We strive for democratic revolutions - radical and fundamental changes in the structure and quality of economic, political, and personal relations - to abolish the power now exercised by the few who control great wealth and the government. The Socialist Party is a democratic, multi-tendency organization, with structure and practices visible and accessible to all members.

## Celebrate International Labor Day on the Common in Brattleboro Vermont.



**Sunday, May 1, 1-5 pm**

**Music,  
Maypole**

**Haymarket Martyrs Presentation  
Soap-box Featuring Labor Unions and  
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