

Unite workers and youth to defeat Wisconsin budget cuts

The Socialist Equality Party, The International Students for Social Equality
16 February 2011

A PDF version of this statement is available [here](#).

The Socialist Equality Party and the International Students for Social Equality calls on workers and youth to reject the illegitimate cuts of Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, and to use today's demonstration as the starting point for a mass movement against such social attacks.

The governor's demand for sweeping wage and benefit cuts and the outlawing of strikes is not only an assault on the state's 175,000 public sector workers. It is an assault on the entire working class and is the first step in the financial aristocracy's campaign to destroy public education, health care and other services that millions depend on.

Demonstrating his contempt for public sentiment, the governor has threatened to dispatch the National Guard to ram through his demands.

Walker's attacks on democratic rights and social spending are not unique to Wisconsin or to the Republican Party.

Instead, they are part and parcel of an orchestrated attack on working class living standards being carried out by both big business parties, led above all by the Obama administration. While handing over trillions to bail out Wall Street, provide tax breaks for the rich and finance its criminal wars, the White House has refused to help the states, which have a combined deficit of \$126 billion. The budget shortfall is being seized upon as a pretext to lay waste to any form of government spending that does not boost the fortunes of the rich, the banks, and the corporations.

Across the border in Illinois, the Democratic-controlled state legislature is moving toward banning the right of public school teachers to strike in order to carry forward a massive assault on public education. In Ohio, a Republican governor is working hand-in-hand

with Democratic mayors to bar public employee strikes. Democratic governors in New York and California are ordering unprecedented budget cuts, just like their Republican counterparts in states such as Florida and Arizona.

At the national level, Obama has imposed a de facto pay cut on federal workers and a five-year spending freeze on all non-military items. The budget-cutter-in-chief on Monday proposed savage cuts to virtually every form of social spending, including a 50 percent cut to the already miniscule aid given to the poor and elderly so they can heat their homes in the winter.

While doing everything to boost corporate profits and the stock market, the administration has done nothing to alleviate any aspect of the social crisis—mass unemployment, the foreclosure crisis, homelessness, hunger, spiraling tuition costs.

The claim that “tough choices” are necessary because there is not enough money is a shameless lie. The main problem facing American workers is the obscene levels of wealth monopolized by the financial aristocracy, abetted by the entire political establishment.

In December, Obama concluded a deal with Republican legislators extending Bush's income tax cuts for the rich, transferring an estimated \$700 billion to America's financial aristocracy. This is about 389 times greater than Wisconsin's one-year deficit of \$1.8 billion. Last year one individual, hedge fund manager John Paulson, took home \$5 billion. Under conditions where the top one percent of American society holds more than one third of the wealth, the 400 richest individuals in the US had an estimated combined value of \$1.37 trillion—more than 10 times greater than the combined budget deficits of all 50 states.

That Walker and other representatives of the ruling elite now demand massive social cuts testifies to a

fundamental reality: the economic and political system has failed. Many protestors have drawn the connection between the fight of workers and youth in Wisconsin and those in Egypt. In both societies, the political establishment is controlled by the incredibly rich and is impervious to the needs and aspirations of the masses of working people. The Egyptian working class has shown by its struggle that workers can stand up to the dictatorial rule of privileged elites.

For such struggles to be victorious, however, a new political strategy and leadership is needed, based in the working class and fighting for socialist policies.

***Break with the Democrats and Republicans.** Workers must break once and for all with the corporate-controlled two-party system and oppose claims that they can defend their interests through appeals to the Democratic Party. Nor can workers place their confidence in the trade unions. At the national level and in states with Democratic governors, the unions are supporting wage-cutting, just as they did in the auto industry and among Harley-Davidson workers in Wisconsin. The union bureaucrats only ask for a seat at the table and the preservation of the dues check-off system.

***Create independent rank-and-file worker and student committees.** To wage their struggle, workers and students must create their own committees, independent from the Democrats and the trade unions. These committees can lay the basis for broadening the struggle to encompass workers in the private sector in Wisconsin and beyond. All workers, whether in the public or private sector, and in the US and internationally, are being subjected to the same corporate assault on wages and conditions.

*** For the nationalization of the banks and major corporations! For a socialist program for jobs, education, and housing!**

The right to a job, a livable income, health care and retirement is incompatible with a system in which the giant banks and corporations exercise a complete dictatorship over economic and political life. The capitalist system has failed and must be replaced with a new type of society based on social need, not private profit. That is the struggle for socialism.

To free up resources for public education, the working class must transform big corporations and banks into publicly owned and democratically

controlled entities. The wealth of the American plutocracy, amassed through fraud and speculation, must be seized for the benefit of society as a whole.

The only way for the working class to carry out such policies is to take political power in its own hands. The Socialist Equality Party and the International Students for Social Equality call on workers and youth to fight for this perspective and to make the decision to join them in the fight for socialism.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact