

All support to public employees in Wisconsin! For a workers' solution to the crisis!



Firefighters enjoy pizza on Ian's Pizza on State. People from over 60 countries and all fifty states have ordered pizza for the demonstrators from the nearby pizza shop. Firefighters and police officers joined protests against Governor Scott Walker's budget repair bill that would strip collective bargaining powers from about 170,000 public employees in Wisconsin. Even though the firefighters, police and state troopers are exempt from Walker's bill, they have joined the protests for labour rights in their state. Photo by Ian's Pizza on State.

By WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE

Editor's Note: We are republishing this article about the massive protests in Wisconsin written by the Workers' International League. Workers around the world are fighting back as governments try to make them pay for the bosses' crisis. It is important that New Brunswick workers learn from the struggles of their fellow workers in every country.

Wisconsin is on the front lines of the nationwide battle against cuts and austerity. Most public sector workers in the state belong to unions that collectively negotiate their wages, benefits, and pensions. It has been that way for over 60 years. Now Governor Walker wants to make Wisconsin a "right to work" state, make it illegal for state employees to bargain collectively, and limit wage increases to the consumer price index. The result is that 175,000 teachers, government employees, prison guards and others will be at the mercy of the Wisconsin state legislature every year to determine how much they will get in benefits and pensions, with wage increases limited to adjustment for inflation.

Governor Walker's vicious attack against organized workers is part of an ongoing assault that is picking up steam as the crisis of the system continues. If he succeeds in smashing Wisconsin's public sector unions, other states and the private sector will follow. This will mean an even lower standard of living for all workers in the United States. What happens in Wisconsin does not stay in Wisconsin!

Just six weeks after he was elected with the backing of the Tea Party, Walker said that anyone who could not see he was preparing an assault against the unions "must have been in a coma." But the Governor, like the rest of the big business politicians and the corporate media, seems to have gone into a sort of self-induced coma, believing their own hype about the Tea Party having a real

mass base in the American population. His assault is being made from a false sense of strength on his part. Walker came to power not because Wisconsin's voters gave him a mandate for these policies, but because they were disillusioned by the Democrats and influenced by the millions of dollars spent by billionaires like the Koch brothers on his campaign. These are the real interests behind his election and his policies.

Walker blames the budget deficit and says we need to make "hard choices." But this has nothing to do with balancing the budget. It has everything to do with making life even easier for the wealthy, while the majority of us see our quality of life driven to new lows. Two thirds of Wisconsin's corporations pay no corporate tax whatsoever. Corporate America is sitting on \$2 trillion, but are not investing in creating new jobs because they want even higher profits than they are already getting and can get fewer workers to do more work as the millions of unemployed compete for fewer jobs. And yet we are told that we are the ones that have to make sacrifices! For Walker and those like him, corporations are more important than people. Profits are more important than jobs that pay decent wages and quality services for the state's citizens.

However, the reaction of Wisconsin's workers and young people to the implementation of the Tea Party's anti-worker program has quickly shown the real state of affairs. The solidarity from private sector union members as well as unorganized workers has been tremendous. Organized contingents of hundreds of firefighters and other unions have marched on the Capitol. Hundreds of students have staged walkouts. Thousands of workers have descended on the Capitol every evening after work. Thousands of ordinary workers and young people have camped out overnight. As many as 45,000 have surrounded the Capitol at one time and many schools have been shut down, a vivid reminder of the power of the working class. This can't help but remind us of the inspiring scenes in Egypt's Tahrir Square, which as we know, led to an important victory. We have the numbers. But we also need the organization and coordination.

So far, the response has been largely spontaneous. What we need is a coordinated fight back against these attacks. There is talk of a recall of Governor Walker, but this will take time. On March 13, public employee contracts will be torn up. Therefore, more concerted action must be organized. A one day general strike of public sector workers, with solidarity strikes, pickets and actions from private sector unions and the unorganized would bring the state to a halt and make clear the real "will of the people." To prepare for this we must urgently organize a city-wide assembly of Madison's workers and young people, a kind of mass "town hall" meeting, and extend an invitation to workers and youth from around the state to join us. The union leaders and coordinating bodies like the South Central Federation of Labour must take the lead on this. They were elected to lead, and this is the time to do it!

At such a mass meeting we could democratically and concretely discuss proposals and dates for a general strike. To build for this we should form coordination committees in every factory, school, and workplace, linked up centrally and governed by elected delegates. This is a fight we can and must win! We, the people have the power!

In Brief...

- On March 1st, about 200 university students from St. Thomas University and University of New Brunswick took to the streets in defence of **public education**. Students in New Brunswick pay the second highest tuition fees on average in the country. In the Maritimes, the average undergraduate leaves school \$37,000 in debt. As the government prepares to release details of this year's budget, on March 22, students and their families are calling on elected representatives to defend public education by providing more funding to public institutions.

- Thousands marched in **Hamilton**, Ontario on Jan. 29, 2011 in solidarity with the 900 steelworkers who have been locked out by US Steel, and 9,000 pensioners whose incomes are in jeopardy.

- Despite mounting public concern over the impact of **aquaculture pesticides** on the marine environment, Fisheries and Oceans Canada is in the process of developing regulations that will facilitate the ongoing use of pesticides in the open water by the salmon aquaculture industry. Sea lice infestations plaguing the aquaculture industry highlight the inherent unsustainability of open net pen salmon aquaculture as it is now practiced in Canada. Pesticides being used by the aquaculture industry in New Brunswick are toxic not only to sea lice, but also to other crustaceans including lobster and the many small crustaceans (like krill) that form the base of the food chain.

- Whole Foods Market sent an email to its customers calling for "conditional deregulation" of Monsanto's **genetically engineered herbicide-resistant alfalfa**. The Organic Consumer's Association called the email "profoundly misleading." Roundup Ready alfalfa will be widely planted with the approval of Whole Foods, Stonyfield Farm and Organic Valley, effectively allowing the GMOs to be included in products labeled "organic."

- Dozens of **tree-planters from Africa** working in rural British Columbia say they were treated like slaves. They were not paid, fed rotten food, left to sleep in shipping containers and subjected to violence and sexual harassment. The employer, Khaira Enterprises, has been ordered to pay \$228,000 in back wages to the workers and pay a fine of \$3,500.

- Two supporters of **Bradley Manning**, the U.S. soldier suspected of leaking confidential documents to WikiLeaks, were stopped and held for two hours for traffic violations by military police at Virginia's Quantico Marine Corp. Base. The pair was attempting to visit Manning and deliver a petition with 42,000 signatures that protested Manning's treatment. As a result, Manning was deprived of his once-weekly respite from solitary confinement.



It is estimated that Muammar Gaddafi's regime killed thousands – many of them youth – in Libya in February. SNC-Lavalin, a Montreal-based engineering company, has confirmed that they are building a prison in Libya. Amir Khadir, the sole member of Quebec solidaire in the Quebec National Assembly criticized SNC-Lavalin for working with the Libyan government and called for the company to end the contract immediately. Khadir is quoted in the Canadian Press on Feb. 24, 2011, saying, "Many people who are in prison in Libya are only in prison because they want more freedom, they want their rights to be respected, and a Canadian firm is collaborating with that regime in putting these people in jail." Rallies in solidarity with the people of Libya were held across Canada, including Fredericton, on Feb. 26.

Student workers at St. Thomas University in Fredericton are unionizing! As student workers on campus, our labour is valuable and we make a significant contribution to the community atmosphere we all love about St. Thomas. We want to make being a student worker at our university the best possible experience it can be for ourselves and the generations to come after us. As employees of St. Thomas University, it is our legal right to form a union. We want to join the other unionized workers on campus and have a real voice in our workplace and working conditions. Sign your union card! The Act requires that you sign a card that clearly states your support, and \$1 must be collected at the time your card is signed. Learn more at stuse.ca, or contact the STUSE Organizing Committee today at stuse.info@gmail.com.

Community Calendar

For details and updated event listings, visit nbmediacoop.org To list your event or to receive the community calendar by email once per week, email: community@nbmediacoop.org

ACORN Organic Conference and Trade Show and Seedy Saturday. Lord Beaverbrook Hotel. March 10-12. 9am-1pm. Free admission. Additional workshops at cost on seed saving, grafting, urban gardening, food preserving and cooking organic food. Seedy Saturday will feature more than 30 workshops on organic agriculture issues. Contact: admin@acornorganic.org or 1-866-322-2676.

5th Annual Variety Show Benefit for the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA). Sat., March 19, 7:00-10:00pm. Gallery Connexion, Chestnut

Complex, 440 York St., Fredericton. With: Voices from Afghan women, the Raging Grannies, the Elm City Echoes, Debbie Adshade, Gumbooting Troupe, inspiring speakers from the Fredericton Sexual Crisis Centre, Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Fredericton Peace Coalition and much more! Silent Auction, Literature & Refreshments. Tickets on sale at the door: \$10. RAWA was established in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1977 as an independent Afghan women's group fighting for human rights and social justice in Afghanistan. Today, RAWA provides education, health care and income generation. Contact: info@frederictonpeace.org Co-hosted by Fredericton Peace Coalition, NB ReELLES, CUSO/VSO, CUPW Atlantic Women's Committee Solidarity Fund and the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC). Contact: info@frederictonpeace.org

Volunteer with CUSO-VSO. Join us for an information session on working overseas. Returned volunteers will share their stories. Thurs., March 24 at 7:30 p.m. Renaissance College, 811 Charlotte St., Fredericton. Contact: events@cuso-vso.org

Screening of the Oscar-nominated Gasland in Fredericton. Gasland is a witty and frightening investigation into natural gas extraction in the U.S. Thurs, March 24 at 7pm at the Elgin Fire Hall. Fri, March 25 at 7pm at Conserver House, 180 St. John St. Hosted by: Cinema Politica Fredericton and CCNB. Contact: water@conservationcouncil.ca

Spring Into Action Auction: Conservation Council's Annual Fundraiser. Join comedian Marshall Button and friends on Sat., April 30 at the Crowne Plaza in Fredericton for the annual "Spring into Action" Auction in support of CCNB. Auction includes outdoor gear and canoes donated by Arpin Canoe Restigouche. Contact: info@conservationcouncil.ca/506 458-8747.

Cinema Politica is a network of community and campus locals screening documentaries on issues that matter. In Fredericton, Cinema Politica screens films every Friday night at 7:00pm at Conserver House, 180 St. John St. Cinema Politica locals also exist in Fundy, Sackville, Saint John, Moncton and Taymouth. Check out film schedules at cinemapolitica.org

Membership Options

☐ \$3.00/month

☐ \$10.00/month

☐ \$25.00/month

☐ \$10.00/year

☐ \$30.00/year

☐ \$50.00/year

☐ Other

☐ I would like to become a member but I cannot be a sustainer right now.

Payment Options

☐ Cash

☐ Please send me an application form to establish monthly Pre-Authorized Payments from my bank account

☐ Cheque

Application forms and cheques may be mailed to NB Media Co-op at 180 St. John St, Fredericton NB, E3B 4A9