

The Democrats Attack Unions Nationwide

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Obvious political truths are sometimes smothered by special interests. The cover-up of the Democrats' national anti-union agenda is possible because the truth would cause enormous disturbances for the Democratic Party, some labor leaders, liberal organizations and, consequently, the larger political system.

Here is the short list of states that have Democratic governors where labor unions are undergoing severe attacks: Massachusetts, Connecticut, Oregon, California, New York, Illinois, Washington, Hawaii, Minnesota, Maryland and New Hampshire. Other states with Democratic governors are attacking unions to a lesser degree.

The Democrats in these states have sought to distance themselves from the Republican governors of Wisconsin and Ohio, who have specifically attacked the collective bargaining rights of unions. The above

Democrats all hide their anti-union attacks behind a "deep respect for collective bargaining;" akin to a thief who will steal your car but, out of respect, will not target your deceased Grandma's diamond earrings.

For example, the anti-union Democratic governor of Connecticut is demanding \$1.6 billion in cuts from state workers! The contract has not been ratified yet, but Governor Malloy referred to the agreement as: "historic because of the way we achieved it - we respected the collective bargaining process and we respected each other, negotiating in good faith, without fireworks and without anger."

The anti-union Democratic governor of the state of Washington uses similar language:

"They [labor unions] contributed [to fixing the state budget deficit] with a salary cut; they contributed by paying more in health care. They have stepped up and said we want to be a part of the solution. I did it by going to the table, respecting their collective bargaining rights and we got the job done."

The anti-union Democratic governor of Oregon is demanding 20 to 25 percent pay cut for state workers:

"But [says the Governor] those concessions will be made across a bargaining table through our collective bargaining process and with mutual respect."

This garbage normally wouldn't fool a 4th grader, but some labor leaders are playing dumb,

in the hopes that the above attacks will not ruin the long-standing friendship between unions and Democrats. Of course, such hopes are founded on illusion: workers are not so blind as to not notice that the governors they campaigned for are now demanding their wages and benefits be destroyed in an unprecedented attack.

But by minimizing the Democrats role in targeting unions, some labor leaders are disarming the labor movement. On the one hand, labor leaders of both the AFL-CIO and Change to Win federations have drawn some correct conclusions from the events in Wisconsin, especially when they say that “labor is in the fight of its life” and “the corporations are out to bust unions.” On the other hand, both union federations have made excuses for the anti-union Democratic Party, enabling labor to be vulnerable on its “left” flank to the anti-union attack.

The fight against massive cuts in wages and benefits cannot be separated from the attack on collective bargaining; they are two sides of the same coin. Workers only care about collective bargaining because it enables them to improve their wages and benefits. A union that agrees to massive cuts in wages will not remain a union for long, since workers will not want to pay dues to an organization that cannot protect them. Concessionary bargaining destroys the power of a union in the same way that cancer destroys the body; pulling the plug [ending collective bargaining] comes after losing a battle with cancer.

Fighting the concessionary cancer is the essence of the problem. This is the real lesson of Wisconsin: workers want to fight back against the nationwide attack against their livelihoods, whether it be wages and benefits or collective bargaining. The AFL-CIO and Change to Win realize this to a certain degree; they are separately creating campaigns to deal with the attack, with SEIU jumping out in front with its Fight for a Fair Economy.

These union campaigns are doomed to fail if the energy generated by them is funneled into the 2012 campaign for Barack Obama.

Any successful union campaign will require that massive resources and energy be used, since the attack workers are facing is colossal. If workers are told to halt their campaigns to door knock and make phone calls for Obama, the campaign will lose all legitimacy, since Obama has established himself as a friend of Wall Street and thus no friend to workers. Voting for Democrats has a demoralizing effect on workers when the inevitable “betrayal” happens; and demoralized union members will not fight as effectively for their own pro-union campaign.

A successful union campaign will require that workers are energized about it. SEIU’s campaign focuses largely on making more connections with other labor and community groups, which is very positive. However, without waging an energetic battle to prevent state workers from making massive concessions, the campaign will fail, because workers who make massive concessions will be demoralized and not take the union campaign seriously, since it failed to address their most pressing needs. The fight to defend state workers has the potential — as Wisconsin proved — to unleash tremendous fighting energy among workers, while also uniting those in the broader community, who are eager for working people to fight back.

If labor unions continue down their current path of making huge concessions in wages and benefits while making excuses for the Democrats attacking them, the movement will wither and die.

If, on the contrary, labor unions demand that state budget deficits be fixed by taxing the rich and corporations, workers would respond enthusiastically; if public-sector unions demanded No Cuts, No Concessions, workers would energetically join the union's cause; if unions banded together to demand that a national jobs campaign be created by taxing the top 1 percent, a flood of energy would erupt from working people in general; if, during election time, unions joined together to run their own independent candidates with these demands, an unstoppable movement would quickly emerge.

Without using aggressive demands aimed at solving the immediate problems facing working people, a social movement cannot be created to deal with the crisis facing labor unions and working people in general. ONLY a national social movement with Wisconsin-like energy has the potential to shift the direction in which the country is going, away from the rich and corporations towards working people. Such a social movement cannot be born from soft demands, half-fought battles, or campaigning for Democrats.

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2) <http://www.npr.org/2011/02/27/134103416/Governors-Meet-As-Pro-Union-Protests-Spread>

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