

Social Crisis in America: Should Public Workers Make Concessions?

By Shamus Cooke

Global Research, March 02, 2011

2 March 2011

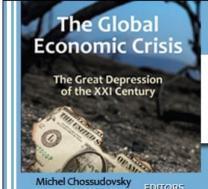
Region: <u>USA</u>
Theme: <u>Global Economy</u>, <u>History</u>

As workers all over the U.S. become inspired by the massive demonstrations in Wisconsin, a dangerous idea is being voiced by some working-class allies that could unravel it all. The threat lies in the following argument: to protect the bargaining rights of unions, state and city workers must be prepared to make concessions over wages, benefits, etc. This line of reasoning is not only false to the core, it's suicidal.

Take for example a recent New York Times article on the battle in Wisconsin:

"It is not yet clear whether Gov. Scott Walker of Wisconsin will succeed in his quest to strip public employee unions of most of their bargaining rights. But by simply pressing the issue, he has already won major concessions that would have been unthinkable just a month ago."

This is extraordinary: The Governor makes a radically anti-union threat, and some union leaders are ready to give him EVERYTHING, just not the kitchen sink.



WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS?

"In-depth investigations of the inner workings of the plutocracy in crisis, presented by some of our best politico-economic analysts. This book should help put to rest the hallucinations of free market ideology."

-Michael Parenti, author of God and His Demons and Contrary Notions

CLICK FOR INFO ON THE HIGHLY ACCLAIMED NEW BOOK FROM GLOBAL RESEARCH!

The article continues:

Andrew Gavin Marshall

"Some of Wisconsin's major public sector unions, faced with what they see as a threat to their existence, have decided to accept concessions that they had been vigorously fighting...translating into a pay cut of around 7 percent...But Mr. Walker is not settling for that. He said that those concessions were "an interesting development, because a week ago they said that's not acceptable." (February 28, 2011).

So the anti-union Governor is making the unacceptable acceptable, merely by voicing a threat. If this precedent were established, what future do unions have? Especially when one

considers that state budget deficits are projected to continue for years.

Imagine the following scenario: A war is declared by a foreign army and the defending General responds by announcing to the invaders, "I will only fight one battle to preserve this particular parcel of land (bargaining rights), and will wave the white flag over all other territory (wages, benefits, etc.).

Of course the foreign army would conclude "the enemy is already defeated!" And fight without mercy for total victory.

This is the situation in Wisconsin and other states. War has been declared on unions and some labor leaders are pretending that they can offer concessions to appease their attackers. Unfortunately, this strategy has failed for years, and is in fact why the right wing felt confident enough to officially declare war.

Every time unions agree to lower wages and benefits — as they have been doing for years — they weaken themselves internally, thus opening the way for further, deeper attacks. The right-wing attack on bargaining rights did not appear from nowhere; it was the result of years of concessionary bargaining, which inevitably leads to worker demoralization within the union. An army which concedes every battle will be composed of demoralized soldiers.

The union policy of concessionary bargaining is the policy of committing slow suicide, and after years of providing their executioners with nooses, some labor leaders act stunned when their hanging is announced. They believed that they could befriend the hangman, as long as they didn't create too much trouble by aggressive protesting or well-planned strikes.

But hangmen are hangmen, and they must be treated accordingly.

Labor unions must mobilize the entire community in every state to demand "No Concessions" for all public workers. The fight to save collective bargaining can only be won if workers believe that collective bargaining will save their wages and benefits; the two cannot be separated.

Contrary to what the mainstream media and politicians constantly tells us, the general public would support such a fight. A recent CBS News/New York Times poll found that "Those surveyed said they opposed, 56 percent to 37 percent, cutting the pay or benefits of public employees to reduce deficits." (March 1, 2011).

The battle in Wisconsin proves that private-sector workers do not hate their public-sector brothers and sisters, they passionately support them.

How can labor unions mobilize the general public towards a pro-worker solution to the state budget deficits? By exposing another media lie: that Americans are against ALL tax increases. In fact, the same pollsters discovered in 2009 that 74 percent of respondents "support higher taxes on the rich." (April 6, 2009).

Labor unions must place this demand at the head of their campaign to save collective bargaining rights and workers wages and benefits. Workers will be further encouraged to fight for their wages and benefits when they see that there is a solution to the budget crisis.

Rose Ann DeMoro of National Nurses United agrees:

"So it's time for all of us to say it loud: No More Cuts in Public Sector Pay, Pensions, or Health Benefits; Balance Budgets By Closing Corporate Tax Loopholes, Restoring Fair Share Taxes on Corporations and Wealthy Individuals; Guarantee Retirement Security and Healthcare for All."

Shamus Cooke is a social service worker, trade unionist, and writer for Workers Action (www.workerscompass.org) He can be reached at shamuscooke@gmail.com

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/28/us/28unions.html?hpw

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/01/us/01poll.html?_r=1&hp

http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503983 162-4923732-503983.html

The original source of this article is Global Research Copyright © Shamus Cooke, Global Research, 2011

Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page

Become a Member of Global Research

Articles by: Shamus Cooke

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca