

Who's Scarier: Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker or 'Jihadi John'?

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When Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker compared labor unions to ISIS his audience cheered. At the end of the speech he got a [standing ovation](#). His wealthy audience hated labor unions that much.

In fact, the 1% despises unions much more than they hate ISIS. Islamic extremists in the Syrian desert pose no threat to anyone in the U.S., while labor unions pose a direct threat to the profits of the super rich.

Conversely, the average U.S. worker has much more to fear from Scott Walker than any knife-wielding Jihadist. For example, Scott Walker is subtly campaigning for president among the elite by bragging about his successful butchering of Wisconsin unions, a model that he and his supporters hope to spread nationally.

Walker is idolized by the super rich for having dismembered Wisconsin unions in a way that recalls Ronald Reagan's smashing of the PATCO air traffic controllers strike in 1981. The rich view Walker as a Reagan-like messiah who will transform labor relations yet again, giving corporations still more power in relation to the U.S. workforce.

For example, Walker's anti-union laws have reduced union membership in Wisconsin by 50 percent since he defeated the "Wisconsin Uprising" in 2011, a battle victory that the super rich consider more heroic than the campaigns of any current military general.

The deathblow that Walker delivered to Wisconsin public unions devastated the powerful teacher union that has been the target of the 1% nationally, as reflected in Obama's anti-union Race to the Top education policies that have weakened teacher unions in every state.

Walker's stunning 2011 victory has been studied across the country by politicians inspired to follow in Walker's footsteps by striking at the heart of union power, rather than the decades-long practice of chipping around the edges. The Walker copycat craze was described by the [New York Times](#):

"[Governor Walker] has already emboldened other Republican-controlled states to enact measures that weaken unions and cut benefits. Tennessee and Idaho passed laws that cut back bargaining rights for public schoolteachers... Even longtime union strongholds like Michigan and Indiana have enacted right-to-work laws that undercut private-sector unions..."

Now the Illinois Governor, Bruce Rauner, is imitating Walker by [signing an executive order](#)

that would cripple public sector unions in his state, which includes a direct attack on the very powerful Chicago Teachers Union. The president of the Chicago Teacher's Union, Karen Lewis, recently called the Illinois governor "Scott Walker on steroids." All the conditions for a Wisconsin-like clash in Illinois have been set.

Scott Walker himself discussed the national significance of his actions in Wisconsin:

"I'm at the top of the list of people they'd [labor unions] have on a platter. Not just for retribution, but they understand that if they could take me out [electorally], it would send a very powerful message to other governors and other mayors. But if we're able to win again in a tough, evenly divided battleground state, that would send another message — that you can take on some of these issues and still survive."

Walker is right. He struck at the heart of union power and won. The union's blinked first. And Walker wants to take the Wisconsin model nationwide. In the same speech that Walker compared unions to ISIS he said:

"If we can do it in Wisconsin, there's no doubt we can do it across America." He was talking about crushing unions, and his wealthy audience cheered wildly.

But Walker isn't resting on his laurels after crushing Wisconsin unions. Now that he's unofficially running for president he has to maintain his anti-union momentum, to convince the rich that he'll continue his "bold" anti-worker agenda if elected. Walker has thus voiced support of new Wisconsin legislation that would eviscerate what little power Wisconsin unions have left.

The New York Times acknowledged the political motive for Walker's [new attack on Wisconsin unions](#):

"As Mr. Walker builds a presidential run on his effort to take on unions four years ago, he is poised to deliver a second walloping blow to labor."

Scott Walker, however, can't be blamed for everything. Wisconsin unions are not mere victims, but powerful actors that pursued bad strategy. When the unions were mobilizing hundreds of thousands of supporters alongside an activated rank and file, they backed down from Walker instead of organizing mass civil disobedience or advocating a general strike.

Instead, Wisconsin unions wasted their momentum by collecting signatures for a recall election, where they stupidly backed an anti-union Democrat against Walker. Surviving the re-call election further empowered Walker and weakened the unions.

And the unions were weakened even further recently when Walker won his re-election campaign. Yet again, the Wisconsin unions threw their weight behind an uninspiring corporate Democrat, who completely ignored union issues in her losing campaign that wasted enormous union resources. The Wall Street Journal correctly noted that the recent Wisconsin gubernatorial election signaled "[a historic shift in the power of unions](#)," exposing the weakness of their political strategy.

Scott Walker's new anti-union attack in Wisconsin has [provoked fresh calls for a general strike](#) to stop the legislation. If Wisconsin unions have the organizational power to win a

general strike they should immediately begin preparations for it. However, it's unclear if the rump that remains of the Wisconsin movement is organized enough to win a general strike, and losing one would certainly encourage Walker to napalm what remains of the Wisconsin labor movement.

Scott Walker and his followers have made it clear: they are declaring total war on unions, who can either fight back or accept their fate. The labor movement must engage its rank and file over a national discussion on fighting back and strategy.

Many unions remain suicidally content with burying their heads in the sand and hoping the attackers go away. Other unions, however, are taking powerful, pro-active steps to defend themselves.

SEIU, for example, was one of the Wisconsin unions in 2011 that got their teeth kicked in. Consequently they initiated a national campaign for "\$15 and a union," a masterstroke that has directly led to thundering union victories in Seattle and San Francisco that won a citywide \$15 minimum wage. Such a campaign is now being mimicked statewide by [Oregon's labor movement](#).

The \$15 campaign has inspired low wage workers across the country, making the West Coast unions less vulnerable to "right to work" legislation, since an active and strong labor movement is itself a repellent to anti-union attacks. The \$15 campaigns have arguably been the biggest victories for unions in decades, especially given the current political climate. These unions have dominated the public political discussion and multiplied the popularity of unions in the broader community.

Also critically important are the actions of unions across the country that are building political programs such as "labor candidate schools," where union members are being trained and encouraged to run for office. Ohio unions showed the potential of such a strategy by [running for and winning several elections](#) against Democrats, prompting calls for the creation of a labor party. This is crucially important given the events in Wisconsin, where unions tied their fate to the Democrats, who dragged the unions underwater in losing campaigns that wasted millions of their members' money.

The U.S. labor movement has reached a historic crossroads, as labor relations in the United States are undergoing dramatic, sudden shifts. The only way to answer the aggressiveness of Scott Walker and his clones is by aggressively throwing counter punches that mobilize union members and the community. The Steelworkers union is waging its first strike in decades and other unions must re-learn how to effectively organize lest they die without a fight.

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