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First of May Anarchist Alliance
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Spread the Struggle! Power to the People!
February 23, 2011

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For over a week now, in response to the draconian anti-labor proposals of the Republican Governor, the people of Wisconsin have rose up in the hundreds of thousands in militant and creative fashion in defense of public workers and the unions. The Capitol in Madison has been occupied.

The surrounding area has seen a sea of demonstrators. Teachers across the state have gone on unofficial strike and high school students have walked-out in support. Rallies of hundreds and thousands have occurred all over the state. This week support rallies will happen all over the country.

This movement - directly inspired, it must be said, by the heroic people of Egypt and the Middle East - with its contagious energy, determination, humor, and optimism has taken everyone by surprise. The politicians, bosses, unions, and media were all unprepared for the wave that has crashed ashore. But this upsurge is at a

crossroads and must push forward defiantly or risk being co-opted or crushed leaving us with yet another heroic defeat or false "victory" to lament for years to come.

Instead of defeat, we can move forward. We support the popular call promoted by the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.) revolutionary union and others for a state-wide General Strike. This should include public and private sectors, union and non-unionized sectors, students and unemployed. As other communities and sectors of the working-class step forward to join the struggle they must be free to raise their own specific concerns and demands. The movement must be open to "speakers from the floor". We must resist any pressure to reduce the movement to a small number of lowest common-denominator demands that favor relatively privileged layers and that the system finds acceptable. This movement must not be satisfied with a return to the status quo but formulate demands of our own for what the people actually need.

Build General Strike Committees in the unions and workplaces, in the schools, on the Reservations, in the prisons, and in every local urban and rural community!

The Governor has the votes he needs in the state Legislature to pass the measures that will strip collective bargaining rights from most public employees, ban strikes, and implement deep cuts to workers' pay, benefits and pensions. The Democrats move to leave the state and prevent quorum can be seen as a clever political ploy – or more realistically - as a means to give the ruling class (the corporate and political elite) time to reassess and regroup in the wake of this social explosion. In any case the Democratic Party is in no way an ally of working people and oppressed communities. The Democrats are participating in social cuts in states all across the county and at the Federal level. Next door in Minnesota, even the very liberal Governor there is proposing severe cuts to Health and Human services.

Similarly we cannot expect an effective way forward from the bureaucracy of the unions. Their entire strategy revolves around

having “friends” in high places, only seriously mobilizing their membership to mark ballots every several years. They could not lead a militant movement if they wanted to - they have not led a serious struggle for generations. Yet all their political capital rests on their ability to channel workers dissatisfaction. Already they have begun trying to assert their control over the spontaneous movement at the Capitol, by taking down signs deemed inappropriate (for instance “Walk like an Egyptian”) and stepping up the “marshalling” of the crowds.

There is a real risk that the union bureaucracy and the Democrats will try and present a “compromise” of severe cuts minus the collective bargaining roll-back. “Don’t take away our right to negotiate how deep we let you cut our pay and benefits” is pathetic but they are already starting to sound out this approach. We must be prepared to defy this and explain the danger to the bulk of the movement who so far see the Democrats and union tops only in a positive light.

If, in the likelihood that the efforts toward mass strikes become bottled up inside the union structures, we must push ahead with whatever means of mass direct action we can muster. Mass demonstrations; more unofficial strikes and high school walk-outs; occupations of campuses and State facilities, Republican and Democratic Party headquarters, corporate supporters of the Governor, etc. We must come out of this struggle with a network of working-class activists willing to organize/participate in mass direct action.

Finally since in many ways the wave that started this whole thing came from the Middle East, lets end there as well: The United States spends billions and billions of tax dollars on military occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, huge military presence in Kuwait, Bahrain and in the surrounding seas, support for the apartheid Israeli state, and dictatorships and monarchies across the region. The National Guard that the Governor has threatened to deploy against the workers of Wisconsin has spent many months guarding the Empire over there. All this to control the people and resources of the

Middle East for the same global capitalist system that is attacking us here in Wisconsin and killing our planet.

We cannot have an honest discussion about budgets, deficits, or resources without addressing the costs of Empire – both financially and morally. Our movement must defend the self-determination of the working people across the Middle East and help them dissolve the Empire of Capital that benefits no one but the rich elite.

Solidarity!