

Fight for Jobs

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[Although CP of USA is a very small party, still enamoured of CPI(M)/CPI, it's reaction on Obama's betrayal is interesting. Following is a slightly shortened version of a report prepared by Scott Marshall for the National Committee of the Communist Party of USA]

This report is not so much about the economy as it is about the jobs fight. But some overall points about the economy. This meeting doesn't need to be told that the economy is bad for working people and getting worse for many. People are falling through the cracks in the system. Everybody heard last month that unemployment dropped from 9.4 to 9% and fortunately a lot of attention was paid to the fact that the drop was mainly due to 99ers (those who have run completely out of unemployment benefits), in particular, falling out of the system. Millions and millions of people are not counted anymore as looking for work and not counted in the unemployment figures.

Manufacturing and durable goods production figures were down again this month even as the pundits touted that the economy was picking up. Without a strong manufacturing and durable goods sector it's really impossible to have a recovery.

Total construction activity both private and commercial is down again and continuing the downward drift. Everybody knows that the housing crisis bubble has not finished bursting.

Falsely blamed on the freedom movement in Egypt, oil prices are topping \$100 a barrel. This will have a huge downward effect on the economy and particularly on working people.

And there are the continuing attacks and cuts in state and local budgets and federal programs. The ongoing discussion about doing away with Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac will certainly have a downward pull on the economy as fewer working class people will be able to afford housing. The government spending freeze and the wage freeze also have a very negative impact on the overall economy and on working people.

The jobs fight, the fight of the unemployed, and fight to defend public workers are all the same fight. The overall attack on workers and unions are all basically part of the same fight for jobs and for relief for people who are victims of the system.

The Good Jobs Green Jobs conference in Washington DC, the Pennsylvania Progressive Summit and the Steelworkers Rapid Response conference conclusions all really confirm the estimate that the battle is shifting dramatically to local and state struggles.

At the state level the attack is even more drastic than many realize without having a full survey of state and local anti-labor actions. An incredible array of anti-labor, anti-immigrant and racist and anti-women legislation is being proposed in state legislatures by the Republican right wing. Just to mention a few.

Right-to-work laws are pending in Alaska, Hawaii, Indiana, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Montana, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The attack in Wisconsin is one of the most drastic attacks that one can imagine. It seeks to destroy public workers bargaining rights. The proposed law also mandates that public workers revote every year for their union representation.

"Paycheck deception" laws designed to take away the ability of unions to engage in political action are proposed in 17 states—Arkansas, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Mexico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin. Attacks on the building trades against project labor agreements are proposed in Alabama, Arizona, California, Delaware, Georgia, Iowa, Indiana, Idaho, Kentucky, Mississippi, Michigan, Mississippi, North Dakota, North Carolina, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas, West Virginia and Wyoming.

Attacks on public sector workers union rights and benefits are threatened in Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Utah, and Wisconsin. These include also attacks on education workers and bargaining rights for teachers.

And there is attack legislation against immigrants in 30 states: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Italy, Idaho, Indiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana.

Twenty-eight states are proposing legislation to preempt Card Check and the Employee Free Choice Act. And 25 states have filed suit against implementation of the healthcare act.

One conclusion one can draw from this is that this is not just a spontaneous thing that's going on in different states. This is a highly coordinated attack on the working class and on unions and working people across this country. That is what's going on here. This is not simply a spontaneous happening because of the 2010 elections.

Big business, the Republicans (and some Democrats), and the far right saw the opportunity to launch this all-out attack on the working class. It's very important that one sees it this way. This is the kind of battle that people are in. Every single one of these over 424 state laws worsens the economic situation. Every single one of them will lead to unemployment and more jobs loss. That's not even mentioning the horrible cuts that are coming also. Now of course there is fight back and it is an extremely fast-growing fight back.

There is important legislation in the hopper. House Resolution 589 introduced by Rep. Barbara Lee and Rep. Bobby Scott addresses the plight of the 99ers, the long term unemployed. It provides for 14 more weeks of unemployment insurance and has 60 cosponsors. It's critical legislation that everyone can get a hold of in terms of getting more cosponsors for that bill. This is life-and-death bill for literally millions and millions of people in this country. HR 516 is a bill that is basically an outline for an industrial policy for the country. HR 402 creates a federal infrastructure bank.

Rep John Conyers will reintroduce his comprehensive infrastructure jobs bill that is financed by a stock transaction tax. It is a vast jobs bill like the WPA that is revenue neutral and does not add to the deficit. In the Senate two sense-of-the-senate bills introduced by Harry Reid are important. SB 1 and SB 2 together basically outline a progressive policy for jobs creation touching on infrastructure, minimum wage and other issues vital to working people. While they are agitational, they do lay out some important elements of a progressive program.

Also local coalitions are developing all over the place at the state and local level. There are grassroots actions and demonstration building momentum all over. Jobs committee has discussed some exciting ones from Illinois, Ohio and Connecticut.

There are many ways and venues that people have to be involved in struggle. So much takes place at the grassroots, at the local and state level.

There is fightback fire beginning to rage. American people are inspired by Egypt. The State House in Madison, Wisconsin is beginning to look like Cairo. □□□