

Military Resistance 9B17

[Photo Of The Year, So Far] “Egypt Supports Wisconsin Workers”



“Egypt Supports Wisconsin Workers: One World, One Pain” Shukran jazilan, Muhammad Saladin Nusair! Via February 19, 2011 Mother Jones [Thanks to Phil G, who sent this in.]

DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE MILITARY?

Forward Military Resistance along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Afghanistan, Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the wars, inside the armed services and at home. Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Resistance, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657. Phone: 888.711.2550

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Foreign Occupation “Servicemember” Killed Somewhere Or Other In Afghanistan: Nationality Not Announced

February 19, 2010 Reuters

A foreign servicemember died following an insurgent attack in southern Afghanistan today.

Why We Fight II: The Strategic Reason That Keeps The U.S. In Afghanistan: “This AfPak ‘Necessary’ War Is Not Only A Quest Gone Bad And Now On Autopilot, It Has Key US Strategic Objectives” “Follow The Money”

From: Don Bacon
To: Military Resistance
Sent: February 16, 2011
Subject: Why We Fight II

By Don Bacon, Lt Col, US Army (Ret), Vietnam & Smedley Butler Society:
<http://www.warisaracket.org/>

“Why We Fight” described the AfPak War as a basic struggle between Pakistan and India, with a US objective of seeking an avenue to Central Asia and its energy.

Why “We Fight II” outlines the larger US strategic objectives that contribute to the AfPak War.

What strategic reason keeps the US in Afghanistan?

None of the foreign wars that the US has entered, going back forever, have been fought for no strategic reason.

They've all had a strategic basis -- manifest destiny, extending the empire, stopping communism, securing petroleum supplies, etc.

This AfPak “necessary” war is not only a quest gone bad and now on autopilot, it has key US strategic objectives.

The 9/11 events merely served as a convenient pretense to hasten the inevitable entry of the US military into south and central Asia after the Soviet demise.

Sure, the government gives us that malarkey about al Qaeda safe havens, women's rights, promise-keeping, staying the course, etc., but that's only propaganda for the plebes.

The safe haven argument has been successfully demolished considering Pakistan safe havens, for one.

In Afghanistan the US has several over-riding strategic objectives -- countering its rival China, allying with India (another China rival), restraining Russia and controlling Central Asia.

Afghanistan is in a key geographical position between Pakistan and Iran and an entre to the “Silk Road” countries of Central Asia where the US, after the fall of the USSR, as in eastern Europe, has an expressed interest.

Being in this position makes this poor country Afghanistan central to the TAPI pipeline, among other things.

The war itself has increased US presence in the other Central Asia '-stans' north of Afghanistan.

Besides the political reasons for extending the US empire there are considerable natural resources (petroleum, gas, minerals and water) in these countries, and a lot of money to be made.

Follow the money.

The US has partnered with India in its Central/South Asia strategy which is particularly oriented on the energy rich Central Asia, and a US-dominated Afghanistan is the key to Central Asia.

US Assistant Secretary of State Blake spelled out the Central and South Asia strategy, and the US-India partnership, in a speech on 19 Jan 2011:

“Energy-rich Central Asia lies at a critical strategic crossroads, bordering Afghanistan, China, Russia and Iran, which is why the United States wants to continue to expand our engagement and our cooperation with this critical region. And South Asia, with India as its thriving anchor, is a region of growing strategic and commercial importance to the United States in the critical Indian Ocean area. . . Given this dynamic regional context, we have three primary objectives in the South and Central Asia region: Support international efforts in Afghanistan; Build a strategic partnership with India; and Develop more durable and stable relations with the Central Asian countries.”

The business of America is business, and the US Chamber of Commerce together with its foreign affiliates American Chambers, will always help expand the US economic empire.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce (Eurasia Business Platform) held a marquee conference, “Silk Road Trade and Investment: New Pathways for U.S.-Central Asia Economic Ties” on October 7-8, 2009.

This event brought together Ministers, corporate decision makers and experts from the public and private sectors to discuss the opportunities and challenges of the rapidly emerging market nestled strategically between Europe, China, Russia, South Asia, Turkey and the Middle East.

The US Senate has had a continuing interest in the “Silk Road” countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and Afghanistan is a key factor..

“S. 2749 IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES May 4, 2006 A BILL To update the Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999 to modify targeting of assistance in order to support the economic and political independence of the countries of Central Asia and the South Caucasus in recognition of political and economic changes in these regions since enactment of the original legislation.

“In General- The United States has significant long-term interests in the countries of Central Asia and the South Caucasus. These interests concern security, economic development, energy, and human rights. Accordingly, it is the policy of the United States to seek political and economic stability in the social development of, and cooperative relationships with, the countries of Central Asia and the South Caucasus, including by providing assistance in accordance with the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.”

“The liberation of Afghanistan from Taliban misrule and the new course in Afghanistan toward political and economic openness make possible the country's reintegration into Central Asia. . . The ouster of the Taliban from Afghanistan has diminished threats to that country's neighbors in Central Asia, allowing for accelerated progress toward democracy, open economies, and the rule of law across the region. Afghanistan's embrace of popular sovereignty and political pluralism demonstrates the universal applicability of these values.”

Pepe Escobar --

“Think of Afghanistan, then, as an overlooked subplot in the ongoing Liquid War. After all, an overarching goal of U.S. foreign policy since President Richard Nixon's era in the early 1970s has been to split Russia and China.

“The leadership of the SCO has been focused on this since the U.S. Congress passed the Silk Road Strategy Act five days before beginning the bombing of Serbia in March 1999.

“That act clearly identified American geo-strategic interests from the Black Sea to western China with building a mosaic of American protectorates in Central Asia and militarizing the Eurasian energy corridor.

“Afghanistan, as it happens, sits conveniently at the crossroads of any new Silk Road linking the Caucasus to western China, and four nuclear powers (China, Russia, Pakistan, and India) lurk in the vicinity. ‘Losing’ Afghanistan and its key network of U.S. military bases would, from the Pentagon's point of view, be a disaster, and though it may be a secondary matter in the New Great Game of the moment, it's worth remembering that the country itself is a lot more than the towering mountains of the Hindu Kush and immense deserts: it's believed to be rich in unexplored deposits of natural gas, petroleum, coal, copper, chrome, talc, barites, sulfur, lead, zinc, and iron ore, as well as precious and semiprecious stones.”

That's the strategic reason that keeps the US in Afghanistan.

BEEN ON THE JOB TOO LONG: HOME, NOW



Marines from the Eighth Marines prepare to head out on patrol from their outpost at Kunjak in southern Afghanistan's Helmand province, February 16, 2011.
REUTERS/Finbarr O'Reilly

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



“The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppose.”

“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation’s ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.

“For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder.

“We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”

Frederick Douglass, 1852

**Hope for change doesn't cut it when you're still losing buddies.
-- J.D. Englehart, Iraq Veterans Against The War**

**I say that when troops cannot be counted on to follow orders because they see the futility and immorality of them THAT is the real key to ending a war.
-- Al Jaccoma, Veterans For Peace**

**“What country can preserve its liberties if its rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms.”
-- Thomas Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, 1787**

One day while I was in a bunker in Vietnam, a sniper round went over my head. The person who fired that weapon was not a terrorist, a rebel, an extremist, or a so-called insurgent. The Vietnamese individual who tried to kill me was a citizen of Vietnam, who did not want me in his country. This truth escapes millions.

**Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71
December 13, 2004**

**“The Nixon administration claimed and received great credit for withdrawing the Army from Vietnam, but it was the rebellion of low-ranking GIs that forced the government to abandon a hopeless suicidal policy”
-- David Cortright; Soldiers In Revolt**

The Obama National Budget: “You Don’t Stick A Knife In A Man’s Back Nine Inches, And Then Pull It Out Six Inches And Say You’re Making Progress”

February 16, 2011 Editorial, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

Amputate the knee. Amputate at the hip. Or just stick a knife in the patient’s heart.

That’s the scale of the alternatives being discussed by lawmakers at all levels of government when it comes to budget cuts and austerity measures.

Only the patient shouldn’t be in surgery at all.

The politicians of both parties are agreed on making cuts, if not always on how deep to go. Their actions will increase the suffering of millions of people.

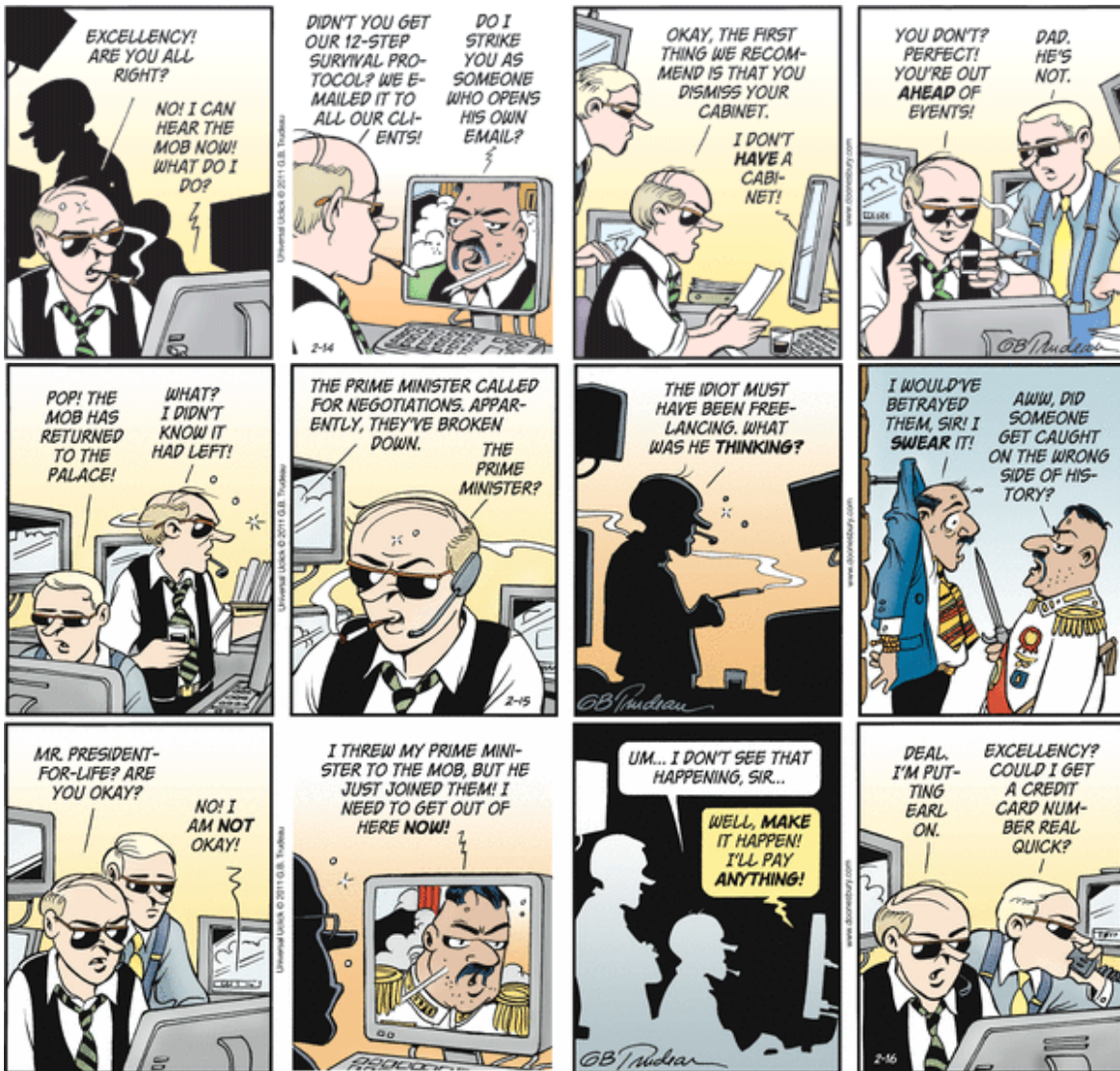
And yet no voice in mainstream politics is proposing an alternative based on increasing taxes on corporations and the rich or ending U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. No mainstream politician will speak up for measures that would make the catastrophic cuts being considered today unnecessary--and, equally important, bring a measure of justice

in a society where the rich and powerful have become so much richer and more powerful.

Instead, as an anonymous Obama administration official told the New York Times, "The debate in Washington is not whether to cut or to spend. We both agree we should cut. The question is how we cut and what we cut."

With his 2012 budget proposal released this week, Barack Obama showed, if there was any doubt, that he's fully on board the budget-cutting bandwagon.

His defenders insist he's protecting us from the wildest proposals of the Republican maniacs, but the words of Malcolm X come to mind: "You don't stick a knife in a man's back nine inches, and then pull it out six inches and say you're making progress."





[Thanks to Phil G, who sent this in.]

“It Is This--The Self-Transformation Of Oppressed People--That Elites Can Never Grasp”

“Our Rulers That They Imagine Those Below Them To Be Inherently Stupid And Deferential”

“That Is Why Popular Revolutions Are Inexplicable To Them”



It is this error that explains the frantic tacking and turning of rulers confronted with mass insurgency.

One moment they make concessions, the next moment they send in the goons--all in the belief that ordinary people can be beaten back into submission, or bribed with crumbs from the tables of the rich.

February 15, 2011 By David McNally, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

Canadian socialist David McNally, author of *Global Slump: The Economics and Politics of Crisis and Resistance*, looks at the dynamics of the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia in an article written shortly before Mubarak resigned.

Marching in their millions, reclaiming public space, attending meetings and debating their society's future, they discover in themselves capacities for organization and action they had never imagined.

They arrest secret police, defend their communities and their rallies, organize the distribution of food, water and medical supplies.

Exhilarated by new solidarities and empowered by the understanding that they are making history, they shed old habits of deference and passivity.

It is this--the self-transformation of oppressed people--that elites can never grasp.

That is what explains the truly delusional character of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's speech on Thursday, February 10, where he prattled on in surreal disconnection from events.

But while the aging dictator may be uniquely out of touch, he merely reflects the biases of his class.

For it is a general characteristic of our rulers that they imagine those below them to be inherently stupid and deferential.

They treat the downtrodden as laboring drones and cannon fodder for military adventures.

They feed them lies and empty promises and send in the riot police when the subjugated get unruly. And most of the time they get away with it.

That is why popular revolutions are inexplicable to them.

As ordinary people cast off resignation and obedience, as they take control of their communities and reclaim the streets, they become unrecognizable to their rulers.

This is the real "intelligence failure" of the ruling class.

Contrary to the terms of debate in security circles, it is not that they missed some indicators of institutional change; it is rather that all their models are based on the presumption of popular passivity.

"Ordinary Egyptians have a reputation as fatalists," pronounced a former Canadian diplomat to Egypt in the early days of the revolution, explaining that Egypt would not go the way of Tunisia, where dictator Ben Ali was toppled only weeks earlier.

In so doing, the diplomat revealed not only his own foolishness, but also the tone-deaf incapacity of elites to comprehend people's power.

After all, revolutions are not just about changing institutions.

Most profoundly, they are about the dramatic remaking of the downtrodden.

Revolutions are schools of profound self-education. They destroy submission and resignation, and they release long-repressed creative energies--intelligence, solidarity, invention, self-activity.

In so doing, they reweave the fabric of everyday life. The horizons of possibility expand. The unthinkable--that ordinary people might control their lives--becomes both thinkable and practical.

All of this eludes bosses, bureaucrats, generals, politicians and the vast majority of journalists because they do not understand the inner heart of a genuinely revolutionary

process--that having taken to the stage of history, oppressed people are never again the same.

It is this error that explains the frantic tacking and turning of rulers confronted with mass insurgency.

One moment they make concessions, the next moment they send in the goons--all in the belief that ordinary people can be beaten back into submission, or bribed with crumbs from the tables of the rich.

But the longer they do this, the more they force the mass movement to broaden its base and deepen its struggles.

President Ben Ali made this mistake in Tunisia; Mubarak keeps making it in Egypt. And by clinging to power in the face of mass opposition, they give the lowest layers of society the time and space to enter the political sphere. The result is that popular revolutions open the doors to great upsurges of working-class struggle.

That has been Mubarak's greatest folly. But the genie of the Egyptian workers having now been awakened, it will be very hard to put it back in the bottle.

“Again And Again, Elated Protestors Have Marveled At The Sudden Discovery Of Their Own Power”

Philosopher Peter Hallward is among those few commentators who have grasped the inner workings of the Egyptian Revolution. Writing in the Guardian, he observes:

“Every step of the way, the basic fact of the uprising has become more obvious and more explicit: with each new confrontation, the protestors have realized, and demonstrated, that they are more powerful than their oppressors. When they are prepared to act in sufficient numbers with sufficient determination, the people have proved that there's no stopping them.

“Again and again, elated protestors have marveled at the sudden discovery of their own power.”

Participants repeatedly describe how their fear has lifted. “When we stopped being afraid we knew we would win,” Ahmad Mahmoud told a reporter. “What we have achieved,” proclaimed another, “is the revolution in our minds.”

The significance of such a revolution in attitudes is inestimable. But such shifts do not happen at the level of consciousness alone; they are inextricably connected to a revolution in the relations of everyday life--by way of the birth of popular power. And these new forms of people's power and radical democracy from below have emerged as steps necessary to preserve the revolution and keep it moving it forward.

So when violently attacked, as they were on February 2 by undercover police and goons of the ruling party wielding guns, knives, Molotov cocktails and more, the insurgents held their ground and fought back, holding Tahrir Square in downtown Cairo. In the process, they extended their grassroots self-organization.

As reporters for the Washington Post noted, the rebels of Tahrir Square created popular prisons to hold undercover security forces, and people's clinics to care for the wounded:

“Refusing to end their 10-day old demonstration, protesters set up makeshift hospitals in alleyways off the square to treat their wounded, and fashioned a holding cell in a nearby travel office to detain those they suspected of inciting the violence. Organizers said they had captured more than 350 “thugs of the government” among the pro-government demonstrators, some carrying police identification cards, and turned them over to the Egyptian army.”

In the same spirit, the movement has formed Peoples Protection forces, staffed by both women and men, to provide safety and security in neighborhoods and in the mass marches and assemblies. In some towns, like El Arish, the biggest city in the northern Sinai, official police and security forces have melted away, only to be replaced by armed Popular Committees, which have maintained the peace.

Developing alongside these forms of popular self-organization are new practices of radical democracy. In Tahrir Square, the nerve center of the Revolution, the crowd engages in direct decision-making, sometimes in its hundreds of thousands.

Organized into smaller groups, people discuss and debate, and then send elected delegates to consultations about the movement's demands.

As one journalist explains, “delegates from these mini-gatherings then come together to discuss the prevailing mood, before potential demands are read out over the square's makeshift speaker system. The adoption of each proposal is based on the proportion of boos or cheers it receives from the crowd at large.”

Years of courageous struggle by Egypt's workers were decisive in creating the conditions for the popular uprising.

And now, mere weeks into the upsurge, tens of thousands of workers are mobilizing, raising both economic and political demands as part of a rising wave of strikes. The consequences could be momentous.

Social movements generally have been on the move recently in Egypt. The years 2002-3 saw important stirrings of political protest in solidarity with the Palestinian Intifada and in opposition to the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Shortly after this, the Kefaya (Enough) movement organized for democratic reform, and the feminist group, We Are Watching You (Shayfenkom) came out in defense of women's rights.

But by 2004, it was strike action, sit-ins and demonstrations by workers that comprised the most determined and persistent oppositional activity--most of it illegal under the emergency edicts and laws that deny workers the right to form independent unions.

Over the past six years or so, more than 2 million workers engaged in thousands of direct actions. Most importantly, they regularly won significant concessions on wages and working conditions.

The result was a growing confidence among workers--so much so that genuinely independent unions began to emerge in a society where the official unions are effectively extensions of the state.

In 2006-7, mass working-class protest erupted in the Nile Delta, spearheaded by the militant action of 50,000 workers in textiles and the cement and poultry industries. This was followed by strikes of train drivers, journalists, truckers, miners and engineers.

Then 2007-08 saw another labor explosion, with riots at the state-owned weaving factory in Al-Mahla Al-Kobra. The youth-based April 6th Movement emerged at this point in support of workers' strikes. Meanwhile, workers began to address the general interests of all working people, particularly the poorest, by pressing the demand for a substantial increase in the minimum wage.

In the course of a few days during the week of February 7, tens of thousands of them stormed into action.

Thousands of railworkers took strike action, blockading railway lines in the process. Six thousand workers at the Suez Canal Authority walked off the job, staging sit-ins at Suez and two other cities. In Mahalla, 1,500 workers at Abul Sebae Textiles struck and blockaded the highway. At the Kafr al-Zayyat hospital, hundreds of nurses staged a sit-in and were joined by hundreds of other hospital employees.

Across Egypt, thousands of others--bus workers in Cairo, employees at Telecom Egypt, journalists at a number of newspapers, workers at pharmaceutical plants and steel mills--joined the strike wave. They demanded improved wages, the firing of ruthless managers, back pay, better working conditions and independent unions.

In many cases, they also called for the resignation of President Mubarak. And in some cases, like that of the 2,000 workers at Helwan Silk Factory, they demanded the removal of their company's board of directors.

Then there were the thousands of faculty members at Cairo University who joined the protests, confronted security forces and prevented Prime Minister Ahmed Shariq from getting to his government office.

What we are seeing, in other words, is the rising of the Egyptian working class.

Having been at the heart of the popular upsurge in the streets, tens of thousands of workers are now taking the revolutionary struggle back to their workplaces, extending and deepening the movement in the process.

In so doing, they are proving the continuing relevance of the analysis developed by the great Polish-German socialist Rosa Luxemburg. In her book *The Mass Strike*, based on the experience of mass strikes of 1905 against the Tsarist dictatorship in Russia, Luxemburg argued that truly revolutionary movements develop by way of interacting waves of political and economic struggle, each enriching the other.

In a passage that could have been inspired by the upheaval in Egypt, she explains:

“Every new onset and every fresh victory of the political struggle is transformed into a powerful impetus for the economic struggle... After every foaming wave of political action, a fructifying deposit remains behind, from which a thousand stalks of economic struggle burst forth. And conversely, the workers condition of ceaseless economic struggle with the capitalists keeps their fighting spirit alive in every political interval.”

And so it is in the Egyptian Revolution.

Tens of millions of workers--in transportation, health care, textiles, education, heavy industry, the service sector--are being awakened and mobilized.

They are fusing demands for economic justice to those for democracy, and they are among the hundreds of thousands building popular power and self-organization.

Moreover, should the rising of the workers move toward mass strikes that paralyze the economy, the Egyptian Revolution would move to a new and more powerful level.

What the coming weeks will bring is still uncertain. But Mubarak's folly has triggered an upsurge of workers' struggle whose effects will endure.

“The most precious, because lasting, thing in this ebb and flow of the (revolutionary) wave is...the intellectual, cultural growth of the working class,” wrote Rosa Luxemburg.

In Tahrir Square and elsewhere, thousands of signs depict Mubarak accompanied by the words “Game Over.” For the workers of Egypt, it is now “Game On.”

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

Traveling Soldier is the publication of the Military Resistance Organization.

Telling the truth - about the occupations or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance to Imperial wars inside the armed forces.

Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces.

If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers. <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/>

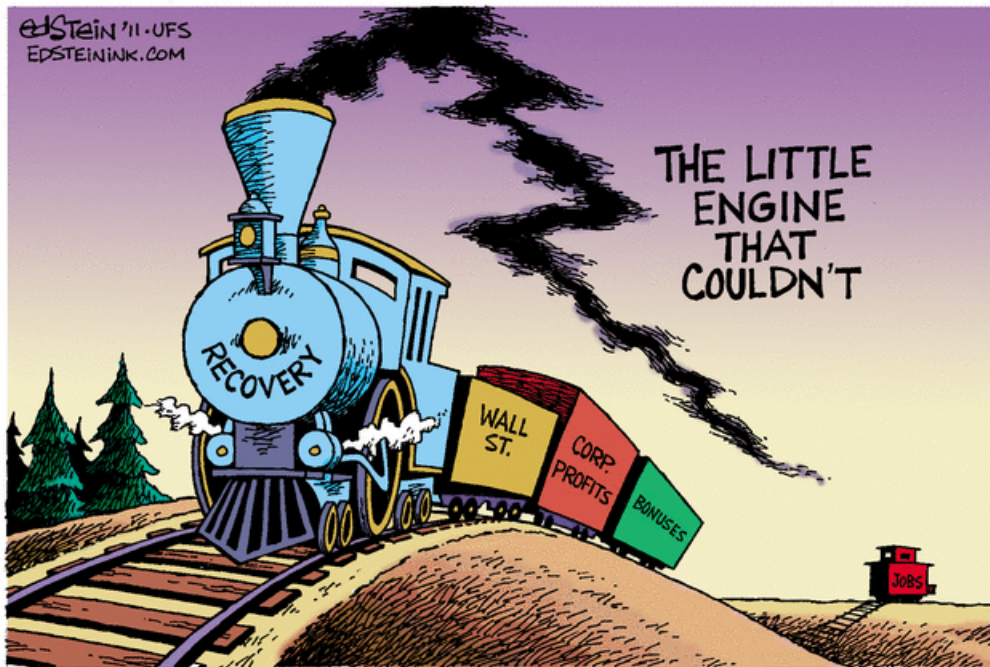
And join with Iraq Veterans Against the War to end the occupations and bring all troops home now! (www.ivaw.org/)

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



[Thanks to Mark Shapiro, Military Resistance Organization, who sent this in.]

CLASS WAR REPORTS



Class War Wisconsin: “The Unionists Are Ringing The Entire Capital, With Not A Break In The Ring” “Here Are Some Of The Signs He Is Seeing, To Give You A Flavor”

From: Marjorie S Via John Arena NOLA_C3_Discussion [Excerpts]
Sent: February 19, 2011 3:31 PM
Subject: Brief report from today in Madison --signs give a flavor

Jan just called from the capital in Wisconsin with an update (3 pm Saturday).

The unionists are ringing the entire capital, with not a break in the ring.

It is hard to get an accurate count because lots of people can't get there, are still in the streets surrounding.

If yesterday was the biggest day of the mobilization thus far, today is far and away bigger. Maybe because it's Saturday and workers from across the state headed to Madison.

Here are some of the signs he is seeing, to give you a flavor:

“Kill the Bill.”

“Screw us and We Multiply.”

“You Can Pry My Union Card from My Cold Dead Hand.”

“We Have Keg Parties -- Not Tea Parties”

“Welcome to Wisconsin--Leave Your Rights At the Border.”

“This is Democracy for America's Working Class.”

“Aaron Rogers Is a Union Rep” [reference to Green Bay Packers Super Bowl winning QB]

“Northern Wisconsin Loves Our Teachers” [reference to fact that Northern Wisconsin has rep for being right-wing.]

“The Workers Revolution Has Begun” -- this is carried by a teacher.

“Don’t Balance the Budget on the Backs of Our Children.”

MORE:

The Uprising In Wisconsin: Background

2.19.11 By Joshua Holland, Alternet.org [Excerpts]

What's happening in Wisconsin is not complicated.

At the beginning of this year, the state was on course to end 2011 with a budget surplus of \$120 million.

As Ezra Klein explained, newly elected GOP Governor Scott Walker then “ signed two business tax breaks and a conservative health-care policy experiment that lowers overall tax revenues (among other things). The new legislation was not offset, and it turned a surplus into a deficit.”

Walker then used the deficit he'd created as the justification for assaulting his state's public employees.

His intentions are clear -- before assuming office, Walker threatened to decertify the state's employees' unions (until he discovered that the governor doesn't have that power).

Wisconsin's public workers have already “made sacrifices to help balance the budget, through 16 unpaid furlough days and no pay increases the past two years,” according to the Associated Press.

Public employees' pensions account for just 6 percent of state budgets.

In 2007, the average pension for a public sector worker was \$22,000. Not exactly caviar dreams.

Many public employees are not eligible for Social Security -- those pensions, and whatever they can put away on their own, is all that they'll have in their golden years.

MORE:

Wisconsin Saturday: 70,000

2.19.11 By TODD RICHMOND and JASON SMATHERS, Associated Press [Excerpts]

MADISON, Wis. – Sometimes they cursed each other, sometimes they shook hands, sometimes they walked away from each other in disgust.

None of it — not the ear-splitting chants, the pounding drums or the back-and-forth debate between 70,000 protesters — changed the minds of Wisconsin lawmakers dug into a stalemate over Republican efforts to scrap union rights for almost all public workers.

After nearly a week of political chaos in Madison, during which tens of thousands of pro-labor protesters turned the Capitol into a campsite that had started to smell like a locker room, supporters of Gov. Scott Walker came out in force Saturday.

They gathered on the muddy east lawn of the Capitol and were soon surrounded by a much larger group of union supporters who countered their chants of “Pass the bill! Pass the bill!” with chants of “Kill the bill! Kill the bill!”

Madison police estimated that 60,000 or more people were outside the Capitol on Saturday, with up to 8,000 more inside. The normally an immaculate building had become a mess of mud-coated floors that reeked from days of protesters standing shoulder-to-shoulder.

Doctors from numerous hospitals set up a station near the Capitol to provide notes to explain public employees' absences from work.

Family physician Lou Sanner, 59, of Madison, said he had given out hundreds of notes. Many of the people he spoke with seemed to be suffering from stress, he said.

“What employers have a right to know is if the patient was assessed by a duly licensed physician about time off of work,” Sanner said.

“Employers don't have a right to know the nature of that conversation or the nature of that illness. So it's as valid as every other work note that I've written for the last 30 years.”

MORE:

**“The Unrest In Wisconsin This Week Over Gov. Scott Walker’s Plan To Cut The Bargaining Rights And Benefits Of Public Workers Is Spreading To Other States”
Union Members In Pennsylvania
“Said Friday That They Planned To**

Wear Red Next Week To Show Solidarity With The Workers In Wisconsin”

“The Images From Wisconsin Evoked The Middle East More Than The Midwest”

Feb. 19, 2011 By MICHAEL COOPER and KATHARINE Q. SEELYE, The New York Times [Excerpts]

The unrest in Wisconsin this week over Gov. Scott Walker’s plan to cut the bargaining rights and benefits of public workers is spreading to other states.

Already, protests erupted in Ohio this week, where another newly elected Republican governor, John Kasich, has been seeking to take away collective bargaining rights from unions.

In Tennessee, a law that would abolish collective bargaining rights for teachers passed a State Senate committee this week despite teachers’ objections. Indiana is weighing proposals to weaken unions.

Union members in Pennsylvania, who are not necessarily facing an attack on their bargaining rights, said Friday that they planned to wear red next week to show solidarity with the workers in Wisconsin.

The images from Wisconsin — with its protests, shutdown of some public services and missing Democratic senators, who fled the state to block a vote — evoked the Middle East more than the Midwest.

The parallels raise the inevitable question: Is Wisconsin the Tunisia of collective bargaining rights?

Governor Walker, in an interview, said he hoped that by “pushing the envelope” and setting an aggressive example, Wisconsin might inspire more states to curb the power of unions. “In that regard, I hope I’m inspiration just as much as others are an inspiration to me,” he said.

FreedomWorks, a Washington group that helped cultivate the Tea Party movement, said it was trying to use its lists of activists to turn out supporters for a variety of bills aimed at cutting the power of unions — not just in Wisconsin, but in Tennessee, Indiana and Ohio as well.

But Wisconsin is also proving to be a catalyst for Democrats and labor leaders, as they take heart from the way thousands of workers have rallied to the cause.

With the falling popularity of unions in recent years, some union leaders see the attempt to take away bargaining powers as an effort that could shift the question from whether public-sector workers are overpaid to whether they should have the right to negotiate contracts at all.

Governor Walker's plan would limit collective bargaining for most state and local government employees to wages, barring them from negotiating on issues like benefits and work conditions.

It would also require workers to contribute more to their pension and health care plans, cap wage increases based on the Consumer Price Index and limit contracts to one year. And it would take on the power of unions by requiring them to take annual votes to maintain certification, and by permitting workers to stop paying union dues.

Some union members who are trying to preserve their rights have been cheered by what they have seen in Wisconsin.

Joe Rugola, executive director of the Ohio Association of Public School Employees and an international vice president of A.F.S.C.M.E., said that 4,000 protesters gathered at the Columbus Statehouse on Thursday to preserve union rights.

"Yesterday at the Statehouse, everyone was talking about the images they had seen in Wisconsin, and it gave them great heart and made folks determined to equal that effort."

Tennessee, a right-to-work state, where workers cannot be required to join a union, is likely to become a staging ground for a collective bargaining battle.

State Senator Jack Johnson, a Republican who sponsored a measure to curtail collective bargaining rights for teachers, said he expected the bill to become law. "Collective bargaining between teachers and the school boards has been an absolute dismal failure," he said.

In Indiana, Gov. Mitch Daniels, a Republican who is considered a possible presidential candidate in 2012, issued an executive order on his first day as governor in 2005 that ended collective bargaining for state employees. Now he is supporting a measure to limit negotiations by teachers to wages and benefits. Some state lawmakers have called for steps that would go further, but Mr. Daniels has said that he does not think their legislation should be passed this year because it has not been publicly vetted.

Feb 18th, 2011 By Mike Elk, Think Progress [Excerpts]

Every day, the Wisconsin GOP has dismissed the protests saying they won't last another day, but each day the protests get bigger by estimates of about ten thousand people each day.

These protests have been successful in gaining a great deal of public support.

A new statewide poll shows that 65% of Wisconsin residents think that Walker has gone too far in his attack on public employees.

The protests do appear to be growing and have entered the realm where they are no longer something being planned through rigorous amounts of organizing, but are happening spontaneously as people get inspired by the events.

Dozens of smaller protests are popping up at smaller cities throughout Wisconsin and students walk out of numerous schools across Wisconsin.

Many union members and activists across the country are beginning to organize car pools to travel to Madison.

Many local governments are upset by the bill which not only affects the ability of public workers to bargain, but also makes drastic cuts in many basic services and municipality funding.

The Mayor of Madison led a march with local public employee union members to the Capitol. Likewise, many local administrators who see their budgets being cut have been sympathetic to workers taking time off to attend the protests.

Business leaders fear that the protests will embolden union members to fight back harder against concession and lockout threats.

As Wisconsin based labor organizer Andy Gussert told me the other day, “Thank you Scott Walker! If we were given a million dollars, there is no way we could have taught so many kids about solidarity, labor organizing, and the power of the people when they unite”.

Troops Invited:

Comments, arguments, articles, and letters from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or send email to contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Same address to unsubscribe.

Bahrain Orders Military Off Streets Of Capital Saturday:

“Thousands Of Marchers Came Under Fire Friday As They Tried To Head Toward The Square”
“Down, Down With The Khalifas”
“The Regime Must Fall, They Will Kill Us All”



February 19, 2011: Anti government protestors march into Pearl roundabout in Manama after the military and police left. Photograph: Caren Firouz/Reuters

[Thanks to Joan M, who sent this in from Australia]

19 February 2011 By Barbara Surk, Associated Press & Michael Slackman and Jack Healy, The New York Times & Martin Chulov in Manama, Tom Finn in Sana'a and Saeed Kamali Dehghan, Guardian News and Media [Excerpts]

Manama, Bahrain - Thousands of jubilant protesters surged back into the symbolic heart of Bahrain on Saturday after government security forces withdrew and the monarchy called for peace after two days of violent crackdowns.

Perhaps more alarming for the 200-year-old dynasty is that demonstrators are no longer making a distinction between the ruling family and the government during their calls for reform. “Down, down with the Khalifas,” they shouted in English as they teemed towards Pearl roundabout.

“The regime must fall, they will kill us all,” doctors and nurses chanted in the grounds of the Salmaniya hospital that had been the focal point of the revolt.

“We will not stop at regaining a piece of land,” said Bassema Mousawi, draped in a banner that read in Arabic: Bahrain is me and I am Bahrain. “They cannot buy us off and they cannot appease us. Real change is what we demand. Nothing less.”

Such intransigence was heard from protesters across the region.

It was a remarkable turn after a week of protests that had shifted by the hour between joy and fear, euphoric surges of popular uprising followed by bloody military crackdowns, as the monarchy struggled to calibrate a response to an uprising whose counterparts have toppled other governments in the region.

Bahrain today ordered its military off the square in the capital that was the heart of an uprising against the Gulf nation's rulers, a key demand by the opposition for starting a dialogue in the political crisis.

Some jubilant Bahrainis honked car horns, waved flags and flashed victory signs as the armored vehicles began moving away from Pearl Square.

However prominent opposition leader said the withdrawal of army tanks from Bahrain's capital is not enough to open talks with rulers in the crisis-wracked Gulf nation.

Ibrahim Sharif, head of the Waad Society, is demanding guarantees that protesters can stage rallies without fear of being attacked. Waad is an umbrella group of protest factions.

An Associated Press photographer saw a contingent of riot police fire tear gas at people celebrating the army withdrawal from the square and detain at least 10 people.

It was not immediately clear if the tanks and other armoured vehicles were headed back to military bases, or just pulling back from the square.

According to a government statement, the withdrawal order came from Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, deputy supreme commander of the armed forces and the member of the royal family who has been designated to open a dialogue with protest leaders.

The statement said he had ordered “the withdrawal of all military from the streets of Bahrain with immediate effect.”

“The Bahrain police force will continue to oversee law and order,” the statement said.

Thousands of marchers came under fire Friday as they tried to head toward the square. More than 50 were injured in the second consecutive day of clashes. Protesters took over Pearl Square earlier in the week, but they were driven out in a deadly assault Thursday.

Reports Of More Unrest In Saudi Arabia, Morocco, And Iran

9 February 2011 Tom Finn in Sana'a and Saeed Kamali Dehghan, Guardian News and Media [Excerpts]

In the eastern province of Saudi Arabia, not far from Bahrain, Shia Muslims staged a protest to demand the release of prisoners detained without trial. The protest, reported on Rasid.com, a Shia website, was said to have been silent, with no banners for fear of provoking the authorities.

Those wanting to protest in Iran and Morocco are preparing for demonstrations today to ram home their message to their countries' rulers.

In the North African country, where the regime of King Mohammed VI claims to be more liberal than its regional neighbours, pro-democracy campaigners are urging people to take to the streets in the cities of Casablanca, Rabat, Marrakech and Tangier. "We want a government that represents the people, not the elite," said one of the organisers, Mont Asser Drissi.

In Iran, the opposition has called for fresh street protests to commemorate the deaths of two pro-democracy youths killed during rallies last week. Saane Zhaleh, 26, and Mohammad Mokhtari, 22, died in Tehran last Monday. Today marks a week since they were killed.

"In response to the brutal suppression and killing of the supporters of the Green Movement, we will go out in streets in major squares (of Tehran and other major cities) on Sunday which will mark the seventh day after the death of our martyrs," said the website of former presidential candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi.

“In Libya, Demonstrations On Saturday Continued To Challenge The 41-Year Rule Of Col. Muammar El-Qaddafi”

“Even Traffic Police Have Disappeared From Some Streets”

He said people in Benghazi were desperate. “We need an end to this oppression. It's been 41 years. We've been dreaming of this day. If we go back, the whole area will be wiped out. We know how crazy he is. If we step down, we will be taken out.”

Feb. 19, 2011 Michael Slackman and Jack Healy, The New York Times & 20 February 2011 By Andrew Johnson and Susie Measure, Independent.co.uk [Excerpts]

In Libya, demonstrations on Saturday continued to challenge the 41-year rule of Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi. The country moved to shut off Internet access, mirroring a tactic used by Egyptian authorities to try to thwart an upheaval that eventually led to the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak.

The New York-based group Human Rights Watch said that the death toll in Libya after three days of government crackdowns against protesters had risen to 84. .

Thousands of demonstrators gathered again Saturday at a courthouse in Benghazi, Libya's second-largest city and a fulcrum for protests there.

One activist, Idris Ahmed al-Agha, a Libyan writer reached by telephone, said the crowd had grown to more than 20,000 by mid-day Saturday.

He said protesters planned a funeral march to bury some of those killed in pitched clashes on Friday.

Occasional uprisings have shaken Benghazi and eastern Libya, where Colonel Gadhafi's writ still runs broad but not as deep as in the capital, Tripoli, in the west.

Mr. Agha said security forces had not returned to parts of the city after withdrawing Friday. Even traffic police have disappeared from some streets, leaving residents to direct cars, he said.

The unrest in Benghazi appeared to grow out of the long-simmering repercussions of the killings of hundreds of prisoners in 1996 in the Abu Salim prison in Tripoli. Some of the families have refused government compensation for the deaths of their relatives and have organized occasional demonstrations to press for more information.

Others joined their protest Friday at the courthouse in Benghazi and, by the end of the day, the crowd had grown into the thousands, said Heba Morayef, a researcher for Human Rights Watch.

Clashes were reported in the town of al-Bayda, where dozens of civilians were said to have been killed and police stations came under attack. In all, the death toll was reported to have reached 120.

Several reports said government-recruited mercenaries were behind the worst violence including sniper attacks and the use of heavy machine guns.

A British-based IT consultant, Ahmed Swelim, 26, originally from Benghazi, said relatives told him the situation had reached "critical point". "People are living in fear since he [Mr Gaddafi] brought in African mercenaries. They are dressing as normal people but doing random killings. They will shoot or cut people's hands off.

"The whole city is erupting. People went out to protest peacefully. They want an end to this oppression. The death toll is much higher than reported. There are more than 200 dead. My cousin, a doctor at a main hospital, has seen the bodies. There are more than 1,000 injured."

He said people in Benghazi were desperate. “We need an end to this oppression. It's been 41 years. We've been dreaming of this day. If we go back, the whole area will be wiped out. We know how crazy he is. If we step down, we will be taken out.”

Anti-Dictator Actions Continue In Algeria And Yemen

Feb. 19, 2011 Michael Slackman and Jack Healy, The New York Times [Excerpts]

In Algiers, hundreds of baton-wielding police pushed back demonstrators protesting the government of Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the country's 73-year-old autocratic leader.

Riot police in unyielding lines repeatedly forced the hundreds of demonstrators into smaller groups, shoving some down side streets and pushing others up a main artery until they dispersed, in a working-class district near the city center.

Protesters held up signs reading “Bouteflika, get out,” and chanted, in Arabic and French, “We're sick of this government.”

But they were overwhelmed by the massed police, who beat their plastic shields with thick truncheons as they surged forward against the crowd, which broke up barely two hours after the start of the planned march.

Long lines of armored police trucks surrounded the headquarters of the opposition RCD party nearby, and police were posted at intersections throughout the seaside capital.

Many of the demonstrators said they were angered by the massive police presence at what they insisted was a peaceful march in a country where elections are widely seen as rigged, the military holds real power and antigovernment demonstrations like the one Saturday are prohibited.

“We are simply asking for what the other countries are asking for,” said Mohamed Ditabshish, a retired civil servant. “Independence is not enough. We need liberty as well. We are independent, but not free.”

Unlike some of its regional neighbors, the country had been relatively quiet this past week.

In Yemen, about 1,000 protesters demanding the ouster of President Saleh gathered for another day in Sana, the capital, squaring off against pro-government demonstrators, who held posters of Mr. Saleh

The pro-government group moved closer, and the two sides began hurling bottles, shoes and rocks at each other, even as some antigovernment protesters called out, “Be peaceful!”

The pro-government demonstrators fell back, but then a larger group returned, firing automatic weapons, at first into the air, and then at the antigovernment marchers. One

man fell into the street and was carried away by other demonstrators, his chest covered in blood.

The antigovernment marchers scattered as the pro-Saleh group took control of the street, celebrating their victory by chanting, dancing and waving their jambiyas, Yemen's traditional curved daggers.



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THE BLOODSHED**

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