

Radical Republicans' goal is to destroy all unions

To the Editor:

Working people in Wisconsin have staged a rebellion against a brutal attack on the rights of workers by a governor and Legislature dominated by sociopathic Republicans. These plutocrats want to destroy collective bargaining for all public employees and turn Wisconsin into a right-to-work state for private employees.

Gary Huck and I both grew up in Wisconsin. Gary was raised in Racine and I grew up in Manitowoc. Both towns are on the shores of Lake Michigan and both towns were manufacturing centers. Racine and Manitowoc were devastated by the Reagan recession of the 1980s and are still part of the Rust Belt.

I've lived in Madison since 1971 when I came here to finish college.

Wisconsin was the birthplace of Fightin' Bob LaFollette, the founder of the Wisconsin progressive movement. Progressivism merged into the New Deal, and Wisconsin was influential in the creation of laws and culture that respected working people. This is from the Wisconsin Historical Society: "Wisconsin's workers and reformers made significant contributions to the history of labor in the United States, helping to enact legislation such as workers' com-

pensation and unemployment insurance that served as models for similar laws in other states. The study of labor history itself also began in Wisconsin when University of Wisconsin economist John R. Commons set out to document the history of work and labor in America at the turn of the 20th century. Commons and his associates also joined labor leaders, the business community, and politicians to bring about some of Wisconsin's groundbreaking social policies."

Wisconsin was also the birthplace of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), formed in 1932. They created what would later become Wisconsin State Employees Union/Council 24.

The progressive pro-labor culture dominated the state until the dismal 1950s when Joe McCarthy was elected and launched the McCarthy era of brutal repression of working people.

We are now experiencing another period of repression. The workers of Wisconsin know their history and know what is at stake. Again, robber barons are trying to destroy our traditions and the history that our forebears fought and died for. We are determined to preserve our proud history and fight against the forces of decay.

In the election of 2008 we thought that change was coming. But change never comes from the top down. It comes from the bottom up.

Allow me to use a football metaphor. The Green Bay Packers won this year's Super Bowl. The Packers, the smallest market city in the NFL, are named after a meat packing plant in Green Bay. They are not owned by a plutocrat, they are a non-profit owned by the community. To Wisconsin, Packer football is as much a part of our tradition as the labor movement. In the Super Bowl, the team, devastated by injuries all season, lost two of their top players to injury in the first half. The game went back and forth, and in the fourth quarter the Packers found themselves in trouble. Kevin

Greene, outside linebackers coach, pulled linebacker Clay Matthews aside and told him that the time had come to take control of the game. "It is time!" He said. Matthews helped cause a fumble that led to victory.

For those of us who believe in the dignity of workers, and believe in fighting for the least among us, IT IS TIME. Wisconsin workers are up to the challenge.

Mike Konopacki
AFT & IWW
Madison, Wisconsin

(Editor's Note: Mike Konopacki is a labor cartoonist and author whose cartoons appear regularly in the Northwest Labor Press.)

More moderate attitude could solve problems in Wisconsin, elsewhere

To The Editor:

The Wisconsin labor bill being pushed by the governor is just plain wrong. It will do absolutely nothing significant towards reducing Wisconsin's deficit ... but it will reduce the workforce by a great amount because they will leave the state.

I won't go there. I won't work for the \$2-a-day, six days a week, 1920s meat-grinder attitude; while corporate hoards all the profits from their impoverished workforce. A fair and honest day's wage for a fair and honest day's work — nobody loses. Everyone has a good (reasonable) living and no one (corporate or labor) gets screwed.

Thanks to the Italian mob that infiltrated the unions back east and began extortion among its members, a bad name has been directed towards all of

labor.

I am glad to be associated with a union that has no such affiliations and has the brass (and the strength) to stand for its worker membership and its signatory corporate members. Corporate gets a well-trained, competent workforce; labor gets a decent wage and reasonable benefits. Everyone benefits.

I have worked both sides, and was treated well by only one nonunion company and satisfactorily by another. All the others, I was left on my own and got the short end for all my work. I finally moved and joined my local union.

The real problem is that Wisconsin, evidently like California, has been binging upon an unchecked, extremely liberal, wild spending spree. Now they are whining, pointing errant fingers because the irresponsible spending has caught up to them, hastened by a rotten economy that is in a full-blown deep recession that it is hard to distinguish from the 1930s Depression.

Liberalist "left" and tight-wad "right" are not the ideal stance. Rather, a moderate "liberal/conservative" attitude is the solution. All sides will then listen and discuss. All sides will then exercise common sense and integrity. All sides will know when a circumstance requires a liberal solution or a more conservative one to keep the budget in check, as well as keep the citizens (who ultimately pay the bills) protected by reasonable law(s).

It is well past time for America to wake up, turn on their individual brains, and ignore the rhetorical hype so frequently spewed by the irresponsible yellow journalism of all the media.

Be observant of your governmental affairs and, if necessary, remove the greedy, self-gratifying, even corrupt leaders of federal, state, and local areas (referring categorically, not specifically).

Steve Dietrich
IBEW 48
Gresham

OPEN FORUM

Congress should rebate their Social Security rebates

To the Editor:

When President Obama invited the Republican Congressional leadership to the White House recently, some of the results were: continuation of the Bush tax cuts for all, cut the inheritance tax, and a one-year rebate of 2 percent of the Social Security contributions to every wage-earner who contributes to that fund — up to \$106,000 of their earnings.

The net effect of this last issue is that all members of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives will, because their base pay is \$174,000 annually, receive the maximum rate of \$2,120.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, "the champion of Social Security," was quoted as saying to a group of progressive activists after listening to their plans, "You have some very good plans, now make me do them!"

I urge progressives to call, write, e-mail or fax their members of Congress and ask that they, "REBATE THE REBATE," and send their \$2,120 to their respective state's food bank or other social relief agency.

Ben Fain, Jr.
ATU Local 757 Retiree
Portland

There's still time to register for MDA Labor Bowl

The 22nd Annual Labor Bowl Challenge to benefit the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) will be held Sunday, March 13, at Hollywood Bowl, 4030 NE Halsey St., Portland.

Thirty lanes have been reserved. To date, 23 teams from eight union locals have registered to bowl, so there is room for seven more teams. The goal is to have 18 unions represented.

Money is raised by pledges and a silent auction. Since its inception, Portland-area labor unions have collected \$311,828.75 for MDA. Money goes to buy wheelchairs and braces for children, as well as research and summer camps.

Registration starts at noon, with bowling under way at 1 p.m.

For more information, call Jim Cook, president of Letter Carriers Branch 82, at 503-493-5903. To donate items to the auction, call Debbie Burbank at 971-404-5384.

IN MEMORIAM

JOHN P. CRANSTON, a retired secretary-treasurer of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Local 364, died of lung cancer at home with his family Feb. 13, 2011. He was 82.

Born Feb. 7, 1929 in Fermanagh County, Northern Ireland, Cranston moved to New York as a teenager, where he worked various jobs. He relocated to Washington to live with his aunt and uncle. In the Pacific Northwest, he entered a nursing program and became a licensed practical nurse.

Cranston enlisted in the Army in 1951, serving as a medic during the Korean War.



On return, he joined Local 364 working at Nabisco and Frito-Lay. He eventually was elected secretary-treasurer of the union. He retired from that post in the spring of 1990.

Once retired, Cranston enjoyed riding his John Deere tractor to mow the grass and spend time outside. His other hobbies were woodworking in his shop and reading.

He is survived by his wife Angeline; two daughters, Margaret Harms and Shaun Mettler; and three grandchildren.

A funeral mass was held at St. Philips Catholic Church in Woodland, Washington on Feb. 17.

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