

...Wisconsin battle is not about the budget

(From Page 10)

people rally in Madison, the largest protests there since the Vietnam War. The message, "We are all Wisconsin" goes nationwide as an estimated 50,000 people take part in solidarity rallies in 66 cities across the country — including all 50 state capitals. [See Page 1 for details of the Portland and Salem rallies.]

Sunday, Feb. 27: Dozens of priests, rabbis, and ministers join the capitol

Danner Boot lays off 90

Danner Boots laid off 90 employees — 70 last week, and 20 at the end of January, after a contract to manufacture combat hiker boots for the U.S. military was not renewed.

Most of those let go were members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555, although some came from the ranks of management.

Workers met with union leaders, management, and a rapid response team from Labor's Community Service Agency Feb. 25 to get assistance dealing with the job loss.

Last year, Danner, whose parent company is LaCrosse Footwear, Inc., employed roughly 210 union workers at its facility on Airport Way in Northeast Portland. It is now down to 130.

protests, pledging to risk arrest if the building is closed to the public. Disregarding an announcement that the building is closed, 600 spend the night. In Washington, D.C., hundreds of unionists march outside the hotel where Walker is expected to chair a panel at the National Governors Association meeting; he is a no-show.

Monday, Feb. 28: Walker and Senate Republicans direct that the capitol's windows be welded shut to prevent supporters from passing food to demonstrators inside.

When this issue went to press, the protests continued in Madison. State Senate Democrats remained outside Wisconsin. The fate of Walker's bill is still uncertain. But several conclusions have emerged as the Wisconsin struggle developed.

Number one: The Wisconsin battle is not about a state budget crisis. Other governors are asking public sector unions for economic concessions without trying to eliminate bargaining rights. The only parts of Walker's bill that have an immediate budget impact are its requirements that public employees' salaries be cut in order to increase their contribution to pension and health care. Walker says he has to take away bargaining rights because unions won't agree to those concessions, but AFSCME and other unions have since said they would accept those changes. Walker



A crowd estimated at 500 rallied at Directors Park in downtown Portland Feb. 25 objecting to Gov. Scott Walker's plan to cut collective bargaining rights and benefits for public workers in Wisconsin.

has shown no willingness to meet with them, or to accept the concession.

What happens in Wisconsin will have not just practical but also symbolic importance. Wisconsin was the first state to give public workers the

right to collective bargaining. Madison is the birthplace of AFSCME, the largest union of state employees. Van Jones, writing in the Huffington Post, said the idealism and fighting spirit on display in America's heartland is a rare, second chance for the movement

for "hope and change."

Both sides agree that if Walker wins passage of the bill, other governors will be emboldened to try it. The bill's defeat, on the other hand, could give heart to other workers' struggles for justice around the country.

Above all, the strategy of Walker and his backers is to divide American workers and redirect their anger away from the true culprits responsible for their economic distress. Walker refers to public employees as the "haves" and private sector employees as the "have nots." His bill exempts police and firefighters from the union busting. Parents are to be turned against teachers, workers turned against their unions, private sector workers against public sector workers, even public sector workers from other public sector workers.

It follows that the way to defeat the Walker bill and others of its kind is for workers and people from all walks of life to unify, and to direct their attention to the real perpetrators of the crisis.

The National AFL-CIO is calling on union members to connect to the campaign at www.aflcio.org. The Wisconsin AFL-CIO has set up a Worker Defense Fund; contributions can be made online at www.wisafclio.org.



ATU's 'dogged' determination

Retired ATU Local 757 member Al Thomas pets Jersey during an informational picket in downtown Portland Feb. 23 prior to a TriMet board of directors meeting. Also pictured are Jersey's owner, Jeff Hunt, and TriMet mechanic Andy Heesacker. Transit workers and their allies have been picketing board meetings for several months now trying to persuade the governor-appointed to direct TriMet General Manager Neil McFarlane to rescind his unilateral implementation of higher health insurance co-payments. The union says those are mandatory subjects of collective bargaining and thus his action is illegal. State law prohibits transit workers from striking. Contract disputes are settled by binding arbitration. ATU has filed two unfair labor practice complaints, which won't be heard until mid-May. Binding arbitration won't take place until the ULPs are settled. "As I have said time and time again, we are ready to drop the ULPs and move immediately to binding arbitration once TriMet rescinds its unlawful implementation," said ATU Local 757 President Jon Hunt. TriMet has yet to do so.

INDEPENDENT RETIREMENT LIVING

Westmoreland's Union Manor

6404 SE 23rd Ave.
Portland 97202
503-233-5671

Marshall Union Manor

2020 NW Northrup
Portland 97209
503-225-0677

Manors Make the Difference

- Studio and One-Bedroom Apartments
- Affordable Rent includes Utilities (EXCEPT PHONE AND CABLE)
- Planned Events, Clubs, and Activities
- Ideal Locations offer easy access to Bus Lines, Shopping, and Entertainment
- No Costly Buy-In or Application Fees
- Federal Rent Subsidies Available (MUST QUALIFY)



MARSHALL UNION MANOR

Opened in January of 1974



LABOR LEADERS IN THE
PORTLAND BUILDING TRADE
MOVEMENT ORGANIZED THE
UNION LABOR RETIREMENT

ASSOCIATION IN 1962, WITH THE SOLE PURPOSE
OF PROVIDING HOUSING FOR THE ELDERLY.

"We believe that everyone earns the right to retire, free from pressures of earlier years."



Kirkland Union Plaza
1414 Kauffman Ave.
Vancouver 98660
360-694-4314

Kirkland Union Manors
3530 SE 84th Ave.
Portland 97266
503-777-8101

WWW.THEUNIONMANORS.ORG
TDD 503-771-0912