

could divide the public sector against the private sector; (Gov.) Scott Walker thought he could cut a deal with the police and the firefighters; they are trying to divide union leaders and union members; but we discovered our solidarity, our secret weapon, our bedrock.”

“Scott Walker said in Wisconsin they can’t afford collective bargaining; it’s too expensive, it’s too inefficient, it takes too much time. Sisters and brothers, I submit to you that that’s the language of the autocrat and tyrant. That’s what we hear from dictators in the Middle East,” said Bussel.

Bussel provided an example of why unions matter: “When AFSCME and SEIU organized childcare and homecare workers we found that collective bargaining transforms people’s lives: They got health insurance, worker’s compensation, better pay; but they also got something that was even more important: dignity, respect, and a voice. That’s what we’re defending. Are we ready to educate, agitate and organize?”

Mohammad Jamali of the UO told the crowd, “I’m half American, half Tunisian, and we have started a cascade of revolution and freedom, so this is a great year for me. I want to relay a message from Wisconsin that is vibrating all over America that corporations have awaked a sleeping giant called the middle class and working people and their message is: We have had it. We have had it. This is a country of one person, one vote, and guess what? There’s a lot more of us than there is of them.”

Karen Williams works at DEQ, where the agency’s budget is under attack. “My job is to restore rivers so they are healthy for people to swim in and safe for fish,” she said to cheers from the crowd. “I am honored to have a job where I can come to work in the morning and feel like I can help make the world a better place to live in.”

Williams voiced her concerns about attitudes she has heard: “There are some out there who would have us believe that we can’t have a healthy environment and economic progress, that they are mutually exclusive. In fact, scientifically sound collaborative environmental regulation is an integral part of a growing economy. Environmental

protection saves tens of millions of dollars in public health costs. Our battle, more than ever, is to win the hearts and minds of people across the country.”

State Rep. Phil Barnhart spoke next and said, “Wisconsin has the capacity to be a very good thing for us, because it wakes us up. It shows us what can happen when we sleep. The Koch brothers and their ilk do not sleep. They work hard to figure out how they can get all of your money, not just some of it.”

Billy Barker works for Albertina Kerr Centers, which provides services to children, adults and families with emotional or mental health challenges. He told about the time when Albertina Kerr was taken over by a big corporation and he was promoted to management. He attended

meetings about how to bust unions. “They hired a guy who drove a \$200,000 Mercedes and was a personal friend of the Bush family, who was paid somewhere between \$75,000 and \$80,000 to bust the union.” Barker asked for his lower-level job back. “And do you know why I wanted to do that?” he yelled. “Because I wanted to join the union.” He went to work organizing and said, “I looked that union-busting lawyer in the eye and after we won every single point of our contract in federal mediation he told me that had never happened to him before. We work we win.”

The crowd joined in, chanting, “We work, we win.”

Tom Chamberlain is a firefighter and president of Oregon AFL-CIO. “Let’s say what’s really going on in the country,” he

said. “We’re engaged in class warfare ... In Wisconsin there was no financial crisis until Scott Walker started paying back his corporate cronies. Those rich folks who have 80 percent of the wealth in this country look at the world differently, through a prism of me, and we look at the world through the prism of us. ... What Mr. Walker did was make it cool to be union. I’m proud to say to you: I am union. I am union.” More chanting.

Following the rally, the crowd marched off to the state offices on 7th Avenue to support AFSCME and SEIU members in their current contract bargaining talks. Along the way the marchers chanted a call and refrain: “Tell me what democracy looks like. This is what democracy looks like.” **EW**

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A GUIDE TO THE ACRONYMS

- AFSCME is the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. Oregon AFSCME held its biennial convention in Eugene March 11-13 with 200 delegates, staff and guests. AFSCME was founded in Wisconsin in 1936 and has about 1.4 million members. AFSCME is the largest union affiliated with the AFL-CIO, the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations, which has roots going back to 1886.

- SEIU is the Service Employees International Union and represents about 1.8 million health and home care workers, state and college workers, local government employees, service workers and nonprofit employees in the U.S. and Canada. Members can be spotted at rallies wearing dark purple shirts.