

# If He Will Not Fight, Then We Had Better Pull

The fight over the increase in the debt ceiling should have taught us a few lessons. These include that there is a wing of the Republican Party—the Tea Party faction—that is quite prepared to fly their planes into the towers of government in order to make their point. They have no interest in compromise and are doing all that they can to defend the wealthy elite that dominates this country, despite their rhetoric about looking out for the common person.

There is something else that we have to face. President Obama accepted the basic Republican framework for looking at the economic crisis in which we find ourselves. Thus, instead of focusing on jobs, Obama began, some months ago, to talk more and more about national debt and budget deficits. At a point when the government should be putting more resources into the production of jobs as a way of priming the economic pump, President Obama called for shared sacrifice in the need to cut the debt. This was compounded by his willingness to concede most of the



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Bill Fletcher Jr.

demands of the Republicans as the price for gaining the rise in the debt ceiling. The irony, of course, is that the Republican shenanigans, and the instability that this displayed, contributed to the S&P

without a clear debt ceiling increase from Congress that he would use the Constitution's 14th Amendment to increase it unilaterally, he blinked, and sadly, the Republicans knew well in advance that he would.

Leaving aside your personal feelings about President Obama one thing becomes perfectly clear. There is no way that we can rely on him to defend the social safety net that was won in the 20th century, nor is there any way that we can assume that he 'gets' the centrality of the need for jobs in order to get us out of the econom-

we have to recognize is that if we want any action out of the President, the everyday person will need to be the ones that brings this about.

How? We will have to make more noise than the Tea Party element. We will need to have protests, not just in Washington, D.C., but throughout the USA. The unemployed need to assemble in state capitals and insist that they will not be allowed to starve. Workers facing layoffs and demands for concessions must receive support from the rest of us so that they are not standing alone. And, yes, in 2012, we must run and support candidates that have a demonstrated record of being on the side of working people and the poor. We do not need those who will talk out of both sides of their mouths and offer us heart-warming speeches. We need politicians who are with us in the trenches, fighting the good fight. The decisions about our economy will be made both in Washington and in corporate board rooms. If working people do not make their voices heard and flex their muscles—in the streets and in the election booths—just guess who will come out on top?



President Obama in Cannon Falls, Minn.

Bill Fletcher, Jr. is a Senior Scholar with the Institute for Policy Studies, the immediate past president of TransAfrica Forum, and the co-author of "Solidarity Divided." He can be reached at papaq54@hotmail.com.

Instead of the President standing firm in defense of our hard-won social benefits and insisting that without a clear debt ceiling increase from Congress that he would use the Constitution's 14th Amendment to increase it unilaterally, he blinked, and sadly, the Republicans knew well in advance that he would

downgrade and the subsequent, renewed financial crisis. So, instead of the President standing firm in defense of our hard-won social benefits and insisting that

ic crisis. Whether this is due to his ties with Wall Street, his belief system, or his poor negotiating skills is actually irrelevant. What

# Getting Children Ready For School

From new backpacks to sharp pencils, parents across the country are doing their best to cross the items off their children's back-to-school checklists. They want to be sure that when the first day of school comes, their children will have everything they need to be ready to start and ready to learn. But as a country we're failing to do the same thing and in the current budget debate, some of our leaders are threatening to do just the opposite. Instead of budgeting our limited resources wisely so we'll be able to stock up on the things we know our children need, some shrill, ideologically driven leaders are hijacking the political process and trying to grab money out of our children's small piggy-banks and spend it on more gift cards for big corporations and billionaires. No new tax pledges have been signed by 277 members of Congress throwing the entire weight of debt reduction on children, our poorest Americans, the homeless, jobless, helpless, and a middle class treading water and trying to stay afloat.

We know that between birth and age five, children learn social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive skills that set the foundation for academic success. Factors including poverty and the "lottery of geography" create barriers to



CHILD WATCH

Marian Wright Edelman

young children's healthy development. Cognitive gaps emerge between children from families with low and higher incomes as early as nine months, and more often than not, these children are unable to catch up by the time they

still out of reach for many families. Although child care is a necessity for many families with working parents, the annual cost of center-based child care for a four-year-old is more than the annual in-state tuition at a public four-year college in 33 states and the District of Columbia. In 18 states, a family must have an income below 175 percent of the poverty level (below \$32,043 for a family of four) to receive a public child care subsidy. Only 13.8 percent of three-year-olds and 38.9 percent of four-year-olds were in state-funded pre-kindergarten programs, Head Start, or early inter-

in dire straits. Many public school students, kindergarten through 12th grade, are struggling; children of color and poor children struggle most. More than 60 percent of all fourth, eighth, and 12th grade public school students and nearly 80 percent or more of Black and Hispanic public school students in the same grades are reading or doing math below grade level. The U.S. ranks 24th among 30 developed countries on overall educational achievement for 15-year-olds, and in a study of education systems in 60 countries, we ranked 31st in math achievement and 23rd in science achievement

states spend on average more than three times as much per prisoner as per public school pupil. I can't think of a dumber investment policy, one that hurts countless children and families every day.

It's clear we're not getting our children what they need to be ready for and to succeed in school and to learn all that we need them to know in order to keep our workforce, military, and country strong in the future. It's time for every voter to tell those shrill partisan and ideologically driven extremists that America's children are not to be sacrificial lambs on the altar of their destructive agendas. If we saw parents spending money to buy themselves a private jet but sending their child to school unprepared, hungry, and empty-handed, we would be shocked and furious at how misguided their priorities were. Why should any of our nation's leaders be allowed to make the same choice?

Cognitive gaps emerge between children from families with low and higher incomes as early as nine months, and more often than not, these children are unable to catch up by the time they enter kindergarten

enter kindergarten. The resulting achievement gap increases over time and often propels children into the cradle to prison pipeline—especially if they are poor children of color.

Quality child care and early childhood educational experiences are crucial to giving children a sound start in life—but they are

vention/special education in 2008-2009 and only 10 states require all schools districts to offer full day kindergarten to get children ready for school.

Without positive early childhood experiences, it is easy for children to fall behind in school and American education, which used to be the envy of the world, is

for 15-year-olds. Too often children fall behind in school and drop out, increasing their risk of entering the cradle to prison pipeline. Staying in school and receiving a quality education are the best deterrents to juvenile delinquency and the surest route towards responsible, productive adulthood. Yet almost half of our

Marian Wright Edelman is a lifelong advocate for disadvantaged Americans and is the President of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF). Under her leadership, CDF has become the nation's strongest voice for children and families.

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