


[Sitemap](#)
[Join e-list](#)
[Home](#)
[Solidarity](#)
[WL Magazine](#)

# Workers' Liberty

For international working class solidarity and socialism

[Home](#)

## US budget cuts: the class war is back

Submitted on 4 August, 2011 - 10:34 [USA/Canada](#) [Solidarity 213, 3 August 2011](#)



On Monday 1 August Democrat and Republican members in the US House of Representatives voted through a cuts package of more than \$2 trillion over the next 10 years. The deal ended weeks of wrangling that could have resulted in the US defaulting on its debts.

But these huge cuts at the state level follow cuts, and attacks on unions at a federal level. The following editorial\* from the July-August edition of *Against the Current*, the journal of US socialist group Solidarity, describes the political lines of those attacks.

The full frontal assault on public workers and their unions in one state after another — stripping collective bargaining rights and dues checkoff, slashing wages and pensions and health benefits, abolishing seniority and tenure for teachers, mandating yearly decertification votes, threatening jail terms for strikers — is as massive and instantaneous as it was unexpected by the labor bureaucracy and many union members. To say “the class war is back” is an understatement.

In our home state of Michigan alone, 40 anti-labor laws have been enacted or are pending. Those already passed through the Republican-dominated legislature and signed by governor Rick “smart nerd” Snyder include “Emergency Manager” statutes giving state-appointed managers license to eliminate union contracts and even dissolve the elected governing bodies of financially distressed school districts and entire municipalities.

The Republicans on the whole serve a single master — corporate capital.

In some cases, as in the notorious case of Wisconsin governor Walker, they even work directly for billionaire fractions of the ruling class like the infamous Koch brothers. Union-busting legislation is literally drawn up in the offices of rightwing think tanks funded by these super-rich sponsors.

The [Democrats’] overriding loyalty is to corporate capital, especially its largest donors from Wall Street and the hedge funds — and to the capitalist system. The higher up the party leadership, the stronger the discipline imposed by capital.

Yet the Democrats can succeed only by delivering benefits to their

- [About us/ contact/ resources/ books/ pamphlets](#)
- [Join e-list](#)
- [Donate/ make a payment](#)
- [Events](#)
- [All recent posts](#)

**Solidarity**  
NEWSPAPER



[Donate](#)

### Featured Topics

- [Fighting the cuts](#)
- [Feminism](#)
- [Israel/Palestine](#)
- [Rail unions/ Tubeworker](#)
- [AWL conference 2010](#)

**Search**

 

**User login**

Username: \*

**Password: \*** Remember me**Log in**

- [Create new account](#)
- [Request new password](#)

**Debate**

- [Lenin on press freedom, November 1917 \(5\)](#)
- [Marxism 2011: thoughts on a disunited left \(3\)](#)
- [Socialist Party's working-class base \(37\)](#)
- [Join the fight for solidarity! \(25\)](#)
- [After the Cloynes Report: Savage Violence in Irish Schools: Why Did People Stand For It? \(3\)](#)

AWL is an organisation fighting as part of the labour movement for a socialist alternative to both capitalism and Stalinism, based on common ownership and democracy.

**Join the debate!**

We welcome debate and encourage free discussion. Log in

key voting base — labor, the African-American and other communities of color, women seeking gender equality and reproductive rights.

There are occasions... when Democrats at lower levels act honorably, especially in response to the pressure of mass movements — and the fact that the destruction of public sector unions threatens the party's funding base. The 14 Wisconsin state Senate Democrats who left the state, blocking the quorum necessary to pass Governor Walker's union-smashing law, showed real courage and fighting spirit.

The record of the Democrats in power, however, is appalling and demoralising to their support base. But the biggest lessons about politics [under Obama], of course, are EFCA — the Employee Free Choice Act, dumped in an unmarked grave without even a decent burial — and Health Care Reform.

In a period of capitalist decline and crisis — as opposed to the boom times of growth and prosperity — it's really true that "you can't serve two masters" with fundamentally opposed class interests, and so this is a game that Democrats will usually lose. But movements that attach themselves to the Democrats at such a time will always lose.

Even while the intensity and pure viciousness of the rightwing assault on labor creates almost unbearable pressures to back the Democrats as "the only alternative," the real-life need for independent politics is greater than ever.

The game-of-chicken over a government shutdown around the federal budget ended, for the moment, with a highly praised "bipartisan compromise" that hacks away billions from medical programs for children and the poor — those who need them most. It's a taste of what's to come in the next war over raising the federal debt ceiling.

Backed by ideological centers like the Peterson Institute and Cato Institute, the right wing is preparing a frontal assault on Social Security, on the pretext that "the next generation can't afford the burden of Baby Boom retirees," that "only the truly poor really need Social Security" and all the rest of it.

Obama and the Democrats... are getting ready to offer "reforms" that will further weaken working people's confidence that Social Security will be there for them in the long run.

Social Security is neither in "crisis" nor the cause of the deficit. It has produced consistent surpluses for decades, which are used to subsidise US capitalism's assorted wars, tax reductions for corporations and the rich, etc.

Far from a "failed government program," it is the most successful one ever, and can be funded permanently by lifting the artificial ceiling on incomes taxed to finance it — which is precisely why it's now in the reactionaries' crosshairs.

The attack on Social Security is a quite deliberate, frontal assault on the notion that society's members bear any kind of collective, organised responsibility for each other. "Your Health Care, Your Problem" was a sign seen at Tea Party rallies trashing the health care reform. It's an ideology with some appeal to relatively

with a user name, and you can add comments to the debates on this site. We operate no political censorship, but we reserve the usual editorial right to delete or cut comments which are racist or sexist; advertising; abusive; excessive in volume; or otherwise inappropriate.

### AWL info

- [AWL info](#)
- [AWL members' web-forums](#)

### Navigation

- [Recent posts](#)
- [weblinks](#)

better-off, mostly white working people — until the attack directly hits them.

The right wing offensive faces contradictions, however. The Republican sweep of the House of Representatives in November, 2010 occurred before the party was quite “ready for prime time.” The Tea Party fringe, with its insistence on lunatic cuts that even the Republican leadership knows would be ruinous, presents a challenge to party discipline. Some of these same elements’ fanatical commitment to cutting things like Planned Parenthood and public broadcasting... may generate a big public backlash.

The bigger contradiction is that the savagery of the state-level assaults on public sector workers has stirred up, at long last, a massive labor response.

The fact is that the new [anti-union] laws are now on state statute books, aside from the legal challenge in Wisconsin over the blatant way the Republicans rammed it through.

There are recall initiatives in Wisconsin and perhaps elsewhere against some of these legislators, and that’s entirely to the good. It’s still to be seen whether these recall drives can retain their momentum and unseat the reactionaries — and if they do, whether the next set of elected politicians will aggressively repeal the union-busting laws or set about “negotiating” over them.

This attack demands radical, new independent politics, not a recycling of the same old lesser-evil corporate politics.

Today’s battle isn’t one that the unions can win on their own, especially in the shriveled state of organised labour. A new, massive worker-led popular movement is the need of the hour.

Saving public education, for example, requires deeply rooted teacher-parent-community alliances; it can’t be done by the teacher unions alone.

Where public employees’ strikes are met with firings and jail sentences, the entire labor movement and communities will need to rally behind them.

The stark reality is that the present political and legal climate — and the state of unions themselves in both public and private sectors — leaves workers with few effective tools to defeat the rightwing assault. New tools for resistance will have to be creatively forged in the midst of struggle itself, always a difficult problem

Millions of people, including many who actually voted for these Republican governors, now see through the lying propaganda of the fanatical privateers and budget-slashing “free-market” fundamentalists.

It’s not just that class war is back — it’s that more and more people can see and feel it.

\*Abridged. Full text [www.solidarity-us.org](http://www.solidarity-us.org).

» [Login](#) or [register](#) to post comments [Printer-friendly version](#)