

Calling all Workers & Retirees

Workers, retirees, unionists, and activists of all stripes and sizes are responding to calls to protest at state capitals in Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan, and elsewhere.

In Michigan, where I live, Governor Snyder wants to raise taxes on workers, poor people, and retirees so he can give businesses a tax break of \$1.8 billion dollars. This is the Republican version of welfare. Tax the poor and give to the prosperous. Or, from each according to his humility (poor, retired, working), to each according to his greed.

This transfer of wealth from one group to another would be labeled class warfare by Republican pundits, but since the shift is from the less affluent to the most affluent, it's deemed justice—wise and benign governance. In their book, only corporations and wealthy investors deserve government support. Like my brother, Steve Shotwell, said, in regard to the conservative minds of our times, "Corporations have all the rights and privileges of individuals, but individuals don't have the right to organize."

When individuals organize to support their rights and bargain collectively, Republicans call it communism, socialism, or fascism because they don't know the difference and clarity is not their selling point. But when corporations organize to promote their interests, and screw the rest, they call it the American Way. Apparently, in their eyes, the American Way is the Corporate State.

Snyder claims tax cuts for business will create jobs. But since consumers will be paying more in taxes and making less at work, or from their pensions, they won't have as much to spend with businesses in Michigan.

Businesses won't hire until there is more demand. Snyder is killing demand with his tax-and-subsidize-business plan. Besides, we've seen how many jobs Bush's tax cuts created. The only job category that expanded under the Bush tax cut plan was debt collectors and repo-men.

But that's not all. Diane Feeley reports: There are a series of Emergency Manager bills coming up in the State House that would give the State Treasurer general powers to take over villages, townships, cities, counties, and school districts that are considered "financially distressed." [75 people have already been trained as Emergency Financial Managers and 100 more in the pipeline.] This bill would allow the EMFs to break union contracts. Already four Michigan cities—Benton Harbor, Pontiac, Ecorse, and Highland Park—have EMFs, plus the Detroit public school system. But this piece of legislation EXPANDS what an EMF can do: not just negotiate union contracts, but terminate them. You can see where strategy this leads. All working people will be impounded into servility.

No one likes to pay higher taxes. But I would not object to higher taxes IF the extra revenue went to support schools and public service workers like police, firefighters, teachers, social workers, sanitation, street repair, and so on and so on. Anything paid to workers comes right back to the community because workers spend their money in the local economy. Handouts to businesses in the form of tax cuts does not stimulate demand. We have seen too many companies accept tax abatements and then not fulfill their promise to create jobs. Instead, they pocket the tax break and relocate to Mexico or China or a PO Box in Bermuda.

Business adds jobs when demand goes up, not when taxes go down.

If a business decides to relocate or start up in Michigan solely because of cheap taxes, the business plan isn't viable in the first place. We want to attract businesses which approve of our education system, our infrastructure, our clean aspiring cities, competent medical care, low crime rate, and high capacity for inclusiveness, consensus, and expansion. These are attractions that require investment in our citizens and in public service. We don't want businesses that are attracted by our Third World living standards.

Republicans, on the other hand, want to roll back workers' rights and benefits to Depression Era standards. I am not willing to pave the road to poverty for my grandchildren with mouth watering concessions to multimillionaires like Limbaugh, Palin, Beck, and blah-greedy-blah-greedy-blah.

But don't mistake my Republican bashing for support for tail wagging Democrats and their union lackeys who want to preserve Collective Begging for old times sake. Collective Begging and democratic penance will not save workers from making all the sacrifices and paying for all the crimes and extravagances of the investor class. The Democrats are eager to please their corporate financiers. And union leaders have never shown a willingness to confront the gorging elephant in the middle of the US budget—the Pentagon. Stop funding war and the Debt Monster will fall faster than a propped up military regime when it runs out of bullets.

We know damn well where all the money went—into the pockets of war racketeers, contractors, and mercenaries. Bring our soldiers home. We need them to protect US citizens from the enemies inside the gates of our State Capitals.

sos, Gregg Shotwell