



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on March 12, 2011

Socialists, Unions Plotting Illegal Strike in Wisconsin

Numerous [media reports](#) said protesters swarming the Capitol repeatedly chanted the phrase “general strike.” The rallying cry was started by members of Socialist Alternative, [according](#) to the group itself. The organization also distributed [literature](#) advocating the illegal move to “thousands” of demonstrators in Madison, it said..



“We need to immediately set the date and prepare for a one-day public sector strike as both a warning shot to [Gov. Scott] Walker and a launching pad to further action,” the [flier stated](#). “There are more and more calls for a general strike because people correctly see the need for bolder action. We must rapidly act to make these calls a reality.”

The socialist group urged government workers to start off by shutting down the state for one day with public-sector strikes and “mass mobilizations” of workers and youth “who are prepared to fight.” But that would only be the first step. “We must be fully prepared to carry out a series of general strikes, that also involve the private sector, and other actions until Walker backs down.”

The socialist leaflet acknowledged that the strike would not be legal. However, it also claimed that, “we can’t allow legality to keep our movement in a straightjacket.” Citing Martin Luther King, the flier continued its exhortation to lawlessness. “The laws preventing us from taking strike action are unjust, and we must break them.”

Among the actions the socialists called for: “Neighboring states to send caravans of activists to flood Wisconsin with hundreds of thousands if not millions of workers to stop this attack.... Tax the super-rich and big corporations.... No concessions! No Cuts! Kill the whole bill!... Working people of Wisconsin and the U.S. unite and fight for a working people’s party and a democratic socialist society!”

Even more shockingly, at least several unions and labor bosses have already announced their support for a general strike. For example, the 45,000-member South Central Federation of Labor [announced](#) that it was backing the idea last month, before the reform measure had even been approved.

“As the labor movement moves to address this naked class war waged upon us, we know we have already accomplished much, setting an example to the nation and the world for how to fight for our rights and for our children’s futures. It appears we have much more to do,” [said](#) SCFL President Jim Cavanaugh after a leadership meeting.

Union delegates [voted unanimously](#) to endorse the general strike and oppose all provisions of the [budget-repair bill](#). But before officially kicking off the illegal move, they are waging an “education” campaign along with other, [larger labor federations](#) to drum up support for the lawlessness.

Some public-safety union bosses are on board as well. Asked about a general strike, Joe Conway, the president of Madison’s firefighter union, responded [on camera](#) that he was in “total agreement” with



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the idea. "We should start walking out tomorrow, the next day — see how long they can last," he said in an interview after the [state Senate approved the reforms](#) on March 9.

When the interviewer asked again, Conway said that yes, even firefighters should go on strike. "It's time that these people — the Republicans — are held accountable for what they're doing. This isn't just a Wisconsin thing, this is a nationwide movement," he claimed, referencing socialist filmmaker Michael Moore and advocating statewide and national strikes.

The Industrial Workers of the World union is [also urging workers to strike](#), even if their local unions advise against it. "A general strike against Walker would begin the process of rebuilding a strong labor movement in the United States," it said on its website. "Since the US plays such an important role in the global economy and world political system, this could also invigorate workers' struggles around the planet. To make it happen will require participation from many people across industries, across unions, and across the country."

Socialist columnists encouraged government-employee lawlessness as well. "Workers are ready to move now in Wisconsin and a general strike is the best tactic to respond to Walker's assault on democratic rights," [wrote](#) Billy Wharton in *Dissident Voice*, a publication that styles itself "a radical newsletter in the struggle for peace and social justice."

Citing the success of a shipyard-worker strike in 1919 Seattle, Wharton suggested Wisconsin government employees could win too. "Working people might take a cue from them and reach back for a weapon that can be used defensively and offensively — the general strike," he wrote. "Focusing solely on the Recall Walker and the Republicans campaign will take energy away from the effort to organize a militant response from working people."

Plus, Wharton wrote, this is an opportunity for Wisconsin to draw "on a long history of socialist and other radical organizing and become the place where a new left-wing movement for the 21st century is born." That sentiment was expressed often by socialist agitators across the Internet.

Writing in *Liberation*, the official newspaper of the Party for Socialism and Liberation, union organizer Jeff Bigelow [also urged a general strike](#). "Waiting for an electoral solution could deplete the energy of this new movement," he said. "We need tactics that escalate pressure now. The most reasonable tactic, one that would resonate with a lot of people and contains the seeds of victory, is the general strike."

The piece also details how unions and their intimidation tactics have succeeded in coercing governments to surrender throughout America and the world. "In today's struggle there is a need to continue the legacy of struggle," Bigelow concluded. "Creative, bold, effective action is needed now more than ever."

And in *The Nation*, columnist Peter Rothberg [showed his sympathy toward the idea](#), too, saying that the IWW [made](#) a "strong case" for a general strike. "It's critical to remember that there never would've been a National Labor Relations Act and numerous other worker protections in 1935, without the widespread labor unrest of 1934," he wrote.

Rothberg conveniently omitted the fact that even Franklin D. Roosevelt understood that, in his [own words](#): "The process of collective bargaining, as usually understood, cannot be transplanted into the public service."

Government-employee strikes have occurred before in American history. And due to the fact that public-sector services are largely monopolized, the consequences can be dire. Police in Boston in 1919, for



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example, [decided to organize a strike](#). Chaos ensued. But Massachusetts Governor Calvin Coolidge (who later became Vice President and then President) reacted swiftly to put down the lawlessness. He immediately called out the state militia. And the people backed him. "There is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, any time," [said](#) Calvin Coolidge, after firing all deserters. His tough stance made him a national hero.

More recently, when air traffic controllers went on strike under the Reagan administration, they were all fired too. And once again, the people approved.

Pundits predict that such a scenario could play out in Wisconsin if government workers really go forward with the plot.

"The outcome of an illegal strike is likely to be mass firings, combined with immediate decertification of the unions themselves, at least after a short period of time to reconsider," [predicted](#) conservative blogger Ed Morrissey in a piece for *HotAir*. "Walker will eventually have to follow Ronald Reagan's example with PATCO [Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization] to establish firmly that the people of Wisconsin, through their elected representatives, run the state of Wisconsin — and not union bosses or Barack Obama's political organization."

Desertions in Wisconsin have already happened, but through deception, not illegal strikes. Thousands of teachers throughout the state [lied by calling in sick to go protest in Madison](#). A number of doctors, however, [wrote bogus medical-excuse notes](#) to cover for the teachers' lies. Some police also [refused orders to evict protesters](#) from the Capitol, joining the squatters instead. Wisconsin law specifically prohibits strikes by state employees. Municipal and school-district workers are also barred from striking to enforce a demand, according to a [report](#) citing the Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission.

Other efforts aimed at stopping the new law [included numerous death threats to legislators](#), court challenges, [recall efforts](#) and more. A massive, nationwide "mobilization" for April 4 is also currently being [planned and promoted](#) by union bosses, communist groups, and members of the Obama regime.

The [measure being protested](#) would make union membership optional for most government workers, as well as mandating a yearly election to determine whether members wished to continue allowing the union to represent them. It would also limit collective bargaining privileges for most public-sector workers to salary increases.

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