



We need a brake

No, I do not mean “break.” While we can always use a break, I believe we are more in need of a brake—a brake to be used to slow down and stop what is happening in this country. My December article addressed a concern that public workers might be on the chopping block by the newly elected officials across the U.S. It is now clear that I underestimated their actions. While my concern over public-sector employees bore fruit, I was not thinking of the lemon that the ultra-conservatives (regardless of name) have decided to harvest.

The actions in Wisconsin, Ohio and obviously more states to follow are just too extreme to discuss. But we must. The organized public-sector labor movement is under attack from the far right, which believes that “business” and the corporate world must be fed and to do so, you must minimize the expenses to allow more profit. They did not believe in the \$250 one-time payment to Social Security recipients because it increased the deficit. They did not believe in extending the unemployment benefits because that increased the deficit. At no time did you see these people up in arms about the “Bush tax cuts” that were the topic of debate late last year. In fact, they believed that the tax cuts needed to be extended to spur the economy, and that the loss of tax revenue was necessary even though it did not help eliminate or reduce the deficit. They got theirs—now pull up the rope.

They now have started their attack on public-sector workers by attempting to eliminate and, in at least one case, eliminating their collective-bargaining rights. Additionally, here in DC, they have reduced payments into Social Security while at the same time they have a budget proposal that would reduce Social Security funding by \$1.7 billion for fiscal year 2011. Such cuts have been estimated to require a month of furloughs for the workers while at the same time delaying payments and the application process for those newly eligible. Of course, this is all deemed necessary by these new repre-

sentatives so they will not have to increase the deficit.

We, the workers and the retirees of this country, need to rise up and stand together in the battle over the “haves versus the have-nots” dividing line that now has been drawn in the sand. Whether you are a public-sector union member, a private-sector union member or a worker without representation, we need to stand together to defend the salaries and benefits that have been gained in the last 50 years for labor.

Those who point their finger at the unionized workers while saying “they are bankrupting this country” will bankrupt the workers instead. When the government of Wisconsin says the workers need to work more for less while at the same time giving millions of dollars of tax

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breaks to the businesses, their goal is clear. When the public employees offer to take less and the governor says, “No—I want your union,” their goals are clear. The lines are being drawn; if we do not stand up together, then we will all suffer later.

To the seniors: You are doing yourself an injustice if you allow these people to con you into believing that your benefits are protected and they are just going after the “future generation.” Remember, you were the future generation when our ancestors fought to establish the benefits that we now enjoy. The idea of dividing the masses occurred so much in our ancestors’ time that we just need to read a history book to see that now we are next. ✉

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