

RICHLAND DEMOCRAT

NEWSLETTER

<p>Friday 2-25 4:30-7:30 pm: Mauston Rally - Juneau County Court House The Juneau County Rally against Governor Walker's Budget Repair Bill. Bring your signs. Bring your friends, family and anyone who doesn't support this bill.</p>	<p>Saturday 2-26 at 1 PM: Madison rally - Bands will begin to play with a special appearance by Peter Yarrow of Peter, Paul and Mary fame. At 3 PM there will be a rally for the rights of Workers. Wear red and white, Bucky colors.</p>	<p>Saturday 2-26 at noon: Madison rally - the centerpiece of a national mobilization. Wear red and white, Bucky colors. Can't get to Madison? Wear your WI red and white all day, everywhere you go.</p>	<p>March 3, 1 PM Firehouse Restaurant - Viroqua WI, Governor Scott Walker (Invited) Governor Walker will give his views on opening Wisconsin for business at the Food, Fuel & Future Summit contact: CAFE- 608-625-4594 for tickets. 9 AM Registration</p>
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MADISON GETS MAD

"On Friday, Feb.11, we were treated to a chilling scene: Scott Walker in the Capitol, ringed by extra security, unilaterally announcing he will lower Wisconsin's quality of life.

Walker says he is ending the collective bargaining rights of state employees that have existed peacefully in Wisconsin for more than five decades, under Republicans and Democrats alike." Mike Tate, head of the Wisconsin Democratic Party.

Thus began the biggest protest against a proposed budget bill in recent history. Scott Walker said in effect, my way or the highway. And so Democratic senators took to the highway.

What are some of the lessons to be learned from this standoff?

First, the governor is disingenuous when he says his Repair Bill has nothing to do with union bashing. That's like saying eating a steak has nothing to do with killing a cow. Second, the governor's solution to the budget problem is patently unfair. It should be clear by now that state employee unions did not cause the problem. Those who did, the wealthy money manipulators, are getting off "Scott" free.



written by Jerry McConoughey

Third, Governor Walker and his Republican cronies are acting like autocrats not politicians. Their refusal to compromise sends the message that they are not interested in democratic rule; not interested in what the majority of the people want.

On a more positive note, the crisis has spawned a new energy in the union movement and a solidarity among working people that has inspired hope not only around the country, but around the world.



Richland Democrats Host Local Listening Session

The Richland Democrats were proud to have hosted an impromptu listening session between local union members, public employees, and the community at large on Wednesday Feb. 16th. Sen. Dale Schultz was gracious enough to accept the offer to attend. Sen. Schultz is a key member of the Senate who appears to be seeking some sort of compromise bill.

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Truth by Trick

Thanks to a prank call made by Ian Murphy from the Buffalo Beast website, where Murphy pretended to be Republican financier David Koch, we now know the true feelings and thoughts of Governor Walker about his radical bill before the State.

Walker: "Each day we crank up a little bit more pressure. The other thing is I've got layoff notices ready, we put out the at-risk notices, we'll announce Thursday, they'll go out early next week and we'll probably get five to six thousand state workers will get at-risk notices for layoffs. We might ratchet that up a little bit too."

Does this sound like a Governor who is concerned about the welfare of Wisconsin workers? Would a true ethical leader use peoples' jobs as pawns in a political power grab?

Walker: "The other thing [I'd like you to do] is more long term, and that is after this, you know the coming days and weeks and months ahead, particularly in some of these more swing areas, a lot of these guys [Republican members of State Legislature] are gonna need, they don't actually need ads for them but they're going to need a message put out reinforcing why this was a good thing to do for the economy and a good thing to do for the state. So the extent that that message is out over and over again is obviously a good thing"

Although (thanks to the Supreme Court) a corporation or group like Americans For Prosperity, a group highly funded by the Koch brothers, can buy as much ad time as they like to promote a cause, it is our understanding that it is still illegal for a politician to direct a group on his or her behalf to spend money in a particular way. Governor Walker seems quite willing to do such an act. What kind of ethical leader would be willing to plot with a billionaire about buying ad time against Wisconsin elections law?

Murphy: "But what we were thinking about the crowd was, uh, was planting some troublemakers."

Walker: "You know, well, the only problem with that — because we thought about that... My only fear would be if there's a ruckus caused is that would scare the public into thinking maybe the governor has to settle to

Behind the Koch Story

By Tom Crofton with material from the Capitol Times

FYI I was/am very involved in trying to develop a bio mass co-op to harvest broken and junk trees, switchgrass etc, as an alternative to fossil fuels for power generation. I am advocating for the county and others to turn operating costs of maintaining rights of ways into revenue by selling the clippings and trimmings for fuel instead of leaving them lay on the ground. The UW planned a new power plant and had worked for years on engineering and RFP's to get small businesses to develop all over the state to supply 30 rail cars per day of a refined product made from bio mass. The opportunity for economic development was/is simply overwhelming (manufacturing of equipment, railroad cars, special vehicles to work our hills, etc)

The Koch brothers spent a million for attack ads and 43,000 dollars of direct help to Walker, and he, seemingly out of the blue cancelled the plant, and all of the work that went into it, in favor of all natural gas. The Koch's own thousand of miles of natural
Continued on page 3

avoid all these problems... let 'em protest all they want... Sooner or later the media stops finding them interesting."

What kind of ethical leader would even contemplate "planting some troublemakers?"

And, what kind of ethical leader would discredit the idea of causing a "ruckus" in a crowd of 70,000 protesters on the grounds that it might not be politically advantageous, not even appearing to stop and think about the potential harm or danger to the people of the State?

Governor Walker has discredited himself as an ethical leader. Now the question is 'How can our Senators and Representatives trust that the best interests of the people of Wisconsin are being reflected in the Governor's budget repair bill? Tell your Senator and Representative that Wisconsin is better than this.

By Will Buros

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From Page 2 Behind the Koch Story

gas pipelines and paper companies that need low cost biomass as feedstock. duh....

by the way they don't live here

In their first published remarks since a prank caller tricked Gov. Scott Walker into thinking he was speaking with big-bucks backer David Koch himself, Koch executives say that that hoax and nearly two weeks of Madison protests have only strengthened the Koch brothers' determination to continue to use their billions to promote a national agenda that includes gutting the power of unions and deregulating industry.

Their statements in a Thursday night story by Robert Costa of the National Review Online, itself a bastion of conservatism, were defiant.

"With the Left trying to intimidate the Koch brothers to back off of their support for freedom and signaling to others that this is what happens if you oppose the administration and its allies, we have no choice but to continue to fight," says Richard Fink, the executive vice president of Koch Industries. "We will not step back at all."

Koch industries, a private, Wichita-based company with diverse holdings, is one of the richest companies in the world. Here in Wisconsin, David and Charles Koch own extensive oil and lumber interests, from Georgia Pacific paper mills to coal and shipping companies. The business employs 3,000 people directly in the state and 8,000 more indirectly through related businesses.

The Price of Balancing the Budget?

*In solidarity, by Sarah Ann Shanahan,
Chair of the Juneau County Democratic Party*

Governor Walker is correct, "Wisconsin is broke."

Besides promising to create 250,000 jobs, Governor Walker campaigned on slashing government spending to address the looming state deficit. So, it's no surprise that he is asking state employees to make sacrifices to control the budget. What is surprising is the scope of the budget repair bill, the lack of time for it to be fully vetted through the democratic process, and the blatant stripping of Wisconsin and its workers' rights not out of a sense of fiscal responsibility, but ideological and political strong arming.

Governor Walker claims that his cuts and refusal to budge on collective bargaining are due to an emergency fiscal crisis.

If the state is short \$140 million dollars this year and we are in crisis, why did the Governor sign a bill just weeks ago giving away \$137 million in tax breaks to companies when over two thirds of corporations operating in Wisconsin pay no income taxes? Apparently, fiscal crisis only applies to public employees. The same public employees that have already taken pay cuts in the form of furlough days, and have agreed to the Governor's proposal to pay 12 percent more into their healthcare plans and 6 percent of their pension programs (estimated savings from pension contributions alone would be \$500 million annually).

The one thing that they have not agreed to is the stripping of their rights and the rights of workers across the state to collectively bargain; a right that has been part of Wisconsin's historic role as a leader in labor practices for decades.

The Governor's lack of compromise on just one issue to solve the budget crisis and his recent threat to needlessly start layoffs as early as next week show he would rather prove a point than do what's in Wisconsin's best interests.

There are many other aspects of this bill that Governor Walker would have rather remained hidden, which may be why he tried to have them voted on less than a week after proposing them. They includes slashes to Medicaid, including \$20 million in senior care, the selling off of state power plants without even having to accept bids, abrupt restructuring of our renowned UW system, attacks on our wetlands and more. It's hard to imagine that a bill this far reaching and potentially destructive was almost passed without so much as one public hearing.

If the concern was truly the deficit, this standoff would be over, since public employees have already agreed to all but one concession. Asking them to sacrifice their rights is not the answer to the state's budget problems. Governor Walker is proposing a "budget" that strips people of their rights and sets up a 'Fire Sale' of Wisconsin's assets, its healthcare, its education system, and its environment. The short notice he provided Democratic legislators and the people of Wisconsin shows he is not at all interested in the fundamental rights of the people he represents or the democratic process that our nation and state have always nurtured.

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Fighting For Crumbs

by Will Buros

The Big Lie-

In his opening remarks to at least 300 concerned local citizens packed into the Richland courtroom on Wednesday February 16th, Senator Dale Schultz said, "We have raised taxes in Wisconsin billions of dollars. We can't raise taxes anymore." Therefore, to reflect the point of the Republican administration, we must make drastic cuts in public spending. The attack on the public employee labor rights is the first of a one- two punch to eliminate labor rights then pass along massive reductions in aids to counties, cities, and school districts with the message,

"Good luck meeting your needs; but hey, we gave you the tools to slash your staff and balance your budgets. Now, have fun..."

As the people of Wisconsin have begun to understand what is coming down the line, they have stormed out in crowds the likes of which have not been seen since the Vietnam War. The risk as I see it, though, is that even as we stand in unison to save our public employees and their rights, we are still buying into the deceitful premise of Senator Schultz and the Republicans that we can't raise revenues!

The Golden Idol-

There are only two tools to truly "balance" a budget, cut spending or raise revenues. The Republican Reagan-Revolution ushered in the concept of the "trickle down" theory. You remember- the idea George H. Bush called "voodoo economics." The article of faith that our country has been living under for over three decades is that by cutting taxes on the

richest among us (the job creators as they are called now) then wealth will trickle down to us all as those job creators invest in building our country. Unfortunately, during those times when the Republicans controlled the government, they spent more time cutting taxes for the wealthy than finding corresponding cuts in spending. They relied heavily on borrowing and trying to simply hold spending at its current levels while rising costs cut away at workers' incomes. Why didn't they cut programs and "waste" as the commandments of their doctrine clearly spell out? I suspect the more rational Republicans of recent history understood the risks of the public outcry that Governor Walker is now experiencing, and therefore resisted such actions. All elected officials in the past decades, though, have continued the procession of blindly having faith in the strategy of fasting or "starving the beast"- refusing to raise revenues while costs to government increase thereby bringing about a slow belt-tightening. This seemed to satisfy most moderate Republicans but is a sign of lack of faith to the zealots on the far right. Well, the zealots are now in control of the People's House. But wait a minute, in all this talk of cutting government, we forgot that all those tax cuts were supposed to usher in monumental growth that would increase revenues, so we should all be basking in "trickled down" wealth by now. Yet, having experienced a slow decline in the growth and development of our great country, seeing middle and lower class wages stagnate or deteriorate for decades, and having just come out of the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, it seems somewhat disingenuous to preach that Reagenomics is the one, true economic ideology. It

would appear that under this dogma a handful have prospered but most have not.

The L Curve-

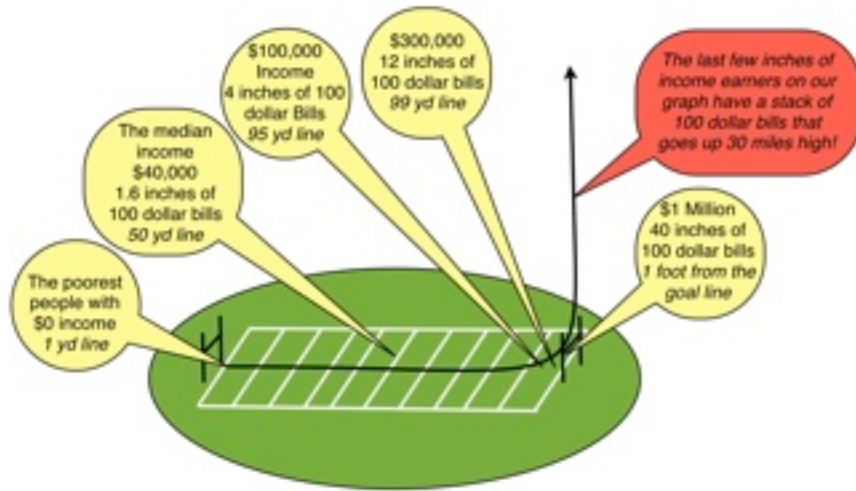
There are a few prophets of another world-view who have been quietly preaching in the wilderness. David Chandler maintains a website that illustrates the discrepancy in the distribution of wealth in the United States. On Chandler's site entitled "[The L Curve](#)," he helps the average person understand the unbalanced nature of our economic system. Chandler makes a graph of the US population and its distribution of income represented along the length of a football field, arranged in order of yearly earnings. On the left side you would start with the poorest people with \$0.00 of income moving to the right side of the football field wherein reside the richest people in the country. (See graph on p. 5)

The median US family income is ~ \$40,000 (using the height of one's income as the Y axis of the graph, a stack of \$100 bills (1.6 inches high) would be located at the 50 yard line.) The family on the 95th yard line earns about \$100,000 per year, a stack of \$100 bills about 4 inches high. Then at the 99 yard line the income is about \$300,000, a stack of \$100 bills about a foot high. The curve reaches \$1 million (a 40 inch high stack of \$100 bills) one foot from the goal line. From there we meet the richest people in the nation and the curve looking very much like an "L" creating an stack of \$100 bills going straight up...it goes up ~30 miles on this scale! Let that sink in. The median families on this scale have 1.6 inches of income. The richest families have 30 miles of income.

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The L Curve: A Graphic Illustration to Point Out the Disparity in Yearly Income continued from Fighting for Crumbs on page four.



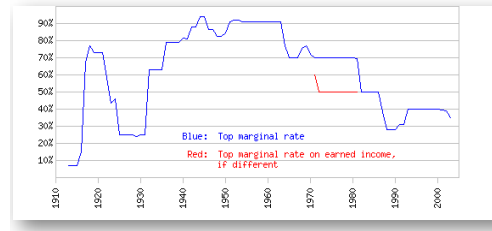
When Times Were Good-

As Senator Schultz noted, “We can’t raise taxes!” And to even mention the idea, gets one labeled a socialist or worse. Thanks to billionaires like the Koch brothers the air waves are filled with the messages that raising the income tax on the “job creators” causes economic downturns. Yet, looking at the history of raising the top income tax bracket does not seem to reflect this belief.

It would appear that during the history of the income tax, people very much understood that when government really needed money you increased the income tax on the highest income earners. This would be a practice best defined as “you can’t get blood out of a turnip.” As illustrated by the “L Curve,” the people along the horizontal line do not have very much money compared to the people on the vertical line. So during times of need, (Or anytime for that matter) it would seem wise to look to the top income bracket earners for generating tax revenue.

As one looks at a [graph](#) from *Truth and Politics* of the top income tax brackets over time, there seems to be no evidence that raising income taxes on the top brackets had any negative impact on the economy.

Interestingly, during the times in our history that we now look back fondly as our “Glory Years,” the top income bracket was at 91%!



Disclaimers: the table does not address the tax treatment of capital gains; the table does not take into account the alternative minimum tax or its predecessor, the minimum tax; and, care should be taken in comparing the income levels at which the top rate applies, not only because of the effects of inflation, but because the definition of the income base has varied over time.

The Cream Theory-

I am not an economist, but to the untrained eye, it almost seems as if our current “trickle down” theory may be a large part of our economic woes. I believe it is possible that the wealthiest of us actually do not do a very good job of investing in areas that promote positive economic growth across the entire population. At those time when the top income earners were taxed very highly, their money seemed to be stirred back

into the economy thereby stimulating growth and building a strong middle class.

As we fight and claw with each other for crumbs, the top income earners seem to be carrying away the cake. I propose that we challenge the Scott Walkers of the world when they say we can’t raise taxes on the “job creators.” Tell ‘em we’re done with being “trickled” on. Being from Wisconsin, we need to remind him that as any good dairy farmer knows, if you let the milk sit, the cream rises to the top leaving the bottom milk too watery to drink. If you want quality, you have to keep stirring that cream back into the milk. It’s time to have good, tasty milk throughout the entire bulk tank.

The End Game-

I fear if we do not broaden the debate of our current budget crisis, we will ultimately lose the argument. The population will be too easily twisted by those like the Koch brothers to blame the “greedy” teachers, those “corrupt” unions, and “government” in general. But the times feel right for change. The moderates seem mobilized. So, I’ll see you on the street corner- putting an end to the big lie.