

Ohio Workers Fight Back!



PART II

JOURNAL OF A CONTINUING STRUGGLE

By Linda Gosnell

Editor's Note: For the first phase of this ongoing fight, see "Ohio Workers Fight Back," posted March 9 2011, at www.utopianmag.com.

March 2011

While I was recuperating from surgery, it was exciting to see and hear about thousands of Ohio public and private workers demonstrating against Senate Bill 5, the anti-working class, anti-union bill passed by the Ohio Senate on March 1 by a 17-16 vote. Workers from the Autoworkers Union, teachers from a community college, single moms, and secretaries demonstrated as well.

SB5 is a union-busting bill that establishes fines and jail

In the face of mass opposition after the Senate vote, the Ohio House stalled on this sweeping anti-union bill.

Demonstrations were going to be held on March 15 in the following Ohio cities: Strongsville, Cincinnati, Maumee, Mansfield, Salem, and Westerville. But in spite of countless demonstrations, on March 30 the House passed SB5 with some modifications and Republican Governor John Kasich (aka Scrooge) immediately signed it.

April 2011

On April 4, there was a solidarity rally in Dayton against SB5. On April 5, there was a rally at the Statehouse in Columbus, Ohio. On April 9, 10,000 strong public workers and supporters demonstrated and kicked off a referendum



time for public workers who go on strike. The new law says layoffs of workers will no longer be based solely on seniority. It requires public workers to pay 15 percent of health insurance costs. The bill no longer allows union contracts to require non-union members to pay union dues—an anti-union right-to-work provision. This is a worse attack on working people than the anti-union bill recently passed in Wisconsin. SB5 is the direct result of the political and economic power of corporations, the right wing, and the Tea Party that receives funds from the multi-billionaire Koch Brothers, and big business in general.

petition drive to put SB5 on the ballot in November and enable Ohioans to vote down this horrible bill.

May 2011

2,200 demonstrated in favor of jobs in Columbus against a backdrop of teacher layoffs and cuts to public services.

June 2011

At this time, over 700,000 signatures are on the petition.

Only 231,000 valid signatures are needed to put SB5 on the ballot. Everyone that I talk to is upset about SB5 and the budget cuts, including working class people and middle class people who vote Republican. Some friends of mine go back to their early jobs and reminisced when they were in a union and they are against these attacks on working people and our unions.

Signing the petition is just one way of stopping the attacks on working and poor people. If SB5 – now called Issue 2 – gets defeated in November, the government, big business and the Tea Party will be back to take more from us. Chris Littleton represents a coalition of Tea Party groups called the Ohio Liberty Council. Tea Parties in Ohio support SB5. Chris said, “We seek making Ohio a right-to-work state

and complete elimination of employee unions as a primary objective for 2011.” He said further, “...but we are definitely supportive of this measure” (SB5).

Workers in right-to-work states earn 6.5 percent less than in non right-to-work states. Right-to-work laws do not create jobs or economic growth. Workers’ safety and workers’ rights are worse in right-to-work states. Public services are worse in these states, too. As of February 21, 2011, five states had deprived teachers of collective bargaining rights: South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, Texas, and



Virginia. The ranking of these states’ students’ test scores like the ACT and SAT scores are all at the bottom in the nation.

In states that have outlawed collective bargaining or only allow some workers to join unions, their budget deficits are as high or higher than Ohio’s. Public workers, such as teachers, did not cause the Ohio budget crisis. As a matter of fact, one country after another, around the world, is faced with big budget deficits. Their governments, corporations and banks want to also make working and poor people pay for their eco-

nomics.

July 2011

As of July 4th, my friends and I, along with over 1.3 million Ohioans had signed the petition to overturn SB5, which was sent to Columbus, the capital of Ohio. This means over 1 in 8 Ohio residents signed the petition, as there are only 8 million resident Ohioans. There was a

party atmosphere when the petitions were sent to Columbus. “We Are Ohio,” a coalition of public sector and private sector unions, progressive groups, Democratic Party people, and others, oversaw and organized the petition drives and prep classes; 10,000 volunteers and some paid workers circulated the petitions.

“We Are Ohio” is like Wisconsin’s coalition, “We Are Wisconsin,” which has a similar strategy of voting against the repressive bills that both Republican governors have signed in each state. “Stand Up for Ohio” is another coalition that includes labor unions like the CWA (Communication Workers of America), civil rights groups, environmental groups, faith-based groups, and community groups. They held a number of demonstrations around Ohio in support of public workers who are under the gun.

The struggles of public workers have a long history. Forty-three years ago, in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1968, sanitation workers held an illegal strike as they were earning poverty wages. They provoked a civil rights upheaval. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. came to Memphis to support these public workers where he was assassinated because of his leadership roles in the great civil rights movement and the anti-war movement and his support for workers’ and poor people’s struggles.

August 2011

SB5 will get defeated in the November election is my guess. Of course, the millionaires and multi-billionaires, and the right wing, like the Tea Party, will do anything to make working people pay for their economic mess. It is clear to some working people who have never been in a union that this is an attack on working people. But the strategy of the unions and the Democratic Party is to simply vote against these attacks. And they organize demonstrations to serve this strategy. Voting NO on Issue 2 is an important step but it is only a stopgap measure. Because as surely as the sun rises and sets, the government, the politicians, the corporations, and the right wing will be back again to take more from working and poor people as soon as they can. They want to grind us down and take away our rights like the governments do to working and poor people in other coun-

tries, like Greece. Militant, radical action by working and poor people is really needed to get the government, big business and the right wing off our backs. I don’t know what will happen after the November elections. I do know that we are sick and tired of the government taking from us and giving our money, part of our wages that were taken from us, to the corporations, and to the banks.

It is class war by the right wing and big business against working people, middle class people and poor people. How do working people defeat these attacks against us that are going on? My girlfriend says to help build the movement against these attacks and I think that’s one way to fight for real freedom. We need to be free of the governments that steal our money, our tax dollars, our wages; we need to stop the take-aways such as cutting Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security that working people have paid for all of our lives, we must stop the foreclosures of our homes, and stop the cutbacks in our schools; we need universal healthcare; we need to organize strikes in our work places to stop the corporations from stealing our labor; we need to be free of the banks and corporations that are hammering down on us; all women have a right to control our bodies without personal interference and without government interference; we must fight for equality and dignity for all; and we must fight for jobs for all with a living wage. Make no mistake about it: we’re in for the fight of our lives.