

Working people are fed up with pay cuts, furloughs, unemployment, and cuts to healthcare, services, and education. Walkouts by teachers in Wisconsin ignited massive protests there early this year and now that anger is fueling the Occupy Wall Street movement and spreading across the country – and the world.

From Occupy Seattle to Occupy Atlanta, high school students and retirees alike are furious at bank bailouts and the massive transfer of wealth that has impoverished the majority and enriched the few. Some of the signs at Westlake Park read: *Bail out schools, not banks; Tax the rich; Money for healthcare, not warfare; One million jobless veterans; We are the 99%; and I'll believe corporations are people when Texas executes one*, carried by an African American man.

Who are the 1% that we're up against?

Our enemy is not just obscenely rich and greedy men like Bill Gates, but a capitalist **system** that is in crisis. Some argue that the problem is “unfettered” capitalism, or a lack of regulation, but this economic model is **based** on a vicious cycle of competition to produce more and more goods and to control markets, inevitably resulting in overproduction and huge international monopolies.

Labor productivity in the U.S. is higher than ever, yet workers' standard of living has plummeted. We are now witnessing the largest transfer of wealth in history – from the working class to the ruling class. But this is also capitalism's endgame because consumers can no longer afford the products that fuel corporate profits. No amount of market reforms, “entrepreneurial spirit,” or “Buy American” campaigns can end the downward spiral.

Who are the 99%?

The majority of this 99% are workers, but it includes small-and medium-sized business owners as well as people who have been forced to the very fringes of society. However, the real power hitters are the workers, not only because of our overwhelming numbers but because we are the ones who actually **produce all the wealth** and keep society running. **We** pro-

From wall street to westlake

FIGHT CORPORATE rule with WORKINGCLASS POWER

cess every bank transaction, transport people and goods, design and build computers, homes, and airplanes. **We** pick the fruit, install the cables, tend the sick, and teach the children.

Workers also have the power to shut down business-as-usual. The Occupy Wall Street movement can be a catalyst, but until the working class exercises its power – the general strike being its strongest weapon – the politicians (and the corporations that put them in office) won't give an inch.

Ultimately, to win the demands being raised at Westlake will take **systemic** change. We deserve a society that prioritizes people's needs; a society in which those who do the work can democratically decide what they produce and how goods and services should be distributed. This is the premise of socialism – to cut out the profiteers and middlemen and put the economic and political power into workers' hands.

Expand the Occupy Wall Street movement into a broader United Front

The nationwide occupations are a wake up call and they have the potential to galvanize a broader fightback. But a “leaderless” movement with no clear demands will be easily diverted into another round of election-year campaigning for Democrats who promise peace, jobs, and equality, but inevitably deliver the opposite.

It's time for our **own** party – an independent working-class political alternative – a labor party. The Democrats and Republicans have played good cop, bad cop with us for too long. President Obama's phony jobs program is the latest attempt to rustle



up our support for a bill that amounts to just another “stimulus” package for private employers, funded with money diverted from Medicare and Social Security. Labor, women, Blacks, Latinos, the elderly, queers, and young people voted for “change” in 2008, but Big Business is still running the show.

A cohesive workingclass movement also needs the voices and leadership of those hardest hit by the recession and the inhumane cuts in social services. Today, on average, for every dollar in a white household, a Black family has a nickel. Latino workers saw 600,000 jobs vanish. Employment of foreign-born men dropped by a third from 2007 to 2010. Asian Americans lost a quarter million jobs and Native Americans suffer the highest unemployment of all.

Poverty among women – already much higher than among men – climbed to 14.5 percent in 2010, and the poverty rate for single moms rose to **40.7** percent. As a result, one in five children live in poverty.

Those bearing the brunt of this disaster are also the fiercest fighters. It’s no accident that unions have only seen growth in public sector and service jobs where women, people of color, and lesbian and gay workers predominate. Immigrants have also revitalized the labor movement with the militant ideas and tactics learned in their homelands.

The seeds of a United Front – which would enable socialists, liberals, disaffected Democrats, and anarchists to share and debate ideas, but march as one – are budding in the Occupy Wall Street movement.

With workingclass leadership, a United Front could unite students, unionists, veterans, feminists, unemployed workers, and retirees around concrete demands such as:

- **Nationalize** the banks under workers control. Open the financial books of the banks and corporations.
- **Cancel** the debts on student loans, on the mortgages of devalued homes, on foreclosures – and the debts of entire countries impoverished by “Free Trade” austerity measures.
- **Establish** a national public works jobs program at union wages; restore public sector jobs; revive affirmative action plans in hiring and education; reduce unemployment and spread the jobs around by reducing the work week to 30 hours – at 40 hours pay.
- **Tax** the rich and corporations to restore social services for those hardest hit by the economic crisis. Fully fund quality healthcare and education. No cuts to Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, and reproductive services.
- **Defend** civil liberties. End police state tactics in communities of color and against immigrants, strikers and those protesting war and Wall Street crimes.
- **End** U.S. wars and occupations and redirect military spending for jobs and human needs.

Issued jointly by:

Radical Women

206-722-6057
RWseattle@mindspring.com
www.RadicalWomen.org

Freedom Socialist Party

206-722-2453
FSPseattle@mindspring.com
Facebook.com/FSPseattle

If you’d like to talk more about these ideas, feel free to call or stop by any weekday between 10:00am and 8:30pm. Both organizations have offices in Columbia City at:
New Freeway Hall, 5018 Rainier Ave. S., Seattle, WA 98118

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