

South Central Federation of Labor

Highlights & Activities Review for 2011

WISCONSIN UPRISING

Massive protests gripped the state from February through November in response to newly-elected Governor Scott Walker's union-busting Act 10, the so-called Budget Repair Bill, which stripped public sector union members of their collective bargaining rights.

Within days of the announcement, 10,000 turned out at a State Capitol rally February 15, public schools closed, thousands testified against the bill at all-night public hearings, and a sixteen day occupation of the State Capitol was initiated by the TAA (AFT-W Local 3220). On March 12, the day after Walker signed Act 10, over 150,000 flooded the Capitol Square for a rally that welcomed back 14 Senators who had fled the state in an attempt to prevent passage of Walker's bill.

Worldwide attention drew celebrities such as Jesse Jackson, filmmaker Michael Moore, talk show host Ed Schultz, and musicians Tom Morello and Arlo Guthrie. AFL-CIO President Rich Trumka as well as the presidents of numerous national unions made pilgrimages to Madison, as did labor delegations and activists from around the country.

Around the state in towns and rural areas like in Dodge County – and in other parts of the U.S. – rallies, protests and pickets erupted, often spontaneously. Activists began bird-dogging Gov. Walker at public events and bad actors like Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald were likewise taken to task at town hall meetings and county fairs.

For two weeks in June, protestors kept the heat on Walker by pitching nearly one hundred tents around the Capitol Square at an encampment dubbed Walkerville, modeled after the Hooverville tent city in Washington, D.C. at the depth of the Great Depression.

Even as the protests raged, Wisconsin union members engaged in unprecedented political activity, circulating recall petitions, canvassing door to door, staffing phone banks and doing data entry, in an ongoing effort to take down the Walker administration. In August a recall election won two Senate seats, narrowing the Republican majority.

Recognizing the importance of the Wisconsin Uprising, the Institute for Policy Studies awarded its prestigious Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Award to Wisconsin's Progressive Movement, which was accepted by representatives of Madison Teachers Inc.

LABOR HISTORY MURAL

- Completed the Madison Labor History Mural after hiring Madison muralist Sharon Kilfoy and held a dedication ceremony and celebration.
- Following the mural dedication, Maine actor Harlan Baker staged a one man show – *Jimmy Higgins: A Life in the Labor Movement* – to wide acclaim.

POLITICAL/LEGISLATIVE ACTION

- Twelve of SCFL's 16 endorsed candidates won seats in the Spring elections, including a new Dane County Executive, a Dane County Circuit Court Judge, Madison aldermanic candidates (7 of 10 endorsed won), and aldermanic candidates in Fitchburg, Mayville, and Juneau. Also winning voter approval with SCFL support was the Move to Amend resolution opposing corporate personhood in the financing of elections.
- COPE's 52nd Annual Bean Feed fundraiser served a crowd of over 400.
- Held joint press conference with Madison Teachers Inc., AFSCME Local 60 and the Madison Metropolitan School District, calling on Congress to pass the American Jobs Act which would provide investments in public school buildings and a quality educational system.
- Opposed the Madison Preparatory Academy which would have become the first privately run charter school in Madison financed with public dollars. The Madison School Board voted 5-2 against the proposal.
- Lent SCFL's backing to the *Housing is a Human Right* resolution approved by the Madison Common Council to find ways to address the city's most pressing housing problems.

SOLIDARITY SUPPORT

- Mobilized support for a Nationwide Day of Action to Save the U.S. Postal Service sponsored by the American Postal Workers Union, the National Association of Letter Carriers, and other postal worker unions.

(cont.)

- Turned out support for informational pickets held by AFSCME Local 171 protesting the outsourcing of unionized food service jobs.
- Marshaled support for 200 striking Machinists at Manitowoc Crane by encouraging material aid and picket line support, and mobilizing for a statewide rally attended by nearly 3,000 union supporters.
- Coordinated a letter writing campaign in support of rehiring UFCW Local 1473 members at Cub Foods after the store was bought out by Tim Metcalfe of Metcalfe Markets.

EDUCATION

- Long-time chair of SCFL's Education Committee Steve Masar received the *Lifetime Achievement Award* from the Wisconsin Labor History Society.
 - Hosted a screening of an anti-war video, *Why We Are in Afghanistan*, illustrated by Madison-based labor cartoonist Mike Konopacki.
 - With the UW School for Workers and the Building Trades Council, sponsored an educational program, *100 Years of Apprenticeship*, prior to a monthly delegate meeting.
 - With the UW School for Workers, sponsored a spring training on protecting workers' rights and later a four night class, *Talking Union, Building or Rebuilding Unions in a Hostile Environment*.
 - Promoted participation in a Labor Notes Troublemakers School, and a talk on reviving the strike by labor lawyer and author Joe Burns.
 - Awarded 6 scholarships to college students, including two targeted to Dodge County students.
 - Cosponsored the Madison Labor Radio weekly news program broadcast on WORT (89.9 FM).
- Held United Way Campaign kickoff and Labor Recognition event for volunteers serving on United Way of Dane County Board of Directors, Vision Council, Campaign Cabinet and other committees.
 - Rapid Response Orientation Sessions were presented by the AFL-CIO Community Services Labor Liaison to over 600 laid off/displaced workers. In addition, United Way 2-1-1 information concerning available resources was provided to hundreds of union members on the UW-Madison campus who were impacted financially due to ramifications of the state budget.
 - SCFL Community Services Committee sponsored a Labor Day drive for personal care and household items – and an additional collection in December for the families of striking Machinists at Manitowoc Crane.
 - Provided volunteers for the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Coalition Community Dinner.
 - Helped coordinate the UW-Madison Service Day which involved about 175 to 200 UW-Madison employees volunteering at a number of projects across Dane County on May 16th, which was the last of their mandatory furlough days.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

COMMUNITY SERVICE

- Assisted the Interfaith Coalition for Worker Justice with participation in the annual Faith/Labor Breakfast and a holiday season fundraiser also benefiting the Workers' Rights Center.
 - Publicized and solicited volunteers for the annual NALC (Letter Carriers) Food Drive.
 - Drawing at SCFL's monthly delegate meetings raised \$1032 for food pantry at St. Stephen's Lutheran Church.
- SCFL's Dodge County Chapter organized its 2nd annual all-union Dodge and Jefferson County picnic that drew over 200 union members with music, free food, swimming, games and raffles. Proceeds from the event (over \$3000) benefitted area food pantries.
 - SCFL's Dodge County Chapter organized its 3rd Annual buffet dinner for area union leaders, including union members from Jefferson County.
 - Cosponsored and promoted May Day rally and march to the State Capitol with immigrant and worker rights groups.
 - With the Madison Area Peace Coalition cosponsored and mobilized for a March and Rally to End the Wars on the 10th anniversary of the start of the war in Afghanistan.
 - LaborFest 2011 featured Westside Andy/Mel Ford Band and Paul Cebar at what was certainly a record crowd.
 - For more information visit: WWW.SCFL.org