

The Crisis of Public Education: Budget Cuts, Deficits and the Lies Behind Them.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AT A CROSS ROADS

While the country remains deep in recession, with official unemployment rates near 9% and real unemployment over 20%, a campaign is underway to balance state and local budgets by slashing public education at all levels. These attacks are carried out under the baseless assumption that the money has simply disappeared. Instead of investing in education to get out of the great recession, massive cuts aim to gut the entire system. Politicians seem more interested in fixing numbers on a budget sheet than fixing society's problems.

WHERE'S THE FUNDING?

The basis for these cuts is that there is no money. This is the biggest lie of all. Over the last ten years, the US has spent over \$1.17 trillion on never-ending wars and occupations with estimates of total costs clearing \$3 trillion, and spending over \$964 billion this year for defense. They've also given massive tax breaks for the rich and corporations on all levels, enriching the rich while taking from the poor. We've also seen massive increases in corporate welfare and bailouts. Since 1980 the proportion of the Gross National Product going to the top 1% has nearly tripled, from 9% in 1979 to over 23% in 2007. That means that trillions of extra income, over and above the proportion these folk enjoyed in 1979, when they weren't hurting, is going to the top 1% of earners, while pay and benefits

for the vast majority have stagnated as wages adjusted for inflation are below 1981 levels. Put together, these public expenditures amount to the largest transfer of wealth from the public coffers into private hands in the history of the nation.

THE HIDDEN TRUTH

The truth is the money does exist. Returning tax rates on those making over \$500,000 per year to the levels they were at under Richard Nixon would yield enough to pay for a new public education system, plus massive aid to state and local governments, to fund public health systems, to build a new green economy, all while drastically reducing the federal deficit and balancing state and local government budgets. Ending

the wars and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan would free up hundreds of billions of dollars that could be invested to expand the Pell grants program, to hire more public school teachers, fund more head start programs, or cover the financial costs of education for millions of students. This is without even touching the immensely bloated defense budget. More money can be found in the massive bailout programs, in taxes avoided or not paid, or in places like

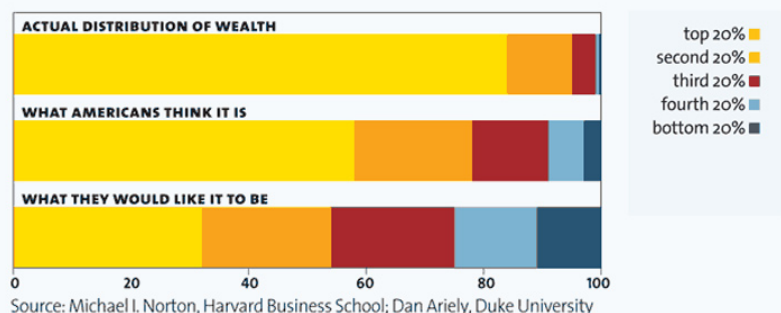
the continuing expansion of the prison industrial complex. The problem is that the money has been taken from our pockets and directed into the hands

STOP SCAPEGOATING TEACHERS' UNIONS

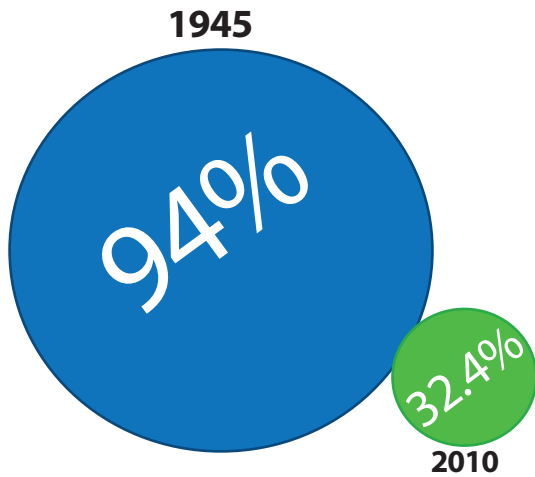
The attack on teachers' unions and other organized public workers has been coupled with an amnesiac suggestion that these are the responsible parties for the fiscal crisis of state and local governments. Did the teachers and other public unions create the financial crisis that resulted in lower revenues to government at all levels? Did teachers, janitors, nurses, and bus drivers grant the absurd tax cuts that gutted state and federal revenue streams? Were these workers the ones who built up a massive bubble for their own profit, knowing it would eventually collapse and devastate the economy? The answer to all these questions is no -- but still teachers are being dubbed the new welfare queens, Reagan's favorite target of the 1980s.

For sources and more information, please visit:
www.defendededucation.org

<http://motherjones.com/politics/2011/02/income-inequality-in-america-chart-graph>



The Rich Pay Far Less than They Once Did



Top Marginal Tax Rates - What the Richest people pay in Income tax

of the rich. Serving the priorities of the rich has devastated public services and education, while leaving working people without homes and jobs.

FROM WISCONSIN - NO CONCESSIONS, NO CUTS!

The crisis in Wisconsin and across the Midwest is a good illustration of the perversity of the current policies. We don't propose milder versions of the same, or merely a struggle to keep the status quo, but expansion of public education. Expanding public education in times of economic recession creates jobs -- a lot of jobs per dollar of spending -- and also invests in the future. Rather than giving tax cuts away to the wealthy, taxes could be raised on the top 1% even at the state level, to balance state budgets and restore spending to have a healthy public sector, including public education. With a sufficient shift at the federal level, free public education at all levels for all Americans could be accomplished with ease, as demonstrated above. We do not support lesser cuts in an already starved public sector, but insist on NO CUTS. Cuts are designed in the interest of the rich to privatize great swaths of public wealth. We cannot accept any cuts; we cannot fight over scraps from the master's table. We must advocate for massive increases in public spending to revitalize education, create jobs, and rebuild our communities.

Local Contacts:

UTOPIAN?

The present course of decimating working people, busting unions across America, spending trillions on perverse military interventionism, mass (and historically unparalleled) imprisonment, and tax-cuts for an increasingly wealthy top 1% is surely hardly realistic. What is foolishly utopian is to expect that the current course will bring us out of the recession. It's unrealistic to think that we can fix the economy by spending trillions on wars and bailouts while ignoring the mounting costs of continued unemployment, foreclosures, budget cuts, and crumbling public services. It's quite realistic to challenge a dysfunctional system and propose an alternative. Thinking forward in a time of crisis isn't idealistic, it's visionary.

SHIFTING GEARS, CHANGING PRIORITIES

Private interests hold heavy influence over institutions that should be serving our needs. Their priorities are to tailor education to fit their interests, limit student and worker free speech rights, dismantle unions and attack workers rights, all in an interest to privatize greater swaths of public wealth. These priorities are not a foregone conclusion. We have the power to affect and ultimately change them. In order to change them, we need to build student, worker, and community power. A democratic society is not something that can be handed to us -- we must struggle to win it. A new student movement was born as the result actions that began in California in the fall of 2009. Actions against budget cuts and attacks on public education continue to spread throughout the nation. Building democracy happens from the ground up and these struggles are teaching us how to build it. Students and workers: Join the struggle and fight back against the cuts!

