Americans don't resent the rich, they resent being ripped off by irresponsible corporations who won't pay their fair share in taxes. They resent being unable to earn honest pay for an honest day's work

by Gerry Hudson, Executive Vice President, Service Employees International Union (SEIU)

In a small cafeteria meeting of approximately 20 labor activists, a petite woman, only about 5 feet tall, stood up and with a booming voice declared to the group there was an old 1960s song that reminded her of today's Occupy Wall Street movement. She then began reciting lyrics to "There's Something Happening Here," by Buffalo Springfield. "What it is ain't exactly clear…"

The song, with its visions of confrontation and resistance, fear and courage, and the struggle between right and wrong, was recorded in 1967 against the backdrop of intensifying social unrest.

Back then, teachers throughout the country held "spot strikes" for pay increases to keep pace with inflation. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., launched the Poor People's Campaign, which ultimately produced the "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom." Hundreds of thousands of people began massive demonstrations in San Francisco, New York and Washington, DC, to protest the U.S. involvement in the decade-long Vietnam War, which had killed 14,000 American troops by the early part of that year. Meanwhile, President Johnson asked Congress for a six percent increase on taxes to support the war.

Fast forward 40 years and the lyrics of the song are clearly relevant. In states like Ohio, police officers, nurses and other workers are joining teachers to battle against coordinated attacks by right-wing politicians and Wall Street billionaires who are more interested in killing jobs than paying their fair share to create good jobs and help rebuild the economy.

"There's something happening here."

On November 8, Ohio and Virginia will set the stage for 2012. While Virginians will vote on 40 open Senate seats, the last barrier to a Republican controlled state government, Ohio's middle class families will vote to overturn Senate Bill 5 (SB 5)— an unsafe and unfair **legislation, rammed through the legislature last spring, that strips the voices of hard-working middle class citizens out of their workplace.**

"There's battle lines being drawn."

Ohio's Governor Kasich and leaders like him, are turning their backs on the middle class. Kasich gave away hundreds of millions in corporate tax breaks while simultaneously draining the state's budget for a law that puts families at risk.

SB 5 makes it harder for emergency responders, firefighters and police to negotiate for critical safety equipment and training, which could mean the difference between life and death for people in need. It even makes it illegal for nurses, hospital and clinic workers to demand reasonable and safe staffing levels—so their patient loads increase, while their salaries and benefits are cut. Before the passage of SB5, Ohio's public employees had already sacrificed to save state taxpayers more than $250 million in pay freezes and unpaid furlough days, plus an additional $100 million in increased healthcare contributions.

These attacks against the middle class go beyond Ohio. Right-to-work legislation exists in 22 states creating barriers against the right to unite in the workplace. Yet several more states, including Indiana, Michigan and Florida, are considering similar laws. Moreover, 20 state legislatures this year, are considering new voter ID requirements for citizens. Suppressive voter ID legislation has already passed in Alabama, South Carolina and Texas, which could deter as many as 5 million people nationwide from casting ballots in 2012.

Proposals like S.B. 5 will only fuel America's frustration. There are 14 million people unemployed and another 11 million underemployed and looking for full-time jobs. Our infrastructure is crumbling. Our classrooms and clinics are overcrowded. Our education, transportation, and energy systems are in serious need of upgrades. While Americans are struggling to keep jobs, Republican lawmakers and members of Congress are willing to put Medicare and Medicaid on the chopping block.

Across the country, 99 percent of the people who make up the backbone of our nation's economy are in pain. Working families are suffering through the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. There is a target on every group of people that doesn't benefit the top 1 percent. Even school children in Alabama are being confronted about immigration based on the color of their skin. Meanwhile, Wall Street CEOs and billionaires are busy shipping American jobs overseas and protecting billions of dollars corporate tax breaks.

Americans don't resent the rich, they resent being ripped off by irresponsible corporations who won't pay their fair share in taxes. They resent being unable to earn honest pay for an honest day's work. They resent that the very people who enacted the disastrous economic policies that caused millions of Americans to lose their jobs in the first place have yet to face penalty or repercussions. .

What's happening here is this: the bravest among us—students, young people, the

unemployed, senior citizens, and working people—are taking bold actions to correct our nation's course, including the Ohioans going to the polls to vote on Issue 2. There are 2.1 million members of the Service Employee International Union (SEIU) who will stand with them.

The question is, will you stand with Ohioans and all those confronting the nation's crises to send a message to elected officials, Republicans in Congress and Wall Street CEOs that attacking working families in America is unacceptable.