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Fighting Dictators in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya – and Wisconsin

“Today, we saw America’s money trouble meet a reality, a human reality, as teachers, nurses, tens of thousands of state workers took to the streets in this country protesting cuts by the governors, saying to these governors, a promise is a promise. One lawmaker looked out at the crowds gathered in the Wisconsin capital today and said it’s like Cairo moved to Madison.”

– Diane Sawyer opening ABC’s *World News*, February 17.



“From the Mideast to the American Midwest tonight, people are rising up. Citizens’ uprisings are changing the world.”

– Anchor Brian Williams leading off *NBC Nightly News*, February 18.

“This week: people power making history. A revolt in the Midwest and a revolution sweeping across the Middle East.... Populist frustration is boiling over this week – as we’ve said, not just in the Middle East, but in the middle of this country as well.”

– ABC’s Christiane Amanpour opening *This Week*, February 20.

“The images from Wisconsin – with its protests, shutdown of some public services and missing Democratic senators, who fled the state to block a vote – evoked the Middle East more than the Midwest. The parallels raise the inevitable question: Is Wisconsin the Tunisia of collective bargaining rights?”

– *New York Times* reporters Michael Cooper and Katharine Seelye, February 19.

“Is Madison, Wisconsin, Congressman, the Tunisia of American politics now?”

– Moderator Bob Schieffer to Congressman Paul Ryan on CBS’s *Face the Nation*, February 20.

“Assault” on Unions – “Have Governors Gone Too Far?”

“What began as a battle over one state budget is now being billed as a national assault on unions.”

– CBS’s Cynthia Bowers on the February 18 *Evening News*.

“Is there a coordinated Republican political agenda to this attack or this effort, this pointed effort at unions?... There are many states that have denied collective bargaining rights that also have very large budget deficits. So in some ways, it doesn’t sort of make sense, this idea that the unions really are to blame.”

– Fill-in co-host Ann Curry to New Jersey Governor Chris Christie on NBC’s *Today*, February 23.



“It seems to look like this governor [Wisconsin’s Scott Walker] is trying to basically break unions and that other states may then follow suit.... Should unions be on alert all around the country?”

– Co-host Chris Wragge to former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee on CBS’s *Early Show*, February 22.

“We’ve seen the public employees say, ‘We’ll pay more for our health care and pensions, but you can’t take away our rights.’ Have the governors here gone too far?”

– ABC’s George Stephanopoulos to Kentucky Senator Rand Paul on *Good Morning America*, February 23.

“It’s that attempt to weaken decades of public union clout that is bringing tens of thousands to the Capitol building in Madison day after day, and to rallies around the country today – the fear that unions may one day disappear from American life.”

– CBS’s Cynthia Bowers on the February 26 *Evening News*.

Scolding Walker's "Attempt to Crush the Unions"

"So Governor, explain to us how this is not an attempt to crush the unions, given that collective bargaining is the last thing on the table? What does collective bargaining have to do with deficits and spending?"

— Co-host Mika Brzezinski to Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker on MSNBC's *Morning Joe*, February 22.

"How did it possibly make sense to do tax cuts that would worsen the state's fiscal situation for the years to come, in the context of the kind of sacrifices that you're asking from the public sector and employee unions?"

— *New York Magazine's* John Heilemann to Walker later on the same show.



Confused Clift: "Since When" Does an Elected Official Represent "the People"?

Conservative columnist Pat Buchanan: "They call it collective bargaining. It is collusive bargaining. What you've got, these unions put enormous amounts of money in, they get their buddy in the governor's chair, then they get together, they cut a deal, give them a sweetheart contract and give it to the taxpayers. What this Governor, Walker, is saying, 'Those days are over. We've got somebody representing the people now, and this is going to be an adversary proceeding between you folks and us.'"...

Newsweek's Eleanor Clift: "Since when does Scott Walker represent the people? He's representing the moneyed interests that helped him get elected — including lots of money from the Koch brothers."

— Exchange on *The McLaughlin Group*, February 26.

Democratic Guest Stunned by MSNBC Host's Absurd "Racist" Claim

Clip from RNC ad: "Stop Obama and his union bosses today. The Republican National Committee is responsible for the content of this advertising."

Host Lawrence O'Donnell: "The Republican Party is saying that the President of the United States has bosses, that the union bosses this President around, the unions boss him around. Does that sound to you like they are trying to consciously or subconsciously deliver the racist message that, of course, of course a black man can't be the real boss?"

Ex-Governor Jennifer Granholm (D-MI): "Wow, I hadn't thought about the racial overtones...."

— MSNBC's *The Last Word*, February 25.

"Radical" Rand Paul Would Take "Chainsaw" to Budget

Co-host Terry Moran: "Senator No Surrender. He's the most controversial newcomer to Capitol Hill with a radical pedigree.... Even the most conservative Republicans balk at his proposals for slashing government...."

Correspondent Bill Weir: "While the President argues for a budget scalpel, Rand Paul would use a chainsaw, shutting down the Departments of Energy and Education. He would kill the Consumer Product Safety Commission, shrink the Pentagon and cut off all foreign aid. And while the most fiscally conservative Republicans were proposing \$50 billion in cuts, he wanted to slash \$500 billion.... [to Rand Paul] Does the richest nation in the history of nations have a responsibility to take care of its weakest?"

— ABC's *Nightline*, February 23.



Criticizing a Union = "Demonizing Teachers"

"You really came on hard against the teachers' union. I think everybody in this country on all sides of this thinks we need education reform, that we got to do something to make our educational system better. Do you worry that the stance you have taken has somehow demonized teachers and will raise questions in young people's minds as to whether they want to go into the profession?"

"You have a reputation as a straight talker, I think. Do you believe that the budgetary problems across this country can be resolved without raising taxes?"

— Two of moderator Bob Schieffer's questions to New Jersey Governor Chris Christie on CBS's *Face the Nation*, February 27.



Abortion Foes: Evil, Immoral, Unethical – and Stupid

“It’s illogical, what they’re doing, because if you are not going to help people with birth control, you’re going to have more abortions....So, besides being evil and immoral and unethical, they’re also stupid.”

— Host Joy Behar on her *Headline News Joy Behar Show*, February 21, talking about House Republicans voting to cut off federal funding for Planned Parenthood.



Conservatives Have “Ethnic Disdain” for Obama Family

“I think there’s a disdain from people like [Rush] Limbaugh for this First Family as a family. There’s a disdain towards them. He wouldn’t talk about another First Family that were white like this. He has a disdain, which has come on again and again. [Glenn] Beck has it too. It’s ethnic disdain, and they feel happy doing this because they know their followers out there like it.”

— Chris Matthews on *Hardball*, February 23, talking about Limbaugh suggesting hypocrisy in Michelle Obama indulging in a high-calorie barbecue rib dinner while publicly campaigning against obesity.

Borger Deplores “Dangerous” & Arrogant Republicans

“They [the new Republican freshman] are not awestruck by Washington. (A good thing.) They are not remotely humbled by the hallowed and marbled halls. (Still good.) Instead, they come with the arrogance of absolute conviction. (Dangerous.)...What’s the problem? It’s their way of doing business. It’s their conviction that compromise is bad. ‘They could use a dose of humility,’ says one senior White House adviser.”

— CNN senior political analyst Gloria Borger in a February 24 CNN.com column.

America, the “Swaziland and New Guinea” of Human Rights

“And now, family leave. A new report from Human Rights Watch found 178 nations guarantee paid leave for new mothers and many new fathers – as much as 16 months in Sweden. So where does America fall? At the bottom of the list with Swaziland and New Guinea.”

— ABC’s Diane Sawyer on *World News*, February 23.

Dave Disputes Reality, Wants More Taxes on the Rich

Senator Rand Paul: “If you look at the income tax, the top one percent pay about a third of the income tax. The top 50 percent – those who make \$70,000 and above – pay 96 percent of the income tax, so the middle class and above are paying all of the income tax....”

Host David Letterman: “Right, I think there’s something wrong with those numbers. I don’t know what it is exactly, but I’m pretty sure there’s something wrong with them....I don’t think it makes sense to me. You look at these people in Wisconsin, and we’re talking about, you know, the people we’ve been talking about, why don’t we just raise the taxes and let these folks have their collective bargaining, have their union representation and go back to their jobs?”

— CBS’s *The Late Show*, February 24. The latest IRS data (from tax year 2008) show the top one percent of tax returns accounted for 20 percent of adjusted gross income but 38 percent of federal individual income taxes paid.



“Thanks Goodness I’m Just Gay,” Not Republican

“I had no sense of who I was. You know, I was just, I was just trying to save my life on a daily basis. And so, people have said, you know, ‘You had to have known you were gay.’ I realized I was so un-self-examined I could have been a Republican, but you know, thank goodness I’m just gay. So that’s much better, don’t you think?”

— Actress Meredith Baxter to Matt Lauer on NBC’s *Today*, March 1.

Notable Quotables

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