

Occupy Pittsburgh Now

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WAR ON WOMEN



Gov. Corbett closes his eyes to women’s rights (Photo by Tom Jefferson)

The Invasion of Women’s Bodies

By Kristyn Felman

Rather than addressing longstanding income inequality, the poverty experienced by fifteen million American women (US Department of Health and Human Services), or the disproportionate impact of this recession on women, many lawmakers have fixated on limiting a woman’s control over her own body.

In December, Governor Corbett signed Senate Bill 732 imposing burdensome and costly regulations on abortion providers. Promoted by the anti-choice National Right to Life Committee, 732 passed with bipartisan support despite the opposition of every public health and medical organization that weighed in. While the stated purpose of this bill was to protect women from unscrupulous providers, medical experts including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists opposed the regulations and warn that the effect will be to dramatically limit access to abortion services.

Then there is House Bill 1977, which will ban coverage of abortions by insurance companies that participate in the statewide insurance exchange to be set up in compliance with the Affordable Care Act.

In other words, if the company that provides your private health insurance policy opts to participate in the insurance exchange, the policy will no longer cover your abortion *even if* that procedure is necessary to save your life. Experts agree that this will effectively eliminate the coverage of abortion services currently included in eighty percent of the private health plans now held by American women. HB 1977 is poised to pass in Pennsylvania with overwhelming bipartisan support.

Finally, House Bill 1077 requires that an ultrasound be performed prior to an abortion procedure, that the results be visible to the patient, and that the technician document whether or not the patient viewed said results. While ultrasounds are not uncommon in abortion care, requiring them when medically unnecessary and dictating this type of documentation are unprecedented violations of the privacy and autonomy of women. The bill may also violate a physician’s first amendment protection from compelled speech, mandating that providers invite patients to view ultrasound results and share information, which implicates them in delivering the state’s anti-abortion message. While Governor Corbett recently told National Public Radio that he would not support a bill that required the more invasive transvaginal ultrasounds, he supports the current version of the bill which requires that a woman seeking an abortion be given an opportunity to “observe” their fetus’ heartbeat. Since fetal heartbeats are not audible externally until approximately 12 weeks’ gestation, and the great majority of abortions occur prior to 12 weeks, this may covertly mandate the use of transvaginal ultrasound technology.

The invasion of women’s bodies represented by this legislation is an important component of the oppression of the 99 percent. Women are systematically excluded from the one percent and disproportionately represented at the bottom of the 99 percent. According to the U.S. Census, women are 35 percent more likely to be poor than men. The politicization of women’s bodies and the patriarchal nature of recent rhetoric should serve as a potent reminder that the personal liberties and autonomy of the 99 percent are under attack.

The Attack on Women Workers

By Kate Luce Angell

“The denial of contraceptive coverage is seen as discrimination against women and an attack on workers’ right to basic health coverage.” -The AFL-CIO Executive Council, 3-14-2012

It’s easy, especially if you are a woman, to take the current Republican and right-wing War against Women personally. And if you’re a man, it’s just as easy to see these attacks as aimed at women, not at you.

But the focus on women as targets obscures the fact that this anti-woman agenda isn’t just directed toward the more than half of the 99% that are female. Women workers are the linchpin of both American economic growth and the well-being of the American family. Women’s gender may make them especially vulnerable to “cultural” attacks, but make no mistake: the War against Women is part of the larger war against all working people, regardless of their gender.

To start with, a growing proportion of American workers are women. Since 1970, women have entered the workplace in rapidly increasing numbers: up more than 44% in the last 25 years. Women now comprise half of all payroll employment in the U.S.

We’ve all seen the cultural skirmishes that have resulted from this increase: debates about affordable child care, changes in traditional marriage, sexual harassment. But one fact that gets little attention is that, to a large degree, the growth of the American economy over the last 10 years is a direct result of women’s move into the workplace. It’s estimated that in developed economies like the U.S., women now produce about 40% of GDP, and that their contributions overall have added more to global growth than China.

In step with the importance of women to the American economy, families now increasingly depend on women’s work. Wives’ earnings are 36% of the average family’s income, and 2 –parent families with a working wife see a yearly increase in average earnings, whereas families where the wife stays home can expect a decrease. If trends continue, by 2030, the average wife will make more than her husband. The numbers are clear: many families need women to work in order to survive and have any chance of rising.

And let’s not forget the more than 33% of American families that depend on women as the only breadwinner: that’s one third of families in this country completely dependent upon the work and earning power of women.

The kind of family that the right claims to support—2 parents, one paycheck—is declining, and that is partly because of the same economic policies that it also supports, which undermine wages and discourage collective bargaining.

So it’s not hard to see how the current attack on women’s access to reproductive healthcare is also a broadside against all workers when you consider its role in allowing women AND men to delay childbearing, space their children and plan their families in a way that allows women to undertake full-time, long-term work—a situation that benefits male workers as much as it does female ones.

Hilary Chiz, who works in Civil and Human Rights at the United Steelworkers Union in downtown Pittsburgh, points out that her organization’s position is that workers’ rights are human rights—and that an attack on female workers is an attack on all workers.

She gave the example of a supervisor who might sexually harass female steelworkers.

“We tell the men that if management demeans these women, they demean every worker there. It affects the entire organization,” she said.

“We say, ‘These women do the same job you do, so this is being done to you.’”

The economic health of our country, and our country’s families, is directly tied to whether women work. Women might appear to be the target of these attacks, but these are attempts to control the ability of *all* working people to make a living and control their lives.

An attack on one is an attack on all.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN OUR BACKYARD

By Jeff Cech

In recognition of International Women’s Day, the World Affairs Council of Pittsburgh and the YWCA of Greater Pittsburgh held a panel discussion on March 15: “Trafficking of Women and Girls: a Global Challenge in Our Own Backyard.” This panel discussion raised the issue that human trafficking isn’t just a problem in other countries, or states: it’s a major and growing problem right here in southwestern PA.

One of the speakers, Dr. Mary Burke, a Carlow University Professor who oversees the Southwestern Pennsylvania Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition, said that trafficking is the fastest-growing and second-largest criminal industry in the world after the drug trade, and that it generates \$32 billion in profits for traffickers each year.

According to the United Nations, human trafficking involves “recruiting, transporting, transferring, harboring or receiving a person through a use of force, coercion or other means, for the purpose of exploiting them.”

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Humility: A Letter From the Trenches of the Abortion War

By Kate Luce Angell

As the debate on abortion has gotten more contentious over the last few months, and with a growing number of states adopting legislation that restrict women’s access to abortion, or proposing measures like our own state’s HB 1077, I’ve felt more and more frightened by what I’m seeing.

I know I’m not alone on that, and I’m also not alone in being someone who, in years past, was complacent enough about the security offered by Roe v. Wade that I didn’t feel the need to fight the slow chipping away of my rights.

There’s no more room for complacency, now, and no more room for equivocation. That’s why I am willing, for the first time, to say publicly: I have had an abortion.

In that, also, I know I’m not alone. At least half of American women will get pregnant by mistake by age 45, and about half of those pregnancies end in abortion. If our current rates hold, 35% of all women of reproductive age in America today will have had an abortion by the time they reach the age of 45. Like me, about 61% of abortions are obtained by women who have one or more children.

I’m saying this because I am tired of this debate being dominated by people who seem to have little to no understanding of what they’re talking about when they talk about abortion, or at least do so without any compunction about harshly judging a group of women that, after all, is comprised of 1 out of every 3 of us.

I’m also heartily tired of being made to feel like I need to slink around and be deeply ashamed for terminating a pregnancy, and I fear for a future in which my daughter may be made to feel this way, too. I am not ashamed, and I believe that decision was the best one I could make for myself and my children. Furthermore, I remain deeply grateful that I was able to do so safely, and with the help of medical professionals who exhibited compassion and concern throughout. Finally, I know I am lucky in that my private insurance partially

covered the procedure and although my portion was expensive, it was not beyond my means to pay.

I could tell you the whole story, but I won’t—not because I want to preserve my privacy (clearly I’ve let that go already), but because I refuse to play the “deserve” game.

You know the one I’m talking about. Even among some people who support abortion, there is a sliding scale of abortion-justification, which starts up there with women who want to abort because of rape or incest, and covers the gamut from



severe birth defects and danger to mother’s life, malfunctioning birth control, all the way to “he told me had a vasectomy,” or “I just wasn’t thinking clearly at the time.” My experience woke me up to the importance of humility—when you need an abortion, you are no better or worse than any of the other women who do. Debating the circumstances isn’t relevant.

Along with the concept of women deserving, more or less, an abortion, there’s another concept I’d like to challenge: that women need to suffer the consequences of their actions by being forced to have a baby they don’t want.

This assumes that abortion isn’t consequence enough. That it’s totally without emotional or physical impact, that women don’t understand the gravity of terminating a pregnancy, that it isn’t a difficult decision, and that, even under the best of medical circumstances, it’s a procedure any woman would want to undergo.

Again, I was fortunate enough to be eligible for a chemical, rather than surgical, abortion, which meant that I took a combination of mifepristone and misoprostol, one in a doctor’s office, then another at home. Even avoiding surgery and dealing with my abortion in my own home, it’s not an experience I ever want to repeat.

But that brings me to another assumption: “We can all agree that abortion is a terrible thing.”

Actually, no. I don’t agree that abortion is necessarily a terrible thing. It’s not ideal, and it’s not for everyone. But I can think of a lot of things that are far worse than a safe, first-trimester abortion: like having a back-alley abortion that leaves you dead, or having a baby you can’t in a million years afford, or even bringing a baby to term, then giving it away and just hoping its adoptive parents don’t abuse or neglect it.

But that’s me. Someone else in my shoes would choose to continue the pregnancy and keep the child, while another woman would give the child up for adoption. Right now, women have all these choices.

Having an abortion made me far more aware of how difficult these choices are if you’re actually faced with them. It made me aware of how my abortion, my set of circumstances, was different from anyone else’s, and “abortion” is a word that hides all the individual women who choose to terminate their pregnancies, making them all seem the same.

Finally, it made me aware of the fact that most women don’t have the advantages that I had: an abortion provider minutes from my home, a supportive staff and doctor, access to insurance that partially covered the procedure and the ability to pay the balance.

It made me less likely to judge other women for their choices. It made me even more aware of the disadvantages that women have to deal with every day.

I haven’t debated here about the ethics of having an abortion, or talked about the very real difference between an abortion at 3 weeks’ gestation and one at 23. I haven’t talked about the constitutionality of Roe v. Wade, or what the world would be like if abortion were made illegal, all of which are worth talking about.

I just wanted to attach one name to that vast crowd of women that legislators and others seem so anxious to condemn and control, and suggest that a measure of humility and the exercise of some empathy might do them some good. It did me.

Human Trafficking

(Continued from page 1)

The UN’s International Labor Organization reports that there are 12.3 million individuals being trafficked worldwide, but estimates range from 2.4 to 27 million. The U.S. State Department believes there are 600,000 to 800,000 individuals trafficked across international borders each year, and between 14,500 to 17,500 are arriving in the United States. Trafficked people tend to move from developing countries like the former Soviet Republics, China and Nigeria, to industrialized “first world” nations like the United States, Germany and Japan.

These modern slaves tend to be broken down into two categories: Labor and Sex. Across the board, roughly 80% of trafficked people are female. Seventy percent of those are for the purposes of sexual exploitation, and nearly half of them are children. FBI Special Agent Denise Holtz told the audience that “juvenile sex traffic in Pittsburgh is the dominant form of Human Trafficking.” The CIA claims that 50,000 to 100,000 women are trafficked within the U.S. each year, and Holtz points out that “not all victims of human trafficking in the U.S., are from outside of the U.S.” In fact, under the United Nations definition, a missing 14-year-old girl who was found when police busted a prostitution ring in South Oakland was a victim of Human Trafficking. The girl was reported missing from the Three Rivers Youth Center nearly a year prior.

Shockingly, CBS News reported on February 11 2012, that “about 1,000 American-born children are forced into the sex trade in Ohio every year and about 800 immigrants are sexually exploited and pushed into sweatshop-type jobs.” These numbers come out of a commission formed by Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray. The commission blames Ohio’s weak laws on human trafficking, its growing demand for cheap labor and its proximity to the Canadian border.

Before we congratulate ourselves on having a better record than Ohio, it’s important to take a look at the report card on state action to combat international trafficking from the UN. The report card covers 5 areas, and Pennsylvania received a “B” in the first area, reflecting that it had, in fact, criminalized human trafficking within the state. But we received an “F” in the other four areas. Two of the “F” grades were earned for failing to regulate international marriage brokers and failure to regulate travel service providers that promote “sex tourism” to places like Thailand where human sexual exploitation generates the majority of the GDP.

The third panelist, Dr. Muge Kokten Finkel from Pitt, pointed to factors that contribute to the likelihood of human trafficking, and said “the trends seem to cut across developed and undeveloped countries.” They include states with less severe punishment for domestic violence, legalized prostitution, repressive policies toward undocumented migrants, less active civil societies, poverty, and cultural attitudes that objectify women.

Our state has certainly seen some of these factors at work. So far, though, we’ve been less able to perceive the human cost of the trafficking that’s happening in our local neighborhoods. It’s difficult to see, “in our own backyard.”

**Join Occupy Pittsburgh in the
Fight to end the
War on Women
and Stop PA House Bill 1077
with a March and Rally
on April 28th
Check for more info at
www.occupypittsburgh.org**

**CELEBRATE THE CENTENNIAL OF THE
BREAD AND ROSES STRIKE
WITH LABOR SONGS, FOOD AND DRINK!**

After more than 25,000 textile workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts (most of them women) had their pay cut, they shut down the looms and left. Their rallying cry was a poem by James Oppenheim titled “Bread and Roses.”

*As we come marching, marching, we battle too, for men,
For they are in the struggle and together we shall win,
Our days shall not be sweated from birth until life closes,
Hearts starve as well as bodies, give us bread, but give us roses.’*

**JOIN OCCUPY PITTSBURGH ON APRIL 30TH
7PM AT THE NATIONAL LETTER CARRIERS’
HEADQUARTERS IN THE NORTH SIDE**

The Citizen Journalist

By Tom Prigg

Citizen journalism (also known as "public", "participatory", "democratic", "guerrilla" or "street journalism") is the concept of members of the public "playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news and information." -Wikipedia

The birth of Citizen Journalism has created some interesting conundrums for those who want to control our news for their own agendas. There are too many of us to co-op financially and we're using new technology still unfamiliar to those in mainstream journalism.

Calling it the "new" journalism isn't accurate, because journalism has always been an evolving field ever since ancient people pressed messages into clay slabs. But the current moment in journalism may be as significant as the shift in journalism styles of the 60s and 70s. With the advent of satellite broadcast and television coverage, journalism began to transform itself, with a big shift occurring during the Vietnam War. Suddenly, anyone could come home from a long day at work and watch the war as it unfolded before their eyes.

In one televised report from Hue, burned-out vehicles and rubble surrounded a CBS war correspondent, who asked one Colonel Chedum, "What's your objective and what are your men about to do?" The colonel immediately launched immediately into his game plan. "Well, I have got two companies here who are about to clear the next two blocks up." Colonel Chedum then points at the building behind the correspondent, "I got one company here in this big building here that I guess is Hue University."

The film cuts back to men lying behind a three foot wall. Rifle rounds crack the sound barrier just above their heads. One man dashes out on orders, but his squad stays put, he collapses onto the ground hit by enemy fire.

The Vietnam reality show woke the American population up to what war really meant. They watched from their couches the horrors of invading a foreign country.

Up until recently, journalism has been dependent upon individual journalists who were limited by their news agencies. In these times, Freedom of Press was only



Laney Trautman, Occupy Pittsburgh Live-stream Reporter

available to those who were wealthy enough to own the press. Major newspapers, local and cable news were owned by the richest people in our society and this monetary dependency has only increased since the economic downturn. In 2009, The American Society of News Editors reported the loss of 59,000 reporters due to layoffs.

Traditional journalists also feel growing pressure from their corporate-sponsored news organizations, thus creating conflicts of interest. On Feb 14, 2003 a Florida Appeals court hearing ruled in favor of Fox News as it sought to purposely lie, conceal and distort information. In December 1996, reporter Jane Akre and others were advised to lie by the Fox News Network. As reported in the Daily Kos, "Fox executives and their attorneys wanted the reporters to use statements from Monsanto representatives that the reporters knew were false and to make other revisions to the story that were in direct conflict with the facts. Fox

editors then tried to force Akre and Wilson to continue to produce the distorted story."

Into this moment comes the "Citizen Journalist." Citizen Journalism has hampered the ability of a few mainstream news organizations to dictate what information is published, to distort events or to outright lie. And by utilizing social media, citizen journalists are beginning to reach levels of readership closer to the established commercial media.

Take the example of blogs and social networks. Over time, many blogs have developed into respectable news sources. Information has never spread so quickly. Recently, the Susan G. Komen foundation announced that it would cut all funding to Planned Parenthood. Not only did the news spread like wildfire, but people were able to mobilize a protest of the Komen foundation within a single day. The world's largest breast cancer awareness foundation is still struggling to rebound from the backlash.

The newest manifestation of citizen journalism is the advent of live-streaming video. Anyone with smart phone can now stream live video to a website for anyone who logs on to see it. Anyone with an Internet connection can experience a real-time telling of events.

My first experience as an observer of this type of journalism was on September, 17, 2011, as I watched the very first live-stream from the very first action of Occupy Wall Street. I watched as people took the megaphone and gave their thoughts on why they were there, and what their demands should be. A soft acoustic guitar melody mixed with echoing police sirens as a young woman draped in a hoodie stepped forward and addressed the crowd. "If we don't know what our demands are now, we should know what we need to do." At 9 p.m. the police took away the megaphones. Another young man suggested a process of speaking in unison to relay their messages and "The Peoples Mic" was born. I was not at Zuccotti that night, but in some respects, I was there to witness a historical event from my home hundreds of miles away.

Citizen Journalism is changing the way events are recorded, seen and interpreted worldwide, and it's emerging as a force that can oppose or put pressure on traditional news outlets who distort events for their own ends. Because citizen journalists are everywhere, all the time, they continue to resist the cooption and control that has characterized current journalism.

Public Transit Under Attack

By Jeff Cech

On March 7, Occupy Pittsburgh, the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) and Pittsburghers for Public Transit (PPT) were joined by hundreds of United Steelworker members for a rally demanding action to stop the proposed transit cuts. After gathering at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, where USW members from across the country were attending a Health and Safety Conference, 500 demonstrators rallied together and marched to the U.S. Steel Tower, home to UPMC's Corporate Headquarters.

Protestors wanted to send the message that budgetary shortfalls in the Commonwealth aren't from a lack of revenue, but from a serious tax collection problem, and it's being allowed to threaten our city's public transit system, on which tens of thousands rely, both for their livelihood and for their transportation.

Pennsylvanians lost \$10 million in transfer tax revenue when the out-of-state buyers of the U.S. Steel Tower exploited a loophole to avoid making the payment.

The U.S. Steel deal isn't the only tax revenue that's missing from the picture. Laws on the state books, written by corporate lobbyists, allow our region's largest employer, UPMC, to avoid paying taxes on its \$406 million in profits. UPMC is also one of the region's biggest land owners (and its holdings increase all the time) but its tax-exempt status allows it to evade property taxes.

Meanwhile, the governor's office has consistently slashed public services, crying a lack of funds. Last year's budget took nearly \$1 billion out of our state education system and made drastic cuts to transit. The Port Authority of Allegheny County was reduced by a third. The

Governor's current budget proposal will result in the loss of half of the remaining bus service.

Local organizations have come to the conclusion that one of the only ways to stop cuts is to end tax breaks for hundreds of large corporations across Pennsylvania.

During the protest, the crowd rushed across Grant St. to fill the steps leading up to the Steel Tower, chanting slogans like, "Public Transit Under Attack, What do you do, Stand Up Fight Back," and "U-P-M-C, Pay Your Fair Share!"

Michael J Harms, Recording Secretary ATU Local 85, spoke at the rally. He was excited by the turnout and the energy, and says, "you could feel the electricity."

Harms believes that, unfortunately, the protest may not have been big enough to have an effect in Harrisburg. He says, "We'd have to multiply that by twenty times because I can't see Governor Tom Corporate fixing it without a real mass action. The jerks we have in there right now aren't going to do anything until we get people in the streets and literally shut these businesses down."

A veteran driver with 14 years of service, Harms has seen a drastic change at the Port Authority over the course of his career. He

says drivers are being rushed to complete routes faster, even at the expense of safety. Drivers are stressed and morale is low. Many don't know if they're going to have a job at the end of summer, and according to Harms, "we still have 98 drivers out from last March's cuts, and their unemployment is starting to run dry."



Mike Harms exits a Port Authority Bus during the demonstration on March 7th, 2012.

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Why Women Matter

What’s Being Done, and What You Can Do About It

By Rebecca Altes

In “The Handmaid’s Tale,” Margaret Atwood envisioned a dystopic society where women are stripped of their rights and treated only as “two-legged wombs.” Make no mistake: there are people who view this as an ideal, not a nightmare. And there are legislators who are working to make this nightmare a reality.

In 2011, according to the Guttmacher Institute, “legislators introduced more than 1,100 reproductive health and rights-related provisions, a sharp increase from the 950 introduced in 2010. By year’s end, 135 of these provisions had been enacted in 36 states, an increase from the 89 enacted in 2010 and the 77 enacted in 2009.” Almost 70% of these new provisions restrict access to abortion services, compared to 26% in 2010.

Most of the bills are couched in condescending language, like the “Right to Know Act,” which assume that women are incapable of making informed decisions about their health without interference from the government. Others, such as those raised in Arizona and Kansas, would allow doctors to lie to women about birth defects in order to prevent an abortion, though strangely these aren’t presented as “No Right to Know Acts.”

At least one legislator has been honest in his opinion of women. Defending a bill which would ban ANY abortion after 20 weeks, Georgia Rep. Terry England compared it to farmers delivering cows and pigs. That’s right, fetuses should be considered people, but women should have no more rights than livestock.

If the attack on women’s rights to govern their own health feels coordinated, that’s because it is. Many of the bills follow the model legislation developed by Americans United for Life (AUL), which has connections to the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), the corporate-funded organization which has written the model legislation for voter suppression, privatization of education, weakening environmental protection, and destroying collective bargaining rights.

Currently, ten states are considering, or have passed, bills forcing women to

have an ultrasound prior to receiving an abortion; several states are bringing bills which would ban coverage of abortions by insurance companies which participate in the statewide insurance exchange; and “wrongful birth” lawsuit shields (which would allow doctors to withhold information about birth defects so as to discourage abortions) are gaining steam.

Across the country, women, and those who support them, are rising up.

Several progressive legislators have added riders to the restrictive bills, or introduced their own satirical counterparts. In Virginia, while the state Senate considered requiring transvaginal ultrasounds for women seeking abortions, Sen. Janet Howell proposed mandating rectal exams and cardiac stress tests for men seeking prescription drugs for erectile dysfunction. Her amendment failed by just two votes. Similar riders were suggested in Ohio, Illinois and Wisconsin.

While Rep. England was comparing women to livestock, Rep. Yasmin Neal of Georgia proposed outlawing vasectomies, as did a colleague in Missouri. In Oklahoma, in response to a zygote-personhood bill, Sen. Constance Johnson proposed an amendment that ejaculating anywhere outside of a women’s vagina should be considered “an action against an unborn child.”

Taking it a step further, the bloggers at Shakesville are suggesting a Personhood Amendment to the Constitution. “A person identifying as a woman and/or having a uterus shall retain all of the full, basic, and fundamental rights of a US citizen as promised by the Declaration of Independence—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” When so many in the government seek to define zygotes as people while infringing on women’s rights, this seems not so much satirical as vitally necessary.

If you have a uterus, or know someone who does, you need to stand up. On March 14, 2012, Governor Tom Corbett reaffirmed his support for the Pennsylvania mandatory ultrasound act, saying women could just “close [their] eyes.” Governor Corbett, our eyes are open!

Public Transit Fights Back

(Continued from page 3)

“Theft by one thousand slices” is how Harms describes the deterioration of the Port Authority, and says that if cuts go through, “this place is going to be a shell of what it is. What they’ll run basically will be inner city service only.”

Action to stop transit cuts will have to come by the end of June when the budget is due. Harms says, “Pressure needs to be put on these politicians to step up and do their jobs.” He pointed to the Governor’s Transit Commission’s recommendation to end tax breaks on wholesale fuel to help pay for the bus system, and said, “I don’t think the leaders that we have in there have the stones to do it.” So, as it has in the past, the buck will be passed to the drivers. Many accuse the drivers’ union for the Port Authority’s budget problems because of their wages and healthcare. Harms grumbled, “I’m tired of hearing it.”

The Port Authority’s CEO, Steve Bland, admitted that even if drivers’ healthcare benefits and wages were cut, it wouldn’t fix Pennsylvania’s transit crisis. In a meeting earlier this year, Bland half-jokingly exclaimed, “They want to pay bus drivers minimum wage? I don’t want to ride that bus!”

Harms believes that for legislators and corporations to make the changes necessary to repair the tax

collections system in Pennsylvania it will take drastic measures, and may mean watching transit disappear before businesses and corporations realize how great the impact is.

In the meantime, drivers and passengers alike have to wonder if they’ll be going to work on a bus in September.



STAND UP FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT

WITH OCCUPY PITTSBURGH
AND OCCUPY BOSTON

ON APRIL 4TH AT NOON

AT THE CITY-COUNTY BUILDING

IN A NATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY IN THE FIGHT TO STOP CUTS AND SAVE OUR PUBLIC TRANSIT

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