



The Demands of the Irresponsible

by **John Hayward** ([more by this author](#))

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Writing in the *Washington Post*, George Will begins a [splendid profile](#) of Governor Scott Walker by reminding us that Madison, Wisconsin used to style itself as “the Athens of the Midwest.” These days, the similarities are indeed pronounced, and not at all flattering.

In the city of Athens, Greece, an interesting new mutation of anarchy has appeared: the “I Won’t Pay” movement. As [described by the Associated Press](#), it’s a combination of labor union members and Communist Party activists (funny how those flavors of collectivism combine so readily!) who prevent people from paying for municipal transportation, highway tolls, and even fees at state hospitals. They do this by blockading toll booths, sabotaging ticket machines, and encouraging other Greek citizens to stiff the government for public services, any way they can.

Greece lies in a pool of her own blood at the base of socialism’s cliff, crushed on the rocks of unsustainable government spending and a moribund economy. The “I Won’t Pay” crowd is upset by the government’s new austerity measures, and (justifiably) angered by years of widespread corruption. It’s grimly amusing to watch socialists wail in surprise and fury when they discover their government is corrupt. *Of course* it is. So was *every other* socialist and communist government on the planet, throughout the sad history of collectivist thought. Corruption is an inherent feature of collectivism. There are no large, honest governments, and there never will be. When political power becomes one of the most valuable commodities in an economy, it *will* be bought, sold, and traded.

“The people have paid already through their taxes, so they should be able to travel for free,” an activist told the Associated Press while picketing a metro ticket booth. That’s a fine example of the kind of thinking that turned Greece into a basket case, and music to a communist’s ears. An atmosphere of anarchy provides excellent acoustics for the siren song of collective ownership. Things may seem desperate now, oppressed workers, but serve and obey the State, and everything will be provided for “free!” The vastly more efficient principle of expecting the people who actually *ride* a train to pay for the service is confusing to childlike minds.

Newspaper columnist Dionysis Gousetis made an interesting point in criticizing the idealistic freeloaders: “The course from initial lawlessness to final wanton irresponsibility is like a spreading cancer.” This is always a danger with civil disobedience. What better word for the crowds of public union employees marching around “the Athens of the Midwest” than “irresponsible?” From teachers using their students as political props and tossing around Hitler references, to doctors writing fraudulent excuses to obtain paid sick leave for union shock troops, to Democrat politicians fleeing the state to shut down a vote, the Wisconsin Left abandoned all responsibility to the people it wishes to subjugate.

Prosperity flourishes in an environment of trust, established through mutual respect for the law. No government or private corporation could afford to provide services for very long, if people felt free to use them without paying. It doesn’t take much imagination to see the “I Won’t Pay” movement as exactly the kind of poison that will murder the deformed economy of Greece in its basket.

The notion being pushed against the capitols of Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, and other American states wrestling with powerful and desperate public unions is a related toxin. Call it the “You Will All Pay” movement. It is the idea that taxpayers have *no say whatsoever* in how public unions are compensated. Union demands override the outcome of the democratic process, to the point where democratic government itself will be shut down, if it seems likely to produce an outcome the union leadership doesn’t like.

The people may be able to vote for new representatives, but those representatives are not allowed to adjust the relationship between government and the unions. The “right” of public employees to collective bargaining – which has only existed for about fifty years - is now even more immutable than the Constitution, which at least has an amendment process. These “public employees” obviously don’t recognize their Republican governors, or the people who voted for them, as “employers” they must respect and serve. It’s a trait they have in common with the Greek anarchists who are sabotaging ticket booths.

Using public services without paying for them... forcing the public to pay for civil servants they don’t want and cannot afford... two sides of the same coin, really. Both are demands made in the absence of responsibility, made by people who feel no allegiance to those who sustain them. Both involve the selfish use of public resources, while disregarding inconvenient laws and requirements. They are two separate trails that converge on the road to serfdom. The “I Won’t Pay” movement is a little confused about who will end up as the serfs. The public unions of America suffer from no such confusion.

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