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BUDGET BATTLE

Protesters jam Capitol Square, deriding budget bill

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Tom Lynn

A throng of protesters surrounded the "Forward" statue at the Capitol. The statue has been blindfolded and has a 'For Sale' sign hanging around its neck.

By Bill Glauber and Don Walker of the Journal Sentinel

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Feb. 26, 2011 | (1393) COMMENTS

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If you were Gov. Walker...

Madison - With a light snow falling and tens of thousands of voices rising, demonstrators jammed the state Capitol and surrounding square Saturday in a massive protest against Gov. Scott Walker's budget-repair bill.

Peaceful and passionate, the pro-union crowd rallied against a bill that has left the Legislature in gridlock and triggered a walkout by 14 Senate Democrats, who fled the state for Illinois and left the Capitol in political chaos.

The crowd heard from labor leaders, religious leaders, teachers, an actor and a snowplow driver. Thousands of people stood on snow and ice and poured onto two blocks of State St., while thousands more kept up a steady parade around the Capitol Square.

It was Angela Aldous, a 30-year-old nurse from Madison, who drew the loudest cheers. She sought to cast doubt on Walker's suggestion, made last week, that many people from out of state were joining the large protest crowds in Madison.

"Governor Walker, I'm not faking this Wisconsin accent," Aldous said. "I was born in Wisconsin. I live in Wisconsin. And I came back early from my ice-fishing trip to tell you, 'You are not going to crush Wisconsin.' "

She then led the crowd in a chant: "We are Wisconsin."

Not since the anti-war protests of the Vietnam era has Madison been the scene of such sustained and large demonstrations. Wisconsin is at the center of an epic clash between a Republican governor eager to take on entrenched union power and public-sector workers battling to hold onto rights they have held for more than a half century.

But the struggle has reverberated nationwide, with rallies held in cities throughout the country Saturday in support of Wisconsin workers and

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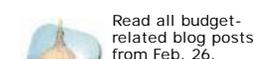
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