



## OHIO FORUM

By Greg Coleridge

Organizers are expecting hundreds of thousands of people will march on Washington on Oct. 2 to demand jobs, justice and education.

The "One Nation Coming Together" rally couldn't be timelier, as 15 million Americans are unemployed (including 600,000 Ohioans), another 11 million have stopped looking for work, and millions more are underemployed.

We have a national jobs emergency.

The 2008 financial implosion exasperated already massive jobs losses. Free trade, tax and corporate policies all encouraged corporations to move abroad and divert investments from real goods and services into speculative financial products.

The Obama administration's economic stimulus wasn't large enough and it lacked focus on hiring. It also added to the debt and deficit.

A massive national public works program is urgently needed. The private sector isn't creating jobs, so the public sector must. Shifting funds from a bloated military budget and ending tax credits to the superrich are obvious financial sources. But there's another option -- one promoted by an Ohioan a century ago who arguably led this nation's first jobs rally.

Jacob Coxey, a businessman from Massillon, organized a 500-strong "Coxey's Army" that marched from Massillon to Washington, D.C., in 1894 to promote federal intervention for job creation. The primary demand of this "petition in boots" was unique -- the direct printing and issuance of \$500 million by the Federal Treasury to employ 4 million people.

What they did not promote was borrowing \$500 million from bankers, which had to be repaid with interest, lining the pockets of the bankers. Nor did they advocate moving \$500 million from one part of the federal budget to another, i.e. robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Coxey's Army members were "greenbackers," advocates for re-establishing the Lincoln administration's policy that financed the Civil War with \$400 million of government-issued funds.

Coxey's Army proposed two bills. The first, a "Good Roads Bill," would help farmers through \$500 million issued by the

# Job Advocates Could Learn a Lesson from Coxey's Army

federal government in legal tender notes, or greenbacks, to construct rural roads. The second, a noninterest-bearing bonds bill, would empower state and local governments to issue noninterest-bearing bonds to be used to borrow legal tender notes from the federal treasury. This money would be used to build urban libraries, schools, utility plants and marketplaces.

Millions of jobs would have been created -- debt-free.

"Money exists not by nature but by law," Aristotle said. What grants money credibility is its anointment by society. "We the people" should have ultimate democratic authority to issue and circulate money, not banks or bankers. The issuance of money should be democratized.

Unfortunately, that's not how it works in the United States. Money is privatized and corporatized. Private banks and the Federal Reserve create more than 95 percent of all our money. It is created literally "out of thin air" by banks and bankers for their own gain, regardless of society's needs. Banks can loan \$10 for every \$1 held in reserve.

A recent example of the corporatization of money was President Obama's having to ask -- almost plead -- with banks to provide more loans to small businesses.

Jacob Coxey, like Abraham Lincoln, understood that money should be publicly issued. History has demonstrated that when money is publicly issued to meet real physical and societal needs, there's no inflation.

The American Society of Civil Engineers estimates that we need \$2.2 trillion to repair our nation's physical infrastructure. Spending publicly issued money on physical and human needs would improve the nation's infrastructure and create jobs without adding to the national debt or sparking inflation (unlike spending money on military warfare or Wall Street casino-like speculation).

The "American Monetary Act" proposed by the American Monetary Institute has developed a three-step plan for the democratization of money -- shifting its issuance from banks to "We the People."

Those organizing and attending the upcoming national jobs rally must learn from Jacob Coxey's army. We need to create a modern-day army that promotes the democratization of our money to address the current job crisis.

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