



Who is Scott Walker, really?

His new book highlights the paradoxes of the man and his politics

BY CHARLES J. SYKES

Three years into his tumultuous first term, as he prepares to run for re-election and perhaps position himself for a presidential run in 2016, Scott Walker remains a puzzle to even some of his closest observers. He is, after all, a hard-edged conservative who talks about being a “champion to the vulnerable”; a fiscal conservative who disdains the politics of austerity; as well as a master communicator who sometimes fails to make his case.

His new book is unlikely to satisfy his critics or dispel all of the mystery behind the man we should know so much better. But it is a start.

Unintimidated: A Governor's Story and a Nation's Challenge (Sentinel Books), is an attempt not merely to tell the story of his battle over Act 10, but to define “Walkerism” and to sharply differentiate its style and philosophy from those of other leading Republicans, especially failed presidential candidate Mitt Romney.

Along the way, the book highlights the paradoxes

of the man at the center of the storm. Let's take a look at those paradoxes one by one and how they might play on the national stage.

Walker is a fiscal conservative but disdains the politics of austerity.

After nine years as Milwaukee county executive and three years as governor, Walker's image (at least among progressives) is that of a relentless budget cutter. In a scathing attack in 2011, historian John Gurda accused him of “dismantling government one line item at a time, regardless of the consequences.”

But in his book, Walker is sharply critical of what he calls the “sour politics of austerity.”

“Too often, conservatives present themselves as the bearers of sour medicine, when we should be offering a positive, optimistic agenda instead.”

His budget could have laid off tens of thousands of middle class workers, slashed Medicaid, and cut

