

A Few minutes with the Boss

By: Joseph Andalina

News Flash: Police officers stuck in low paying job

I'll say. The news out of Scranton, PA is that the mayor, who says they have a budget shortfall, has cut the entire town's pay to the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. Yes, I guess paying cops and firemen a good wage must be "unsustainable" nowadays.

So cops will now make just \$7.25 an hour while they risk life and limb. Bank robbery call with weapons displayed? No problems. Husband stabs wife and still has a knife, threatening the children. Sure, go ahead and call me. Traffic stops on forcible felony suspects. Risking a bullet at any time? Who are we to complain; we still have jobs. Is that worth \$7.25 an hour? Really, is it? Or fire guys rushing into burning buildings and risk collapsing walls, extreme heat, and catching fire themselves, all for \$7.25 an hour?

It seems to me stronger measures should be taken than lawsuits. I know, I sound just like a union guy. But do I want to wait for a court to decide? And what if they agree with the mayor? Then it's \$7.25 an hour until the city says so.

Really? I can't imagine taking a bullet or putting out fires for the same wages that the 17-year old at Dairy Queen is making. This makes concessions, give-backs, and furlough days look like actual wage increases. But each town or person have to do what they feel is best.

Wait for a court order that says pay them what the city is contractually bound to pay, however long that may take and hope that the city will make them whole. Or maybe a job action is in order. But we are not their union, if they have one, so I'll defer to those who have a stake in this abomination.

But is this the new way of fixing budgets? Is it the only way? Has the mayor in this city and others being completely honest? Have their decision making and ineffective policies so screwed up their finances that the only way to fulfill their budget is to make the municipal worker have lower credit scores when they can't pay their bills? Yeah, the banks that hold their mortgage are going to be very understanding. I'm sure they will say it's okay, Copper, pay us when you can. Same with the phone, electric, and gas companies.

And little Johnnie's medicine? Or his newborn sister's diapers and formula? Tough it out and cut up the sheets. I'm sure all those vendors, stores, and doctors will give you a pass, don't you?

I have heard pundits on the right on radio and TV espouse the courage of this mayor (because again, we as public sector workers are the enemy) and slobbered over the cities like Stockton, CA and San Bernardino, CA going bankrupt due to municipal workers' pensions and benefits, and now wages in Scranton. The right has just trashed government workers repeatedly. I think the only ones they want to see make any money are themselves and big businesses to contribute to this ultra-conservative clap trap.

But this is the lowest of the low. What's next, you pay the city to work there? You know, I can feel sorry for government if I thought they were not always trying to divert **their** screw ups to us poor grunts.

Look at Dixon, Illinois, where the comptroller stole \$53 million. It took the city 30 years to figure this out? Or San Bernardino? They said it was pensions and benefits that caused their bankruptcy, and then you dig a little deeper and see that the city attorney informs the council that they have been looking into falsified documents for the past 13 years. And of course the mayor says that is the first time he has heard about these issues. Really, Mr. Mayor? What the hell have you been doing as an elected official? Maybe this, whatever those falsified documents may have cost, has brought that California town to the brink—and not the workers.

So let's hope the cops and fire guys can get this resolved. \$7.25 an hour won't get a family far. It's a lot of macaroni and cheese for sure.

Vita è bella