

A Few minutes with the Boss

By: Joseph Andalina

Triumphant imbecility

The attempt of governments and particularly local municipalities to diminish public sector wages and benefits as well as your pensions goes on.

From the tubby governor in New Jersey to the governor in Ohio calling a policeman “an idiot” after the officer gave him a ticket, to the ongoing battles in Wisconsin, Michigan, Oklahoma, Florida and others, the accent is on stripping you of your collective bargaining rights.

Here in Illinois, the press and government have a never ending array of sound bites in both the print and visual media propagandizing the citizens that our jobs are more lucrative than the private sector. Therefore, we should have our benefits trimmed.

It is laughable that especially from the Republican pulpit who preach the horror of socialism where everybody gets the same, they somehow forget that this principle can also apply to the work force. Public service governments, they shout, should mirror the public sector. (As long as the job does not include where **they** are employed.) More on that in a bit.

Now in Florida, a headline that reached my desk was “*Hollywood, Florida residents vote to cut pensions of firefighters, police, and city employees.*” Yes, the citizens to which we serve chose to strip their employees of their current pension plans to save the city \$8.5 million. Nice trick to get this on a referendum vote.

Now the employees face longer periods to retire, will receive a smaller percentage of salary as a pension and no longer can include vacation and cost of living increase into the pension formula.

This is “Triumphant Imbecility” at its best as I like to call these efforts by politicians to erode the public sentiment away from us working public employees.

It worked so well that other Florida cities may do the same referendum type action. When people think they will save money by screwing **someone else**, they are all for it.

But I have yet to see anywhere how much money will go into the taxpayers’ pockets with the alleged savings. Oh, they say, it’s for future savings. Okay, then how much will governments put in their pocket in the future? No answer and all is silent on this from the peanut gallery of politicians who seem to avoid the obvious here.

They never say and nobody asks. Sure, they may save, but if they do, they will save here and spend elsewhere because that is what the corrupters always do—spend. And in the process, they will have very bitter employees who will care less, work less, and opt out early—if they stay at all. We may be in store for “turnstile” public sector workers. Get the same loyalty that they are given.

That is what is happening right here in Du Page County, Illinois. Recent reports indicate that all employees in the county will receive fewer benefits. The county changed the benefit programs for all non-union employees in that they have been scaled back. (Now this will not apply to unionized employees like our own Du Page County Deputies, but the reporter never says that. Might one surmise that they left out this tidbit to proffer the idea to a gullible public that these benefits were scaled back for everyone. You make that call!)

So the politicians in Du Page trimmed (nice word they used; like removing a few branches from your tree) in an effort to save \$28 million over 20 years.

These are numbers that nobody actually can get their arms around because you can't tell if they are lying for at least 20 years.

Future employees will be prevented from collecting a percentage of some accumulated unused sick days, which was a standard benefit in our business to encourage the saving of sick time. Our employer fully agreed to avoid sick time and reward attendance by offering a payment after 20-30 years

It worked quite well and only a percentage of unused time was paid out unless, of course, you were a boss. That's where the abuse is, not with the grunts.

In Du Page, sick time is now limited to eight days a year (non-union). I have read before that this is more compatible with the private sector. (Note the comparison with the private sector. Socialism for public sector workers only, I guess!) Employers pick and choose now what should be like the private sector. Hypocrites.

But in Du Page they are also implementing changes not only in sick time, but vacations and other areas to save money. And in response, over 100 county employees have elected to retire in order to not get screwed out of their benefits. (Remember again, non-union employees.)

The County Board chairman states this is no coincidence that more are retiring due to the significant benefit changes. A rocket scientist, he isn't. Of course people are going to retire. And with the potential uncertainty of pensions, there is motivation for employees to leave. "And that's fine," he added.

So now maybe those posts will be filled, and if so, the work will be performed by an employee making a lower salary. As I said, this is nothing more than "Triumphant Imbecility."

They win here—for now. They will continue to erode public sector work as they readily admit to asking politicians and state's attorneys if they could go back in time and take benefits away from current employees and not just those for future employees. But it is unconstitutional (for now), as they are salivating over possible litigation to screw all you people working now.

They also admit to closed door sessions with lawmakers to cut pension benefits for current employees. You can see the confusion here. Benefit reductions for new people and for some non-union people where new tier structures are being put in place. Employees are not sure what their benefits are going to be or when they will change. Only thing for sure is that new people will see a vastly lighter benefit package and current employees who can retire are taking no chances and are leaving.

And that's fine with government.

They don't care.

Triumphant Imbecility.

.....

Stay safe.

Vita é Bella

See you next month sometime after a much needed vacation.