

A Few minutes with the Boss

By: Joseph Andalina

Unholy alliance?

Yeah, that is what the far right says about unions and Democrats. We have an unholy alliance simply because the right doesn't. They bitch and moan incessantly on how labor cozies up to the blue politicians and not to them. Well, why is that?

Can unions have a positive relationship with conservatives or Republicans. Sure, we can. All of us at some time may find something good with either party and leap over the party line for certain values one holds over another.

It could be abortion. Or 2nd amendment rights. Maybe it's drilling in ANWR or off shore. Maybe it's no taxation or less of it. Could be socialism or the march towards it that rings your bell. Might be codicils of social justice, such as welfare, food stamps, Medicaid, or voter registration. Could be that the potential of redistribution of wealth really pisses you off. Lots of issues to take sides on, that's for sure.

But for us, it's unions. And what is happening in Wisconsin, and soon to be Ohio, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, and possibly right here in Illinois also.

Pundits on the right are just smearing labor, unions, and your friendly folks who are in unions. And the mayors and politicians are sitting back in their chairs laughing. They have advanced the battle into the limelight and into the public arena. They have managed to demonize unions, labor, and especially public sector workers. And they have coined the term "unholy alliance" to fractionalize the relationship of labor and Democrats.

Don't get me wrong here, there is sometimes a lot wrong with the boys in blue, but for the most part, they understand labor and the need for the worker to sustain the wage and health packages that labor has fought for so long and so hard. They understand that unions gave us all 40-hour weeks, overtime, health benefits, vacations, holidays, and other benefits that we all take for granted.

What is galling is the non stop effort of the red, the press, and of many people to slander us and make what others forgot what union labor has done for this country.

Are there problems with labor? Sure, there are. Are there problems with government? With lawyers? With doctors? With sports, and Hollywood, and Lindsay Lohan?

But to interpret labor and Democrats as an unholy alliance is disingenuous and is built on a foundation of hatred and envy. And now those to the far right and many in the center don't have a true picture of what's going on in Wisconsin. It is just not the effort for concessions to avoid layoffs. These pundits everywhere mostly just gloss over the true reason why 75,000 public sector workers on any given day have stormed the Bastille, or that very brave democratic leaders in Wisconsin have left the building.

It is because of the Republicans' desire to gut and remove collective bargaining rights.

To take away in the bastion and birthplace of public sector labor the right to bargain for your wages and working conditions is insulting. In addition, it's a slap in the face that if this bill passes, you will only be allowed to bargain for wages as long as your request is under 3% or whatever arbitrary figure the Republican governor decides.

It is like stating that you will be paid on a merit system that encourages keister kissing and who likes you now, brother.

It is for saying you don't have to pay dues even if you are unionized, that every year you can vote out your reps and maybe, just maybe, your employer will give you a grievance procedure that, of course, ends with them.

All union busting tactics. Tried and true, but until now, unsuccessful. So the Wisconsin Republicans get a majority and they make the jump to destroy and fracture their people by pitting the public sector against the private sector. And they call us an unholy alliance? I call them shameful, envious, and deceitful. On one hand, Republicans scream that socialism is coming under Democratic rule, then they rule they want the public sector to be the same as the private sector. Is that not a march to socialism in their own twisted way?

We can all work together if we try. But we won't, because Republican leadership and many employers have "forgotten the faces of their fathers," as Stephen King says in his novels. (Although King is not applying this to Republicans, in my opinion, I believe one could make that connection.)

And by that, I mean they have forgotten that the poor treatment of public sector workers received by many of our employers in the past is the single biggest reason that we join labor unions. Think about this for a moment. Even though the unions and workers have conceded to increase their contributions in the areas requested, and have agreed to concessions, that is not enough for the Republican politicians. They intend to eviscerate unions and collective bargaining in that state. They are taking no prisoners and have drawn the proverbial line in the sand. They believe they have unions on the run and will sometime soon have complete control over your working environment. So much for the Republican's version of small government.

I constantly thank chiefs and mayors for their shoddy treatment of their employees because it has, in fact, helped this and other unions grow. They want us to be a right-to-work state and they solicit support by saying how well public sector workers are paid in those areas where there are no unions, completely avoiding the fact that these workers benefit from other unionized states simply in order for the right-to-work areas to attract competent employees. These absurd politicians also talk about how much lower the deficits are in right-to-work states. The key word being lower, because all the states have budget problems and I'm guessing that it has nothing to do with their employees, but rather government's mismanagement of their leadership.

And they expect us to go back to that? Well, I say if y'all in the private sector want better wages and benefits, JOIN A UNION!

Don't be naïve, it is happening in a lot of states and it would be dangerous if you did not think it could happen here.

Vita é Bella