

A Few minutes with the Boss

By: Joseph Andalina

Where there are more farm animals than people

That's about the only place nowadays that doesn't think their public service workers make too much money. Rural America does not seem to be complaining like up here in major metropolitan areas.

After all, there are places in the hinterland where if your house starts on fire and you didn't pay your \$75 yearly fee, the fireman are ordered to lift nary a finger or fire hose to save the house or the pets inside.

And while a national story, I didn't hear any real bitching over it. Even the homeowner was a class act. He didn't blame the fireman because they were ordered to do—nothing! Yes, my friends, things are different down yonder, or is it up yonder?

Let's go to the opposite extreme. In my first opening Opinion Piece at our website that began our second decade of the new millennium, I wrote about the accusation of the press regarding the "many theories" expressed in both "shouts and whispers" on why there was an inadequate response to the City of New York's snow removal that left the city morbid.

Some folks perished which is tragic—it always is—but who is "shouting and whispering" that the problem was exacerbated by a weakened Sanitation Department because of staffing cuts? Or was it because residents abandoned their vehicles and snow prevented their removal from the streets to allow emergency traffic to get to calls for service?

Was it the mayor who failed to declare a snow emergency? The *New York Times* was reluctant to discuss another aspect of this story, but the "rival" *New York Post* came right out and said it. The union for the public works was deliberately sabotaging snow removal efforts.

Apparently, public sanitation workers, according to this story, were angry about budget cuts and looking for revenge against the mayor. Of course, the press has "multiple" Sanitation Department sources, but who knows if this is reliable. There is a lot more to this story and it's primarily directed against the snow plow drivers for the city. However, it is all encompassing to all city workers. And one city councilman says the action was intended to "send a message to the rest of the city" about the labor dispute with the mayor and the city.

Budget cuts in 2011 will lead to some demotions and other reductions in pay, while the city attempts to cut revenue. The unions deny this and rightfully so are pissed off that the press and politicians are trying to foist this off on labor.

Will this baloney not end? Was there a po'd employee in New York somewhere who did a lousy job? Maybe. That's normal. But who really wants to blame the unions? Is the agenda here to make the public sector workers the scapegoats once more? You have three guesses, folks.

It's more than irritating that the press would think there is a job action when every foot of New York was covered by 12 inches of snow. No, don't blame the snow; let's beat up municipal workers and unions once more.

In one article, I read the press quoted a spokesperson from the mayor's office as "We would hope this is not the case" that the unions were responsible. But they will investigate, and I'm sure they will come up with nothing.

But can one not see the wheels turning here inside of the mayor's spokesperson? Can save old Bloomie's job if we play this right. Not the mayor's fault, even though he said he didn't call for a snow emergency because he claimed it would have made things worse by putting more cars on the streets. Hmm, sounds like a mayor's type of thinking to me.

I can see the light bulb in this spokesperson's head. We can fix this "faux pas" by simply saying with our heads bowed and in a soft voice "we hope this isn't the union's fault." Spare me.

So investigations were called for and at press time, I don't know what they found, but the press reported on New Year's Eve or around the "dropping of the ball" in Time Square (excuse the pun, folks) that if the unions story is true, they mayor had the opportunity to take the pressure off of himself. Nice, isn't it?

And some in the press are spouting off about how if this is true, it could be the end of unions in the good old US of A. They even go on to assure the people who died in the snow covered streets of having done so by negligent homicide. And again, if true, it will shake every union hall in America, and that means all of you, both in the private and public sector.

I'm far from New York here in the Midwest, but I see this as nothing but baloney and a cheap, unethical, and downright crappy maneuver by politicians and some disingenuous people in the press to blame a tragedy during a major snowstorm on public sector unions. This will go nowhere, or it should, except maybe for the people of New York who should pull a "Bilandic" (Mayor of Chicago in the 70's who was ousted after a snowstorm brought the City of Chicago to its knees, like a snowstorm generally can do) and vote him and his cronies out. Now that would be justice.

As far as that poor dude in Arkansas or some other southern venue, he could have used a little snow when his house caught fire. And lest you forget, the firemen showed up, but were ordered by—who else—politicians not to do what they were supposed to do; put out fires. And all over 75 bucks.

Like I said, can only happen where there are more farm animals than people.

Stay safe. Vita e Bella