

A Few minutes with the Boss

By: Joseph Andalina

Labor Day 2010

You all know the story. The first Monday of September is dedicated to the social and economic achievements of the American worker. It is a yearly national tribute to the contributions we have all made to the strength and prosperity of our country.

For more than 100 years, it has been an observed national holiday. Nice three-day weekend, too. The day is also embedded in the blood from the deaths of a number of workers during the Pullman Strike in 1894 in New York City, of which Labor Day was ultimately born.

Afterwards, then-president Cleveland put reconciliation with Labor as a top political priority. You can do the requisite follow up history on the founding of Labor Day, its meaning, and related facts. They are easy to find and it is a good thing for all of us to review.

But on this Labor Day of 2010, many find ourselves in America, jobless, not looking for work, on welfare, food stamps, with a flat housing market, stock market, and most other markets where indicators are slouching downward, negatively affecting the American Worker.

In the public sector, we have been laid off, threatened, had payroll and benefits slashed, and denigrated when those of us lucky enough to have contracts, refuse to bow to the mismanagement and mistreatment of our employers.

Yes, it is give and take during tough economic times, but like the steelworkers, laborers, road workers, and truck drivers who build America, we in public safety keep America in individual cities and towns large and small safe by patrolling the streets, putting out the fires, saving lives, while those in public works keep our streets and sewers clean and operational. Our civilian clerks and telecommunicators answer our calls for help and handle complaints while keeping things organized. And our supervisors, for the most part, make sure that every shift runs efficiently, mayors be damned.

But in the past few years, we have seen politicians spend like drunken sailors on pork barrel projects. Some have depleted water commission funds, spent millions to fight or prevent workers unions and others have participated in many other deplorable financial tactics designed to weaken pensions and other employee working conditions.

We have seen them get fat, take care of their own, provide jobs and raises for their staff and cronies, and maneuvered in and out of the maze that is unethical and corrupt behavior.

In some villages, governments have disbanded police agencies, merged with others, and begged for county sheriffs' help in keeping their cities safe, all because some leaders couldn't manage a business or municipality if Warren Buffet was sitting on their shoulders.

In Sauk Village, the mayor needs the Cook County Sheriff to run his town now like they do in Ford Heights (Illinois). He says they don't have any money and he doesn't anticipate his police officers working for free. Is this a true and rational statement by a mayor? Spells doom for the cops, though, doesn't it? Policing a community can cost up to 3 million a year. Where did it all go wrong?

However, one trustee in Sauk Village says that they knew about the budget woes for over a year, but they kept spending money as if it was steadily coming in. The mayor there was allegedly warned about the crisis a year ago, but refused to listen, according to news reports. I think a lot of leadership is like that. They refuse to listen, then find trouble and expect the worker to bail them out, or as in this case, another agency.

In Illinois, we have a governor up for election in November. The Dems are in power, the GOP are wannabe's. Ryan, an ex-governor and a Republican, is eating beans and franks in a federal prison. Blago, a Democrat who was impeached, lived through a mistrial and is bearing up for another round, where if he is convicted, could be sharing a can of tuna with his political nemesis.

But we have problems here. Dems are supposedly the workers' friends but it is they from House and Senate leadership who want to change your pension, just like they did to the teachers. Republicans want to court unions but don't know how, and quite frankly, most of their business model will probably not help the worker.

Governor Quinn, the Dem incumbent, wants to raise taxes and has cut much from the budget. His people released dangerous criminals from prison, in what some believe was a scare tactic to get a gullible citizenry to say yes to a doubling of their state income tax.

You get disappointed with the Democrats, and then turn to the Republicans. The problem here is that Mr. Brady, riding on the elephant's back, (running against Quinn in November) wants Illinois to be a "right to work" state. I know what that is—less pay and no benefits! Can't—we can't go back to that. So then you get disappointed with the Republicans and you go back to the Democrats!

So Labor Day does not come lightly this year. With all of its historical significance, a day that honors the American Worker has, over 100 years later, not lost the rationale of what our ancestors fought for so long ago.

The fight continues. Happy Labor Day

Vita é bella

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