

Collective bargaining's end will push demise of middle class

Written by

John Maraia

Mar 7, 2011|

The labor unrest in Wisconsin should have interest here, as well as interest worldwide. I've even seen a letter online from Piotr Duda, who is the president of the Polish Trade Union, on this issue. It said, in part, "... As we truly do hope that your just fight for decent working and living conditions, for the worker's rights will be successful. Your victory is our victory as well." We seem to be at a crossroads in labor-management relations, not only in the public sector, but also in the private sector.

It should be very apparent that there are some on the "right" who are trying to exploit the current economic crisis for an all-out assault on unions and the right to collective bargaining. Working men and women did not create the recession or the budgetary crisis facing federal, state and local governments.

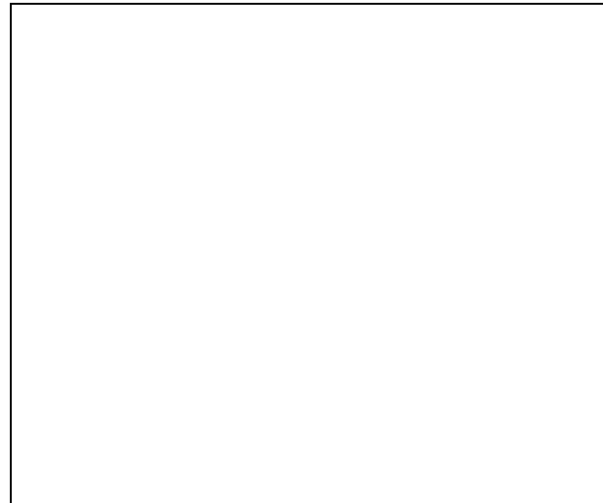
I have been involved with representing men and women both in the private and public sector for over 20 years. Based on my experience I can say that bargaining is never done in a vacuum and that both

sides, labor and management, work together toward what is the final document. Along this path, both sides make concessions and work together to establish wages, benefits and work rules that both parties can live with. This process, collective bargaining, helped to create the greatest economic engine in the history of the world, the American middle class.

And make no mistake about it, to dismantle the right to organize and the right to collective bargaining would only accelerate the demise of the middle class.

Wages and benefits derived through collective bargaining are the benchmarks that other non-union workers in similar jobs are based on. If you lower wages or erase benefits by watering down or eliminating collective bargaining rights, you affect all workers, union and non-union. The enemy here is not your neighbors who get up and go to work every day, pay their taxes, have hopes to send their children to college, assume the responsibility of caring for their aging parents and hope to retire

Advertisement



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

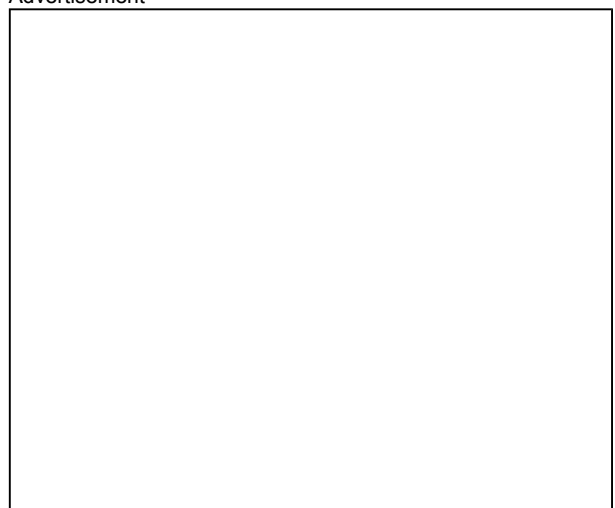


someday with dignity.

The real problem that we are facing was brought on by Wall Street speculators, banks, mortgage lenders and global corporations that shift their jobs offshore. Working people had nothing to do with it. There are those who say that the 12 percent or 15 percent of American workers who are covered under collective bargaining agreements are to blame for all of our problems. Hard to believe that only 12 percent or 15 percent of the work force could be at fault for the entire economic crisis. The real shame is that 85 percent to 88 percent of American workers are not covered by collective bargaining. To those brothers and sisters in Wisconsin, keep up the good fight and rest assured you are not alone.

The writer is president of Rockland County Building & Construction Trades and business manager of IBEW Local Union 363.

Advertisement



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™