



UNION IRONWORKERS
Building America
Since 1896

3 Sept. 1993

Mr. Lomb

It's 9:22^{PM} and C-SPAN is just about to end another very interesting program consisting of the usual intelligent journalists and open forum viewer call in. Just before I turn my set off and get ready to venture out into the world to seek a part-time job or two, I wait a few more minutes with anticipation to see your upcoming guests and programs for the weekend. After seeing what C-SPAN had planned for the next few days, I was saddened, but not the least bit surprised.

It looked like Labor Day was going to come and go without even a discussion about "Organized Labor" and the problems facing the unions in this Country today.

I would like you to consider the idea of presenting to the public a show about a group of unions that have their own unique problems and who seem to be headed towards extinction if something isn't done in this Country to stop this almost class warfare type anti-unionistic attitudes about labor unions. I am speaking about the unions that literally built this Country, and they are the unions of the Building & Construction Trades.

Unlike unions such as Auto-workers and steel-workers that have been decimated in numbers due to overseas competition and the failure of our government to make it worthwhile for American business to reinvest in America rather than foreign Country, we in the Construction Trades have other forces that have whittled away over the years at our very existence and after being a union Ironworker

for almost 19 years I can tell you that this anti union Army of CEO's, lawyers, politicians and journalists have all done a great job in bringing some of the greatest organizations in this Country to the brink of Collapse.

I would not defend the actions or say that every thing about every union is right. I would only defend or condemn the particular union(s) that I truly know and that is why I really take offense when unions in this Country are so generalized, and in large part looked down upon by society. In part I blame the media for not giving unions a little more credit for trying constantly to improve the standard of living for all American workers both socially and economically.

Let's examine the Construction industry and some elements that make up the pros and cons of the union, non union issues. The big problem, according to society, is the union wage. I'm a union ironworker. After four years in the service during the Vietnam Era, I tested and was accepted into the Ironworkers Apprentice program ~~but~~ which lasts 3 yrs and gives the apprentice the training and knowledge of the craft he needs to perform his trade along side his brother ironworkers. (The training received is excellent and as study after study has proven, union Construction workers far out do their non union counterpart in productivity, quality, safety, and speed.) Nineteen years later, I am still an ironworker and more dedicated to union than I have ever been. I earn \$18.65 an hour. I have decent medical coverage and I have

a good pension plan. Is there anything wrong with this? Is there some reason that highly trained workers should not get a decent wage and benefit package to risk their lives every-day as they build the skyscrapers and power plants ~~in~~ this country? (You must also remember that my yearly pay is much less than you would think because we do not get paid for sick days, or holidays, or vacation, or whenever the weather doesn't permit you to safely work, you go home and don't get paid.)

What about the non-union side? I restate my remarks to the Company owners and their lawyers and associations because I have nothing at all against the worker himself. He is a victim and is brain-washed by his Company anti-union propaganda.

America hears much about Organized Labor, but they never hear about "Organized Management." It never comes out in public about such anti-worker groups like the ABC (Association of Builders and Contractors) and how through their vast chest of money they keep their members (Contractors) rich while the workers struggle to make ends meet. The ABC is a nation wide organization of non-union Contractors banded together to do two main things. First and foremost, eliminate construction unions, and secondly, to keep workers wages and benefits as low as possible and profits as high as possible. They achieve their goals any and every way possible. They consist mostly of high priced lawyers who are constantly trying to

have laws that help unions in any way repealed, such as Davis Bacon, or the right to pickett or most recently the Striker Replacement Bill. For a fee, these lawyers will even come into a plant and show management how to get rid of a union or to keep one from organizing. There's a special place in Hell for these people.

And the non-union Contractors keeps getting more and more work because this Country only cares about how cheap you can build something today, not how much quality goes into the building. And long gone are the days when the good Corporate neighbor in the community would hire local union labor to build his expansion thereby keeping wages made in the local area. Now they'll Contract Company from the other end of the Country that bring their own workers in. Anything to save a buck!

Another terrible thing that non-union Contractors do is Cheat insurance Companies by not classifying their workers accordingly thereby illegally paying cheaper rates. They also Cheat taxpayers on "Prevailing Rate" jobs where the job is funded by taxpayers money and wage standards are set by Dept. of Labor, many times the workers do not receive the pay that they should and the money goes into the Contractors' pocket. This practice is common in Pa., but nothing seems to be done about it.

I could write a book on the horrible condition the Construction industry is in and how, wrongfully, people automatically think unions are the bad guys.

All the union movement is, and always was,

Concerned about is the well being of American workers. If these non-union Companies can afford to buy lawyers and politicians and spend so much money trying to crush us, then they would be much better off if they would back-off and channel some of that money ~~to~~ to the people that earned it for them. Their workers. Most of their workers make much less than a union worker, get little or no medical benefits and no pension. And many times we see that the bid difference for a job is not that great, so we know that the non-union Contractor is making an awful lot of money.

In closing, I'm asking you to consider this for a show. Why don't you have a program featuring real life union and non-union construction workers. No journalists or lawyers or national labor leaders. Maybe you could have a few owners of small to mid-size construction companies and a couple business agents representing small union locals? I think it would be very interesting and informative. I know of 2 agents that would be perfect!

If this letter ever find its way to you, thank you very much for considering a subject that is very dear to my heart. 'Happy Labor Day'

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