

*(They) Keep you doped with religion and sex and TV...
A working class hero is something to be*

John Lennon

Compensation regardless of results for them. Minimum wage for us. Golden parachutes for them. Maybe Social Security for us. Health insurance for them. Bankruptcy and maybe medicare for us. Cozy jobs for them. Dirt, injury and death for us. Private and suburban schools for them. Underfunded inner city schools for us. Universities for their children. Community colleges, WGU Indiana and debt for ours.

My state senator, David Long, backed by our ambitious governor and the Chamber of Commerce is spearheading legislation aimed at weakening one of the few remaining stepping stones to middle class life for working people. I'm speaking, of course, about labor unions and the pending Right To Work bill now before both houses of the state legislature.

Here is what my union has negotiated for me: I earn \$19.65 per hour at my non production job. It's one of the lowest hourly positions at my factory. Most production workers earn over \$25.00. My good health insurance package costs me under 40 dollars a week and that includes vision and dental care. When I retire, I'll have a pension and retiree health insurance (and a 401K). In addition, we have a union/management safety committee to ensure our dangerous work remains as safe as possible. In 2008 when my company went bankrupt, my union not only saved our jobs, good wages and most benefits but found a private equity firm to bail out the company. For all this I pay just over 11 dollars per week in dues.

I read today where Keith Busse of Steel Dynamics, testified in favor of the bill. I wonder how his non union employees' wages and benefits compare to ours? I know that they are well paid but I'll bet that in every other way—health insurance, retirement and safety—they lag far behind. Of course he's for Right To Work. For each benefit he has to provide his employees, it means that much less for him. Union jobs are the gold standard and he doesn't want to compete.

The governor, the Chamber of Commerce and Senator Long don't respect us. They view employees as a necessary evil. We're uneducated, ill-mannered and undeserving of a living wage. Unions give us a voice and they aren't interested in hearing what we have to say. We're one of the last bastions against their greed and power. The system is gamed against working people and the American dream is slipping further away for ever increasing numbers of us. We're hanging on by our fingertips and this egregious bill is the boot heel intended to break our grip. Meanwhile, our pastors tell us not to worry, have more children, and God will take care of us. Our politicians tell us to turn on the Super Bowl and hope we'll be too distracted to notice.

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