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The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics [announced last week](#) that for the first time, the number of [government employees](#) in unions exceeded the number in the [private sector](#), which fell to a new low of 7.2 percent, down from 7.6 percent in 2008. At the same time the number of government employees in unions rose from 36.8 percent to 37.4 percent.

But private sector union membership has been on a slow and steady decline for decades. While union leaders decry the numbers, saying that good union jobs are disappearing, the reality behind unions is much more complex. To an extent, they have become a victim of their own success.

The AFL-CIO, the largest union federation in the U.S., [claims](#) on its Web site that unions help “build stronger workplaces” and “give workers a voice on the job about safety, security, pay, benefits — and about the best ways to get the work done.” Further, it says, unions “represent working families before lawmakers, and make sure politicians never forget that working families voted them into office.”



All of that, it turns out, is somewhere between misleading and blatantly untrue.

“They artificially increase wages in unionized [industries](#), limit employment opportunities, depress wages in nonunion jobs, lower rates of return on investment in unionized firms, and slow the growth of productivity,” writes James A. Dorn, professor of economics at Towson University and editor of the *Cato Journal*. “Unions politicize labor markets and have used the threat of violence to protect their wage premiums. In addition to using their monopoly power to secure higher than market wages, unions spend huge sums of money to maintain their power and limit competition.”

In its first issue of 2010, *Cato Journal* asks, [Are unions good for America?](#) The answer may surprise you, especially if you are a member of a union.

(Before going on I should disclose that I once paid union dues to the United Food and Commercial Workers when I worked at a grocery store.)

In 232 short pages of hard-hitting analysis, (but don't do what I did and read it all in one sitting) *Cato* exposes some of the myths behind labor unions that practically everyone believes. Here are a few of them.

Myth: Unions work to ensure a level playing field for employees.

Fact: [Unions advocate for laws which tilt the playing field in ways that are unfair to both employers and employees.](#) Those laws often impair economic growth and innovation, as well as destroy the freedom to contract, according to Randall G. Holcombe and James D. Gwartney, economics professors at Florida State University. Over time, these labor laws actually cause a shift in employment from union jobs to nonunion jobs. In fact, research shows that the growth of labor unions during the Great Depression actually increased unemployment. Unions are still destroying jobs today.

“In the short run, because labor law has given to unions an advantage in the bargaining process, union contracts have had the effect of increasing the wages and benefits of union workers,” they wrote. “In the long run, the higher cost of union labor brought on by those union contracts has resulted in a steady decline in private sector unionism, and has eroded U.S. manufacturing in unionized industries — most visibly, the railroad and auto industries.”

Myth: Unions bargain on behalf of their members to get employees the wages and benefits they deserve.

Fact: [Unions “bargain” with the guns of government in hand, to get employees more wages and benefits than they deserve, with a little for themselves on the side.](#) By crawling in bed with government to pass laws which benefited the unions at the expense of employers — and, in the long run, employees — union leaders have drained American [businesses](#) dry. The long, slow decline of private sector unions reflects the economic destruction they left in their wake as they searched for fresh blood to leech. And today they've found the biggest source yet, the government.

[Armand Thieblot](#), an economic consultant who has written books on union corruption and violence, writes:

When Samuel Gompers, then head of the American Federation of Labor, was asked in the early 1920s what unions wanted, he famously replied, “More.” At the time, everyone correctly understood that unions' targets were the capitalists from whom additional wages and benefits would be wrested by force, and also that if unions were successful, capitalists would have to be content with “Less,” thus, just a transfer of economic rents within the system from one factor to another.

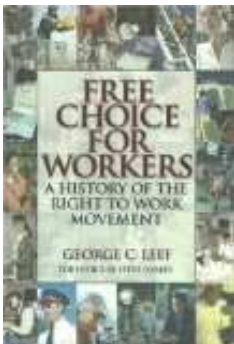
By the 1980s and 1990s, however, when unorganized capitalists had become thin on the ground and those already organized had mostly been rendered uncompetitive by past concession to union demands, unions' new guiding trope became "More government." To achieve it, unions became mordantly political. In economic terms, after unions had absorbed all of the readily available economic rents from their capitalist opponents, they have turned to seeking rents from new sources beyond the system — from the polity at large (from taxpayers), using government as the intermediary.

Myth: Project labor agreements reduce project costs and delays and are good for construction workers as a whole.

Fact: [Project labor agreements increase costs and only help union workers.](#) PLAs are agreements between construction project owners and unions that contractors on the project must use union labor, even if they otherwise would not. David G. Tuerck, economics professor and chair at Suffolk University, cites numerous examples of how nonunion workers were harmed when they worked under PLAs, "first by forcing them to pay twice for benefits already offered their workers and second by forcing pay cuts on their workers." Then, unions use veiled threats to "labor peace" to intimidate project owners into accepting PLAs for "job stability." Further, PLAs increased costs for every project studied which used them, sometimes as much as 20 percent.

"PLAs are motivated by a desire on the part of the construction unions to shore up the declining union wage premium against technological changes and other changes that make traditional union work rules and job designations obsolescent," Tuerck writes. "Now the PLA has evolved into an instrument that the unions employ in tandem with the prevailing wage laws in order to reduce the competitive advantage of nonunion contractors."

Myth: Prevailing wage laws are good for competition, improve safety and quality, and help train new workers.



Fact: [Prevailing wage laws stifle competition, have no effect on job safety and quality, and do nothing to help train new workers.](#) The Davis-Bacon Act of 1931, signed into law by President Herbert Hoover, mandates that on federal construction projects, workers be paid the so-called "prevailing wage" for similar local workers. In practice, the wage is set far higher than the actual prevailing wage, closely mirroring union pay scales. This virtually locks out nonunion construction workers from federal contracts.

George C. Leef, director of the Pope Center for Higher Education Policy, finds that all of the arguments for prevailing wage laws fail to stand up to even the slightest scrutiny. Worse, the Davis-Bacon Act was racially motivated: "The hearings and debate on the legislation revealed some ugly racial overtones with comments on how 'cheap colored labor' was driving down wages of white workers." Robert Bacon originally proposed the bill because he was upset that a construction firm from outside his district, employing black workers, built a veterans' hospital in his district.

Myth: Organized labor has worked to promote racial equality.

Fact: [Unions have used racial discrimination as a tool to enrich themselves, and continue to do so today.](#) In 2008, Richard Trumka, who is now the president of the AFL-CIO, said, “We know, better than anyone else, how racism is used to divide working people.” He should, because the unions have been doing it for their entire existence, [and still are](#), as Paul Moreno, history professor at Hillsdale College, illustrates. It isn’t — and probably never was — the employers oppressing the black, or the Chinese, or the Hispanic people. Most employers, as it turns out, really are color blind, as Martin Luther King, Jr., noted in 1957: “With the growth of industry the folkways of white supremacy will necessarily pass away. Moreover, southerners are learning to be good businessmen, and as such realize that bigotry is costly and bad for [business](#).”

As racism goes, unions made the KKK look like amateurs. Big Labor lobbied for, and got, special laws to make them completely immune for whatever they did — all the way up to outright murder. In *United States v. Enmons*, in 1973, the Supreme Court held that unions were immune from prosecution under the Hobbs Act if their violent acts were in furtherance of a “valid union objective.”

Moreno concludes:

The problem of racial discrimination in organized labor in America was less solved than it was outgrown. The story of racial discrimination in the American labor movement confirms the view that unions act as cartels that attempt to limit the supply of labor and raise its price. An easily identified and culturally disfavored minority group provided a convenient category for exclusion. But most unions were unable to succeed without state power, and by the time that they acquired such power, blacks had already fought their way into the industrial [workforce](#). Discrimination within, rather than exclusion from, unions then became the chief problem — one that spawned the policy of “affirmative action.” Finally, the macroeconomic costs of unions decimated the ranks of private sector unions.

And Trumka? He [talked a good game about ending racism in organized labor](#), but whether anything will change remains to be seen.

Myth: Unions help preserve manufacturing jobs.

Fact: [Unions were a contributing factor in the decline of American manufacturing, especially in the automobile industry.](#) Detroit makes a great example. At the start of the 20th century, Detroit was a boom town and its manufacturing jobs were paying 33 percent above the national average. Union organizers brought their message of capitalist greed and exploitation to already highly paid auto workers, where it largely fell on deaf ears. Until the Great Depression, when union organizers used a variety of underhanded tactics to force automakers, steel plants and other manufacturers to unionize.



(Interestingly, Henry Ford at the time threatened to break up his company rather than submit to union demands; he finally gave in when his wife threatened to leave him.)

Stephen J.K. Walters, economics professor at Loyola, explains what happened next. Companies, squeezed hard and struggling to survive, would move their operations out of Detroit and other cities, and later, out of the country entirely.

In sum, at the onset of World War II most of America's great industrial firms — which, thanks to agglomeration economies were concentrated in cities throughout the East and upper Midwest — now faced labor cartels. These cartels needed some time to consolidate their power, so increases in employers' wage costs would be significant but gradual. Further, WWII and its aftermath, during which time America's industrial rivals' productive capacity suffered heavy damage that would be restored only slowly, insulated the unions and firms to some degree and for some time from the most severe competitive consequences of monopolistic and opportunistic prices for labor. But the employers started to adapt immediately in ways that standard economic theory would predict — and that would ultimately help create what became known as America's Rust Belt. Union actions, clearly, were not the only reason that industrial cities would decapitalize, depopulate, and become poorer in the second half of the 20th century, but they merit inclusion on the list.

If you've lost a manufacturing job any time in the last 50 years, thank your union boss for destroying your job, with a one-finger salute.

Myth: Teachers' unions work to increase the quality of children's education.

Fact: [Teachers' unions work to increase their membership rolls and their political power, at the expense of your children's education.](#) While collective bargaining has done little to increase the salaries of union public school teachers over nonunion public school teachers, these unions perform a different service for their members: preventing them from having to educate children. Andrew J. Coulson, director of the Center for Educational Freedom at the Cato Institute, explains that teachers' unions strongly oppose government reforms which would [improve the quality of K-12 education](#), such as charter schools, vouchers, and property tax credits.

The NEA and AFT spend large sums on political lobbying so that public school districts maintain their monopoly control of more than half a trillion dollars in annual U.S. K-12 education spending. That monopoly, in turn, offers a more than 40 percent average compensation premium over the private sector, along with greater job security. And since both the U.S. and international research indicate that achievement and efficiency are generally higher in private sector — and particularly *competitive market* — education systems, the public school monopoly imposes an enormous cost on American children and taxpayers. We are paying dearly for the union label, but mainly due to union lobbying to preserve the government school monopoly rather than to collective bargaining. *(Emphasis in original)*

Myth: Public sector unions work for the general prosperity of their members and all Americans.

Fact: [Public sector unions dramatically increase the cost of government to unsustainable levels.](#) The cost of employee wages and benefits accounts for half of the \$2.2 trillion that state and local governments spent in 2008, and that number is set to grow dramatically as employees retire and generous pension packages kick in. Though, calling them generous is an understatement.

Moreover, according to Chris Edwards, director of tax policy studies at the Cato Institute, those pension obligations are grossly underfunded, which will make the fiscal crisis even more acute this decade.

The upshot of all this is that policymakers will need to make large budget reforms in the years ahead. They will need to deliver public services more efficiently, to privatize services when

feasible, to cut staffing levels, and to terminate low-value programs. Policymakers often hesitate in making such reforms, but the high level of unionization in many state workforces will make reforms even harder to achieve. During labor negotiations, for example, public officials often succumb to pressure to make short-term concessions that end up damaging public finances in the long run.

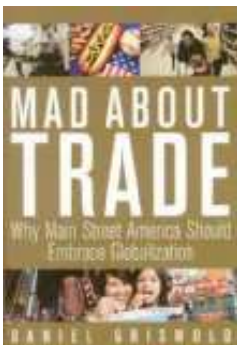
Businesses can and do mitigate the inefficiencies of a unionized workplace, but governments are much more constrained and have less incentive to do so, driving up taxpayer costs even further. And public sector unions use their large war chests to buy influence and protection. “So the problem with public sector unions is not just that they block compensation reforms, but that use their privileged status to control broader policy debates.”

Myth: Right-to-work laws harm employees and prevent employers from freely contracting with unions.

Fact: [Right-to-work laws improve the economy, and employers freely contracting with unions is prohibited by the Wagner Act.](#) That Act forces employers to bargain with unions “in good faith,” which is interpreted to mean that employers must capitulate to virtually every demand of the unions or be accused of acting in bad faith. This is hardly freedom of contract. Right-to-work laws mitigate, but do not entirely fix, this problem.

I have some experience with this, since I once worked in a non-right-to-work state and was forced to join the union. I would rather have negotiated my own terms; I’d likely have gotten a better deal. It seems many Americans agree, as millions of them have moved from non-right-to-work states to right-to-work states in the last decade, a migration that shows no signs of stopping. Richard Vedder, economics professor at Ohio University, found that both predictive models and real world evidence show that right-to-work states experience more economic growth than non-right-to-work states.

Myth: Labor unions support trade liberalization because it lowers the prices of goods that workers buy.



Fact: [This used to be true, but today’s labor unions oppose trade liberalization.](#) They believe that increasing globalization has directly led to the decline of their unions, and thus their power. This isn’t exactly true, according to Daniel Griswold, director of the Center for Trade Policy Studies at the Cato Institute. “Although the evidence is lacking to implicate globalization as a whole, two aspects of the trend have been found to have significant negative effects on labor unions: inward foreign direct investment (FDI), and ‘social integration’ across borders.”

When foreign companies invest in the U.S., companies here realize that they can also invest in other countries. “The correlation of FDI and declining rates of union density suggests that ‘many workers feel greater insecurity from seeing capital mobility in their sectors, even if not in their own particular firms,’ Slaughter (2007: 344–45) concluded.”

And social globalization, “the spread of ideas, information, images and people,” a natural result of advances in

communications and transportation, “reinforces what Dresher and Gaston (2007: 176) call a ‘growing normative orientation towards individuals rather than collectivism [which] makes collective organization more difficult.’ Adding to the trends are rising levels of immigration and perceptions of younger workers who view unions as old-fashioned and anachronistic institutions.”

In competitive product markets, the drag that unions impose on firm performance can be debilitating to the firm and its workers over time. As described above, firms facing vigorous competition are not able to pass along higher costs to consumers without risk of losing significant market share. Newly unionized firms in such markets face the cruel choice of passing along higher labor costs to consumers, thus losing market share to more cost-efficient competitors, or eating the higher costs in the form of lower profits and less reinvestment in physical and intellectual capital. Either choice will result over time in an erosion of the unionized firm’s market share.

Myth: Paying workers higher wages will reduce unemployment and stimulate the economy.

Fact: [The “high-wage doctrine” increases unemployment and drags down the economy.](#) This doctrine originated with a 1921 report that Hoover commissioned while he was Secretary of Commerce dealing with what was, in retrospect, a minor recession. In addition to recommending higher wages, the report also said that government spending (now known as the stimulus package) can help the country recover from a recession. Neither is true, of course, and the report might have been completely forgotten had Hoover not become President. He put his disastrous ideas into practice, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Worse, proponents of these theories, which John Maynard Keynes gleefully signed on to, are more concerned with theories than facts, according to Lowell E. Galloway, economics professor at Ohio University. That’s just a polite way of saying they’re full of crap. Galloway writes:

In the intellectual world, the high-wage doctrine continues to have its appeal. Prior to his appointment as chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, Ben Bernanke, collaborating with Martin Parkinson, noted: “Maybe Herbert Hoover and Henry Ford were right. Higher real wages may have paid for themselves in the broader sense that their positive effect on aggregate demand compensated for their tendency to raise costs” (Bernanke and Parkinson 1989: 214). More recently, Paul Krugman reiterated this view in a [New York Times oped](#) (3 May 2009), arguing, “Many workers are accepting pay cuts in order to save jobs.” He then asks, “What’s wrong with that?” His answer refers to what he calls “one of those paradoxes that plague our economy right now . . . workers at any one company can help save their jobs by accepting lower wages, but when employers across the economy cut wages at the same time, the result is higher unemployment.” This is simply a reprise of Klein’s (1947) views. Never mind the existence of more than a century of empirical evidence to the contrary. Krugman’s concern is not with the empirical problem, but with the theoretical connection between wage rates and employment. The high-wage doctrine still lives. In all probability, this persistent adherence to an incorrect doctrine once again will prove to be detrimental to the U.S. economy, just as it was in the 1930s.

Myth: Unions currently operate in a free market.

Fact: [Unions are heavily dependent on the government to provide them unfair leverage over employers and control over their members.](#) It is possible for unions to exist and provide valuable services to their members in a market free of government-sponsored violence and control, but those services would likely have to be geared

toward helping employees improve themselves, rather than extracting undeserved compensation from employers.

Charles W. Baird, professor emeritus of economics at California State University, East Bay, examines what constitutes a free market, how existing labor laws destroy freedom, and what a union might look like in a true free market. It won't happen any time soon, though, he says: "It is politically impossible, at this time in America, to repeal the Norris-LaGuardia Act and the National Labor Relations Act and replace them with any sort of free-market union law. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to prepare the ground now for doing so in some future, more enlightened time."

If you're wondering why you're out of a job, why Detroit is a wasteland, and why the economy is on the verge of collapse, don't be so quick to blame Wall Street: Some of the blame belongs to the labor unions.

[*"AFL-CIO building, Washington, D.C."* photo by [Derek Blackadder](#); CC BY-SA 2.0]

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25 Comments → “Everything You Know About Unions Is Wrong: 12 Labor Union Myths”

1.

[LABORUNIONREPORT](#)

Jan 26, 2010

This is an excellent post.

2.

Hilary

Jan 26, 2010

No unions, no middle-class. Get a clue. You think power is just given away? It's not. Working-class people have had to fight for everything they've ever had. Do you think it's a fluke that the disappearance of the middle-class working-class has coincided with the disappearance of the labor movement? We desperately need unions as a check on corporate power because god knows our "representatives" won't

protect us.

3.

Grant Liddle

Jan 26, 2010

I guess your site has shown it's true colors now, somewhat akin to fox's fair and balanced. And the not so subtle Rosenbaum novel thumbnail on the side. Sigh.

Why do you need to bash unions with a bunch of disinformation from the libertarian cato institute if unions are failing all on their own?

There is one union that needs busting right now and that's the banking cartel that currently holds government in its grip. Most of the findings above apply very well to them and their cronies. I'm all for capitalism but let's not fool ourselves who has messed up this economy. It was not labor unions. The welfare has all gone to the banks. Let's give a bonus to folks who fail...yeah right that's free market. BTW I am not a union member.



4.

[Michael Hampton](#)

Jan 27, 2010

Hilary, the unions are in bed with the representatives who won't protect you! And the banking cartel, led by the Federal Reserve, has everything to do with the disappearance of the middle class.

Grant, I'll never claim to be fair and balanced. I will always speak truth to power. That's what this is about. Labor unions talk a good game about protecting workers, but what they really do is something else. And I don't look at ideology when I evaluate whether someone is speaking truth or mere propaganda. I'll take GOOD information from anyone of any political persuasion.

5.

Anonymous

Jan 27, 2010

Mr. Hampton, "LaborUnionRep" is right: this is an excellent post. Thank you for exposing unions for what they are: utterly corrupt and oppressive, just like their buddy, the government.

6.

[David Denholm](#)

Jan 27, 2010

This post really disappoints me. After all the things I've written trying to explain these very issues over the last 40 years, I'm not mentioned once. Other than that it's rather well done.

I got a kick out of Hilary's comment "no unions, no middle class." That's rather far fetched. If you're interested in more thoughts along those lines you might like to take a look at my blog entry "What vanishing middle class?" <http://davidsvrwc.blogspot.com/2009/11/what-vanishing-middle-class.html>



7.

[Michael Hampton](#)

Jan 27, 2010

Sorry, it's a large complex set of issues, and I was really trying to go for a summary. I took a quick look at your site and it does indeed look like you've covered the issues well. You may find this new research a valuable addition to your presentation.

8.

[Resnickhr](#)

Jan 27, 2010

This article is full of so much over-the-top rhetoric, I don't know where to start. By most accounts, I would be considered a libertarian pro-management corporate hack, but posts like this are truly disturbing. It makes a mockery out of the issues because it leaves the impression with your readers that much of the public is so uninformed that they believe in the myths that you list.

I think if you asked 100 labor professionals what the most common myths are about unions, none of your 12 would be mentioned. Even the most ardent supporters of unions do not believe in these myths. Although you list several that are clearly a function of how terms are defined (e.g. "level playing field", "deserve"), several are just not an issue for anyone:

Myth: Prevailing wage laws are good for competition, improve safety and quality, and help train new workers.

Although it is argued by many that prevailing wage improves safety, I don't know of anyone that argues it is good for competition. Yes, they argue it is "fair and equitable" and it allows higher pay scale employers to bid on jobs more easily, but no one touts this as a benefit to competition.

Myth: Unions help preserve manufacturing jobs.

Not even the unions claim this. They will say that they preserve “good” manufacturing jobs, but it is unquestioned that higher labor costs does have a negative impact on the number of positions.

Myth: Teachers’ unions work to increase the quality of children’s education.

Myth: Public sector unions work for the general prosperity of their members and all Americans.

Myth: Right-to-work laws harm employees and prevent employers from freely contracting with unions.

Myth: Labor unions support trade liberalization because it lowers the prices of goods that workers buy.

Not sure who claims any of these “myths” are true.

You may say “what is the big deal?” My issue is that well informed debate is what people should be hearing from either traditional media or the blogosphere. If you have believe that national labor policy, unions (or even management) are misguided, just say so without erroneously convincing the masses that there are so many uninformed people in the public that believe in such outlandish “myths.”

9.

Michael Zeiler

Jan 28, 2010

Americans need to see more of these reliable facts about the economic realities of union excesses, NOW. Tomorrow may be too late.

10.

Patrick Omara

Jan 28, 2010

The problem with all too many HR “experts” is not having a clue about the pragmatics of America’s labor relations politico-economics. Unfortunately, the “libertarianism” of Mr. Resnick sounds much closer to the socialist-liberalism that’s wreaking havoc with our market economy and the hitherto well balanced government checks and balances. Typical of our representative democracy in which extremes wax and wane like a perfect pendular manner, what we’re faced with today is merely the reactive over-reaching of liberal and union excess. Without throwing mud at it or anyone else, let’s allow the pendulum slowly and deliberately commence reversing course back toward the middle.

11.

[Resnickhr](#)

Jan 28, 2010

Patrick:

I think you may need to re-read my post. I did not express any opinion either in support of unions or opposed to unions. I can certainly agree with Michael that facts are important, but then we should see cites to studies (there are man) that detail the economic impact of unions. My criticism of the original article had to do with its lack of foundation.

If you really want to learn about Union excesses and convince others of your point, research and publicize:

- * the historic pay scales of UAW and Teamster executive board members;
- * the heart related disability provisions that apply to NYC police officers;
- * the disaster of the Air Traffic Controllers strike in the Reagan years;
- * the insanity of the strategic decertification of the Baseball Umpires;
- * the rubber room in the NYC education department.

Ah, but then, this would just be much more reading than accepting the wild accusations of a zealot that declares that masses of people believe in “myths” that simply do not exist.



12.

[Michael Hampton](#)

Jan 29, 2010

Resnickhr, I expected people to take issue with the facts, but I never expected anyone to take issue with the myths!

Clearly you deal with labor issues on a regular basis. My audience knows (or knew) little about labor unions prior to this article; it's certainly not something I thought about much prior to reading this research. You can be sure that among the general public there are people who believe each of these “myths” simply because they have had no reason to investigate the issues.

Indeed, there is a very large body of research, and presenting all of it would be impossible. Still, the research which corroborates the facts presented is accessible to anyone who clicks the blue underlined links.

This article was meant to be an introduction, and while no product of human labor is perfect, I think it serves well as what it was meant for: a starting point.



13.

[CrisisMaven](#)

Jan 31, 2010

Good summing up! Thanks. By the way: I have just added a [Reference List](#) to my economics blog with

economic data series, history, bibliographies etc. for students & researchers.



14.

[ThomasJ](#)

Feb 01, 2010

James A. Dorn, professor of economics at Towson University and editor of the Cato Journal...Ie a republican bs company!!!! The Cato institute promotes privatizing everything whether or not it makes sense. They are the MOST anti-union, anti-worker unthink tank out there...Enough said!!!

15.

[ThomasJ](#)

Feb 22, 2010

Yes the EFCA would help insure that employee's would have an EQUAL voice in the workplace. Keeps management thugs from intimidating employee to not join. LEVELS the playing field as now management has an unequal advantage. This is why big corps dont want it. Would have to give employees a livable wage instead of pocketing all the money for themselves!!!!

16.

[ThomasJ](#)

Feb 22, 2010

"Myth: Right-to-work laws harm employees and prevent employers from freely contracting with unions."....

Not a myth... "FACT"... employers routinely use union busting company's to harass and intimidate employees from joining the union! The EFCA would level the playing field!!! Should be illegal for company's to fire union organizers, but there is no "TEETH" in the law. EFCA would strengthened this law!!!

17.

[Mike Peterson](#)

Apr 22, 2010

When labor unions were created there was a great need to protect workers from abusive practices.

However as with any institution that gains a considerable amount of power, things become distorted over time. Today with the free flow of information and all the alternatives available to people I can't imagine that too many US workers are being exploited. Illegal immigrants yes, but not many who are legal U.S. citizens.



18.

Nerdmaster

Apr 30, 2010

I find it interesting that a coworker of mine, a very competent software engineer, working for a huge national company gets paid so little his family lives partially off of food stamps. Most people working in IT here are paid well below the national average for what they do, and recently about a dozen of our IT staff were told they are expected to put in 60-hour weeks for the foreseeable future. The top-paid people who rarely put in such hours were making up to 20x a senior engineer's salary back a few years ago when we were a publicly traded company.

The company has fired at least one person I know for trying to form a union. They have told us to our faces they won't tolerate employees who push for unionization, or even jokingly suggest a strike for fair wages.

Some unions surely are corrupt (very much so), but by and large the employers of non-union employees have the upper hand, especially in a right-to-work state like mine.

I'll be happy when greedy CEOs and other execs start spreading the wealth – until then, I'm unwilling to demonize the greedy unions without demonizing the greedy elite upper-class.

19.

Ira

Oct 03, 2010

Well this article truly shows how uneducated and misinformed people (especially the author) are about unions. Really, I didnt think someone could post such B.S. about something they obviously have no idea about. But thats ok, not only am I a member of the IBEW, but I am also serving in the Army. I cant wait to see what this author has to say about that. Lets hear it for the extreme liberal. YAY YAY.....
Oh and by the way, youre welcome.....

20.

DC

Oct 07, 2010

Good article, well written. I agree with what your saying here, its just to biased. I'm against labor unions but you need to show readers what positives they do have.

21.

nt

Jan 01, 2011

So you put Myth ahead of one set of opinion mostly advocated by union supporters and put Fact in front of opinions advocated by institutes (like Cato) know for their anti union attitude, you think you can fool people?

Let me try this:

Myth: Whatever you say.

Fact: Whatever I say.

Read the cato's article. Those guys can't even distinguish between collective bargaining at government level that has nothing to do with union dealing with a company. Comparison of American unions with collective bargaining that is done say in France is at they very least shows an amazing degree of ignorance how different the French system is compare to US, at most it is disingenuous and willfully misleading.

22.

Jim

Jan 17, 2011

Wow, this sounds like it was written by a rush limbaugh listenin farmer from back in the hills. Probably the worst article ever written. You should be given an award for biggest piece of literary garbage ever printed. Of course, its an obvious attempt to spoon feed the under educated some misinformation.

23.

D.F. CARR

Jan 20, 2011

Two things that stand out as I skimmed through the article was the statement that unions slow down production. I've found by working in two separate unions, in construction and in trucking that the unions expect more work out of workers to balance out the difference in the pay rates of the unions over the non-union workers.

Also I have found out that unions are the best thing that black workers have ever had, there may not be perfect equality, but there is a damn site less racism when there is a union contract that has in writing what the policy will be.

24.

Jason

Jan 26, 2011

Wonderful post. I'm a Pro-Union guy, I think anyone would have to be a fool not to be. The problem is Unions aren't who they say they are, and they don't do what they were made to do. The idea of having a group that watches over you, gets you better pay, defends you, adds job security, and gives you a voice; this is a great thing, but how often does this actually happen? Either Unions need a complete overhaul, or they should be abolished. Thank you for being one of the very few to speak out against Unions, seems like this whole damn world has gone liberal on us.

25.

James Richardson

Feb 19, 2011

Nerdmaster, I find your example a little far fetched. Any HR department of any company knows that firing somebody for trying to start a union is against federal law (the National Labor Relations Act). If I was your friend, I would be calling a lawyer today. I'm sure any union law firm (oops..that's the ACLU) would be glad to suck government tax dollars for a lawsuit. And, I would stand behind your friend in support of his lawsuit since, based on your example, the company broke the law.

To me, the biggest myth is understanding unions. What is the National Labor Relations Act? Are unions relevant in the United States now that 70% (and growing) of our national economy is now service-oriented instead of manufacturing oriented.

There is validity and value in unions from a historical sense. Many laws that protect each and every one of us today were form as a result of lawsuits brought up either by union employees, collective bargaining agents, or employers who had employees. Union membership has dramatically decreased over the last five decades. The advent of pay-for-performance, commission & sales-based bay, and the entrepreneurial spirit of individuals (remember 90% of businesses in this country are small businesses) has aided significantly in the elimination of unions. Presently, I would attest it as a societal element.

Those who want to do for themselves tend to be very anti-union. Those who want the government to do everything for them (including wipe their ass) are very pro-union.

Personally, I'd love to see our Senate/House and all public employees be forced to get paid based on their performance. Objective #1 (for Senate/House): A balanced budget every year. Unfortunately, none

of my desires will never happen.

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