

# THE FIGHT IS OURS



MARK A. GARDNER, National Secretary-Treasurer

I am not a thug, and I dare say that neither are you.

If you were a regular viewer of a certain cable news channel, however, you might get the wrong impression. Their broadcasters breathlessly belch out false, made-up stories about “labor bosses,” “union thugs” and “union mob mentality” on a regular basis. I will resist the urge to comment on any of their other “fair and balanced” programming content, but I happen to know a bit about organized labor and labor leaders in America. The facts bear no resemblance to what’s “reported” on that channel.

It’s not surprising that they get it wrong. They have no interest in getting it right. Inconveniently, the facts don’t support their agenda. Inflammatory accusations about unions are good for the billionaires that own that network, and their billionaire friends—and, they are great for ratings. Great ratings must mean they’re telling the truth—right? That’s a pretty popular argument currently being used when anyone dares to point out the factual inaccuracies spewed daily by that network. Quite frankly, they are making this “stuff” up as they go along. And now its owner, media mogul Rupert Murdoch, is the focus of investigations relative to dastardly phone and email hacking by reporters at another one of his news outlets. And they have the nerve to call us thugs?

I really couldn’t care less what channel you watch on television. I do care, and deeply, that our members not be fooled. It’s the irresponsible, and yet highly effective, brainwash broadcasting that I’ve described that has contributed to a seismic negative shift in thinking about unions and union members. That negative shift has spawned right-wing governors and legislators who are willing to go to extraordinary lengths to curtail the power of unions. Such is the case in Wisconsin, where recently-elected Republican Governor Scott Walker has stripped collective bargaining rights from teachers and other state workers. This anti-worker action has been batted around in the courts for months now. I don’t know if the Wisconsin public employ-

ees will ultimately prevail in the courts, but I do know that Wisconsin voters will have their say in the matter, as efforts are well underway to cause recall votes for the Governor and his cronies who rubber stamped his dreadful decisions. Similar

efforts are now underway in several other Republican-controlled states, and now certain Republican members in the U.S. Congress are proposing and pushing legislation to reduce the rights and benefits of federal workers. And even closer to the postal home, Representative Darrel Issa (R-CA), who last year ascended to the Chairmanship of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, now has proposed legislation in the House of Representatives which, if enacted into law, would emasculate the rights of all unionized postal employees in our country, and could send the USPS into a death spiral.

Would such blatant power grabs have been possible, or even attempted, ten or even five years ago? Just two months into his term of office, newly-elected Maine Governor Paul LePage felt so threatened by a worker mural in the lobby of the state Department of Labor that he had it removed. He claimed that the mural sent a message that Maine was “one-sided.” Remember, this is their Department of LABOR! Union members certainly got the message when he had it removed.

Overreaches like these and other assaults on unions has prompted refreshing and widespread pushback. Just days after the mural in Maine was taken down, it went back up again—this time in the unauthorized form of gigantic images projected onto the Maine state Capitol by some clever union protestors. It’s gratifying to see proud union members coming to life in support of their collective bargaining rights and the right to a living wage.

Across our nation, we are experiencing an all-out assault on organized labor—ginned up by the richest of our rich, doing all they can to subvert the progress of unions, to weaken the middle class, and to keep in check the poorest of our poor. I encourage all of our members to speak out in support of labor, to fend off the legislative attacks on labor unions, and to project their own pride in union membership to their friends and family, and in their schools, congregations, and communities.

Solidarity Now! Solidarity Forever!

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