

Feb. 12, 2007  
Progressive Ponderings  
"Labor Is a Commodity"

Twice this year, in below zero temperatures, I was outside picketing with union laborers, joined by other non-union people in our community whose concern for unions brought us together. We spent this time outside the Holiday Inn Express in downtown Rochester – marching, singing, chanting, honking, and empathizing.

This past December the Holiday Inn Express was sold to a new owner(s). The week before Christmas all the union workers were fired, only the union workers. A union contract meant nothing.

In pre-Civil War times, a slave was taken to the slave/commodity market to be sold to a different exploiter. Under today's "market economy" the exploited, disposable worker/commodity is just dumped like leftover scraps. Approximately 60,000 other it-can't happen-to-me worker/ commodities in our city showed little or no concern possibly out of fear for their own jobs. Passivity regarding our neighbors' and our city's victimization by employers increases the opportunity for more victimization in the future.

"Labor is a commodity" is a quote from right-wing, supposedly intelligent columnist George Will. He wrote a column with great concern that Congress might pass a law increasing the minimum wage. Will doesn't believe in people, just market "fundamentalism." "Let the market decide the minimum wage." In pre-Civil War terms this translates to market determination of the price and living/working conditions of slaves. Didn't we fight that war?

George Will advocates a minimum wage of \$0.00. Influenced by Will and other market ideologues, an amendment to the proposed bill would have set the minimum wage at Will's recommended \$0.00. Two right-wing presidential hopefuls voted for this amendment.

"Guest worker" programs, which corporations are encouraging Congress to pass, will allow employers to hire non-citizen workers at slave wages. These disposable "guests" would have no rights of citizenship or rights to pressure their employers without fear of deportation. They would have no workmen's compensation, no unemployment benefits, no disability insurance, no retirement benefits, no health insurance and no right to Social Security benefits so their joblessness would mean deportation. If Congress passes legislation for this "guest/commodity" arrangement, corporate America will employ slaves without any long term commitments by either the employers or government.

Combine this guest/commodity/worker program with the exploitation of worker/commodities under the labor portion of the World Trade Organization (WTO), NAFTA, and CAFTA and you begin to understand the slave/commodity/worker objectives of corporate globalism.

Wealth proceeds from labor. Capital proceeds from labor. Art proceeds from labor. Free time proceeds from labor. Security proceeds from labor. Progress proceeds from labor. Dreams proceed from labor.

Class privilege proceeds from the exploitation of labor. Wars proceed from forcing or propagandizing soldier/commodities to kill for the benefit of class.

Is the world in turmoil? Does hatred abound? Follow the money. Follow the money.  
jmayer

PS – A recent article contains one of the best comprehensive historical-to-current summaries of the real reasons for the U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq - FROM AFGHANISTAN TO IRAQ: CONNECTING THE DOTS WITH OIL By Richard W. Behan  
AlterNet, Feb. 5, 2007 or Truthout 2/7/07 or <http://voxverax.blogspot.com/>