

Labor's Demise Is America's Demise Thoughts for Labor Day

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Labor Day is a holiday that has outlived its time. Like Christmas, Labor Day has become a time-out period. As Christmas has become a shopping spree, Labor Day has become the last summer holiday.

The holiday originated in 1887 to celebrate the contribution made by American workers to the strength and prosperity of the United States. The first Monday in September was chosen by President Grover Cleveland to avoid a May date that would keep alive the memory of the previous year's Haymarket Massacre in which workers striking for an eight-hour day suffered casualties from the Chicago police.

As time passed union leadership became a career rather than a movement in behalf of a cause, but the labor movement in its initial years was reformist. It brought safer working conditions into industry and manufacturing. Unions served as a countervailing power and constrained the exploitative power of capital. An industrial or manufacturing job was a ladder of upward mobility that made the US an opportunity society and stabilized the socio-political system with a large middle class. A large and thriving industrial and manufacturing sector provided many white collar middle class jobs for managers, engineers, researchers and designers, and American universities flourished as did their graduates.

The labor unions provided the Democratic Party with a financial base in labor that served as a countervailing power to the Republican base in manufacturing and finance.

Whether it was a plot or unintended consequence, jobs offshoring wrecked the industrial and manufacturing unions and destroyed the Democrats' independent financial base.

The two-party system that had maintained a reasonable balance was transformed into a one-party system in which both parties were dependent on the same monied interests and thus answered to the same masters.

The consequence was the demise of the middle class and rise of the One Percent. Today the US has the most unequally distributed income and wealth of all developed economies and one of the worst in the entire world. Few Americans other than the One Percent have a stake in the American economic and political system.

The imbalance in the distribution of income and wealth cannot be corrected through the tax system. The imbalance is due largely to the loss of the jobs that provided the economic basis for the middle class. Correction requires a retreat from globalism and the return to a largely self-sufficient economy, which the US economy was during its glory decades.

Globalism is a scheme for impoverishing First World labor and taking power and influence from the hands of the many and putting them in the hands of the few. The champions of globalism are the champions of America's destruction.

Today the Republicans are demolishing the public sector unions. These jobs can't be outsourced, but public schools can be replaced with charter schools, prisons can be privatized, and many public services can be contracted out to private businesses.

Public sector unions never had as strong a case for their existence as manufacturing and

industrial unions. Moreover, strikes by firemen, police forces, school teachers, and trash collectors undermined public support for public sector unions as did many unpleasant experiences with the licensing bureaucracies of state and local government departments. Nevertheless, public sector unions could serve as a check on ambitious executive and legislative power.

Whether one has a favorable or unfavorable opinion of unions, their demise is also the demise of countervailing power. A system in which there is no countervailing power is a tyranny in which power is unconstrained and unaccountable.

The American people have been subdued and turned into a flock of sheep. Will they ever rise again?

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