

Live Bait & Ammo #162: Obama Declares Open Season on Unions

One's disappointment with the Obama administration may be tempered by ideology, loyalty, or world weariness. Most issues have more sides than a pentagon. Most of us are mature enough to understand that our personal opinion is as fraught with prejudice and pride as the next point maker at happy hour. Even the most ideologically inebriated understand compromise is the essence of politics. But some ethical decisions are void of gray area. Certain actions indicate a point of moral divergence as stark and plain as a crossroad. You may choose the road less traveled, but you can't choose both and remain one moral crusader.

The Obama administration chose not to pursue criminal investigations against officials who deceived Americans about Weapons of Mass Destruction and the alleged Iraqi connection to 9-11 in order to lead us into an unjustified war. The Obama administration chose not to pursue criminal investigations against officials who authorized torture. The Obama administration chose not to pursue criminal investigations against the finance wizards who were responsible for the diabolically complicated transactions which devastated pension funds, life savings, and home values while the electronic version of Brink's trucks carted millions of dollars in commissions, fees, and nefarious default swaps onto ships bound for safe deposits in offshore accounts [much as GM-Delphi transferred assets overseas before declaring bankruptcy in the US].

The Obama administration did choose to pursue an investigation against fourteen workers who advocate for peace, solidarity, equality, and justice. These fourteen people are wage earners. They live paycheck to paycheck. They believe the US should end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. They think union leaders in Colombia don't deserve to be murdered. They think Palestinian workers deserve as much right to peace, dignity, and security as Israeli workers. These activists have not been charged with a crime, yet under the auspices of the Obama administration the FBI raided their homes, confiscated their computers, and is conducting a grand jury investigation of their activities and relationships [www.stopfbi.net]. [The investigation has expanded to 23 and now includes students.]

What distinguished these workers in the eyes of Obama? Why should they be investigated while torturers, war mongers, and high finance swindlers ride away — high in the saddle, rich, and free?

These advocates of peace and labor rights stand for values that challenge imperialism, inequality, dishonesty, and a government for, by, and of the wealthy. In the view of the Obama administration, that warrants a crackdown. For Democrats this isn't a road less traveled, it's a familiar pattern.

The neoliberal vision of prosperity is one of labor enthralled with a game controlled by brokers, landlords, and banks. If you choose not to pretend the game is fair, you are liable to be treated like an enemy combatant, that is, deprived of a citizen's rights to free speech, assembly, and a jury of peers; then subjected to unlawful search and seizure, and interrogated by a grand jury where legal representation and the fifth amendment are nullified. Obama didn't close Gitmo, he imported the policy: guilt without proof and punishment prior to trial.

Abrogation of freedom and individual rights is a hangover from the Bush administration but since Obama has abided by the Bush agenda in war, taxation, and the scapegoating of teachers, the political aberration machine runs full throttle. The two capitalist parties traverse parallel roads to the same dead-end alley where an exchange of risk and wealth is transacted. The working class accepts all the risk and the investing class pockets all the rewards. In common parlance, extortion.

After investing thirty years of labor, UAW retirees are left with a health care trust 50 percent underfunded and reliant on stock. How is thirty years of labor different from thirty years of mortgage payments? After the investment of so much time and effort we should own something more than the gambling debts of the investing class.

Profits made in the USA were invested overseas while 43,000 factories were closed in the US since 1993.* Labor has a legitimate lien on capital—no matter where it's transferred—we earned it. The notion that capital can stripmine a community with impunity is contemptible. Yet Democrats and Republicans choose to pursue a fast track recovery that leaves some passengers on the platform holding tickets which were paid in advance while the train pulls away from the station without them.

* Lori Wallach, Director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch, 2-7-2011, *Obama Wrong on Trade and Jobs*
<http://citizen.typepad.com/eyesontrade/2011/02/in-speech-to-us-chamber-obama-gets-it-wrong-on-trade-jobs.html>

Rather than address the underlying social and economic injustice that afflicts our nation, Obama like Bush blames teachers and proposes wage cuts, wage freeze, and two tier as a solution to unemployment. It's obscene. The policy lacks any social redeeming value or common economic sense. You can't pay workers less and simultaneously prime the consumer pump.

Democrats and Republicans both say education is the key to the job crisis because it lets them off the hook and puts teachers on the spear. Tests measure whatever test designers choose to measure, but tests don't educate students to research, analyze, synthesize, and articulate. Tests teach the right answer is whatever authority tells you is the right answer. I'm proud to be a bad test taker.

We all know from experience that the key to a good education is smaller classrooms, but that would require more teachers, and neither Republicans nor Democrats are pro worker, let alone pro union. Every kid on the American playground knows how it feels to be at the top of the teeter-totter when your partner finds a new friend. Organized Labor, Wake-up! Democrats are not on our side.

Indeed, it's hard to keep one's balance when all the odds are tipped in your opponents' favor. The recession was brought on by recklessness and avarice in the investing class, but the working class was extorted into paying clean up costs and rewarding malfeasance with tax breaks, bailouts, and immunity for crooks in high places. Rewarding failure, incompetence, and criminal behavior is a moral hazard that far outweighs welfare in cost, consequence, and ethical relevance.

Our children and grandchildren will suffer because we put our tails between our legs and let Limbaugh ranters and Obama decanters convince us that workers must take bigger wage cuts while shitfaced labor leaders shilled for their paymasters. [*decant*: to draw off without disturbing the lower layers]. Meanwhile UAW bureaucrats contend concessions will not only save jobs but organize the unorganized. Hell, they didn't drink the Kool-Aid, they drank the lab rat's piss. The metaphor is vulgar but the picture fits the frame-up: workers are vilified and union reps collaborate with prosecutors.

Limbaugh's parrots like to repeat the ditto-headed mantra *only rich people hire workers* as if working people don't contribute to society and our purchases don't stimulate commerce. Fact is, only workers support the businesses in my neighborhood, and those businesses are not owned by rich people. Workers collectively hire workers everyday, but unlike predatory capitalists, we don't lie, cheat, and steal. Workers build communities, vulture capitalists exploit communities.

Workers fight the wars. Workers build the roads, bridges, skyscrapers, and homes. Workers mine, mill, construct, farm, teach, nurse, serve, repair, and deliver the goods on time. But Limbaugh's mimics—well prepared to *repeat-after-me* after years of test taking—have the gall to give all the credit to speculators and money changers. Without labor there would be no wealth to invest or a marketplace to invest in. Without labor the rich would go hungry. But I digress, while the endgame progresses steadfast across the board and organized pawns plod forward to their own demise in defense of democratic concession making, that is, we get to vote for what we give up next to benefit the rich.

The US government under both Republicans and Democrats condones US corporations doing business with nations who support terrorism, [*New York Times*, US Approved Business with Blacklisted Nations, Jo Becker, 12-24-2010] but peace and labor activists can't talk to the victims of war and union persecution. Under the thumb of corporate governance, teachers, nurses, first responders, public servants—all workers in general—are scapegoated and forced to pay for the crimes and recklessness of the investing class. The workers and students targeted by the FBI are picture poster threats, promo faces on the US brand of repression intended to serve as a warning: workers who advocate for peace and labor rights are outlaws in America.

Voting for the lesser of two evils is not a credible solution, it's a symptom of social decadence. The body politic is sickened unto death by the conceit of a better evil. Obama's attack on the teachers' union is tantamount to Reagan busting PATCO, and forked tongue UAW president Bob King is overeager to provide cover for traitorous trade deals.* Obama sends a clear, unequivocal message: it's open season on unions. No license nor limit required. Only dissenters will be prosecuted.

*“King told UAW staff that he supports the deal because he trusts the president, and is confident that it will be a good deal for auto workers *because Ford has endorsed it.*” (emphasis added) *FireDogLake.com*, UAW Supports Korea Free Trade, Jane Hamsher, 12-3-10

<http://firedoglake.com/2010/12/03/uaw-to-support-nafta-style-korea-free-trade-sells-out-taxpayers-who-bailed-them-out/>