

Divided And On the Fast Track To Being Conquered

We Are Our Own Worst Enemies

By

Fredric Jacobs, Oakland Local APWU President

Many years ago, in a now-defunct comic strip, one of the characters announced, “We have met the enemy, and he is us.” In several significant ways that is true for us as postal workers and Union members, as well as the rest of the working class: Time and again we fail to act for the greater good or in our best interests.

Here’s one example: an increasing number of working people are voting Republican – the anti-labor party. It used to be that you could go to a labor conference or a national APWU event and assume that everyone in attendance would have voted the Democratic ticket. You can’t take that for granted anymore. Moreover, now it is considered “politically incorrect” to even discuss a person’s political party affiliation at union functions. All the ranting and raving that took place in the House of Representatives and the Senate led to the currently enforced Postal Accountability & Enhancement Act of 2006, which was passed by a Republican House, a Republican Senate and Republican President George W. Bush. This is the legislation that is crippling the USPS right now by way of nearly \$6 billion annually of operating costs called prefunding of retiree health care benefits. Consequently, this has led to the substantial number of job losses occurring within the USPS and the reduced and substandard services that are being provided to the American public.

Many postal employees delude themselves about their economic status. A Postal Service couple can buy a house (probably at an enormous sacrifice, and in many instances a two hour commute to work), own two cars, and send their children to private school. And if overtime work is available, they become enthralled to the concept of “keepin’ up with the Joneses.” In their view, they’ve arrived, and they may not want to associate themselves with a political party that has been identified as catering mostly to the proletariat and welfare recipients.



“Your worst enemy cannot harm you as much as your own unguarded thoughts.”

Certainly, not all employees feel this way; but far too many do. Those who do ought to take a closer look at their real expenses. Even setting aside the question of whether or not a \$750,000.00 house financed with an interest only loan is really affordable, the basics – food, fuel, medical expenses – have increased much more rapidly than their salaries. The level of debt, both

individually and collectively, that most people carry has also risen considerably; and thanks to the GOP – the

~ Buddha

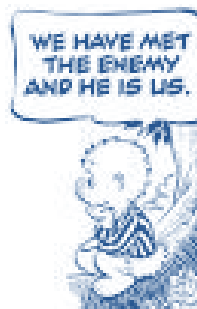
“party of small government” – getting out of catastrophic debt is going to be much harder because of the passage of the new bankruptcy laws. So-called middle-class status has never been so precarious. The George W. Bush administration had a very small true constituency: large corporations and the very rich, whose influences have given rise to our current dire situation.

Some of the wealthy have always been very generous. During the Hurricane Katrina fiasco, among the first to respond were some sports superstars. Magnates Michael Dell and T. Boone Pickens contributed right away: Pickens even drove a flat-bed truck loaded with rescued pets to a plane he chartered. Even Wal-Mart, our perennial whipping-boy, performed better than FEMA – they had 45 trucks loaded with essentials and ready to go several days before the storm landed. These were wonderful gestures, but private entities are still not obligated to rescue people. We shouldn’t have to keep the nearest billionaire on speed-dial.

I imagine the terrorist attacks frightened some voters into supporting an administration that often used that fear to silence opposition. You only have to look again at the mishandling of Katrina – an occasion where we had several days’ warning – to question President Bush’s appointees’ qualifications and abilities to protect the public. One wonders if they would have the knowhow to find their way out of a de-fenced playground.

The 2008 presidential election did draw out voters who usually abstain: “hope” and “change” are hard to resist during a severe recession. The Tea Party backlash of 2010 included not only the flat-earthers distracted by lies about Obama’s birthplace, but also people like the secessionist ranchers of far-northern California, who pressed for a new state called “Jefferson”, while they resented the subsidies they needed to stay afloat.

As an organization, we contribute to our downfall by failing to support the Union and our co-workers. To gain favor with management, employees needlessly divulge confidential information to their supervisors about co-workers. They accept stories spread by management about co-workers getting fired for medical fraud without bothering to confirm the claims. It is surprisingly common for employees to trash injured co-workers with no proof at all that the person is faking or exaggerating an injury. On-the-job injuries, like hurricanes, are democratic – everyone who works is at risk. Fortunately, our local has had considerable success advocating for the rights of injured employees. Sometimes it seems that no one but us is there for those injured employees. We had better learn to “have each other’s back” and get off of the fast track to our destruction or prepare to suffer. No one can say we weren’t warned.



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