

#1585 Workers Rights Ascendent Amid Writers and Actors Strikes in Hollywood and the UAW Strikes Against the Big 3 US Automakers all While the Sociopathic Reality of Capitalism is Laid Bare by CEOs Explain How Exploiting Workers is Intrinsic to the System

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [00:00:00] Welcome to this episode of the award winning Best of the Left podcast, in which we shall take a look at some of the rays of hope for the workers struggle against unfettered, exploitative capitalism, which are coming from multiple angles, as creatives in Hollywood and autoworkers in Detroit are striking to demand better wages, benefits, and protections, while executives make arguments for why workers should be made to feel the threat of poverty to keep them in line.

Sources today include The Rational National, The New Abnormal, Novara Media, Citations Needed, The Broadcast, The Majority Report, and Revolutionary Left Radio, with additional members only clips from Factually, with Adam Conover, and More Perfect Union.

GM CEO Flails In Response To CNN Question Over Her Pay vs. Workers - The Rational National - Air Date 9-15-23

DAVID DOEL - HOST, THE RATIONAL NATIONAL: For the first time in history the United Auto Workers are on strike against all three big automakers at the same time. So, that is General Motors, Ford, and Stellantis. And in the midst of all [00:01:00] this, the CEO of GM, Mary Barra, was on CNN and, uh, was questioned on why she has seen so much of an increase in her pay compared to her workers. And did not give a good answer. And I'm going to really break down just how ridiculous her answer is.

First here, a little more on, uh, the strike. So, as CNN writes, "the targeted strike against three plants includes fewer than 13,000 of the UAW's 145,000 workers, but Union president Shawn Fain has threatened to grow the strike if the automakers refuse to meet workers' demands. Automakers have scoffed at the Union's call for large raises, a four day workweek, an expanded pension program, among others."

So I've discussed a lot of the demands in previous videos, I'm not going to go through all that again here, but I will mention that one of the asks from the union is, initially was, a 40% pay bump, which is in [00:02:00] line with the pay bump that these major CEOs are seeing. They have now since brought that down to, I believe, around 30%, but are still looking for a major pay raise because they see these executives of these companies making record amounts of money while the workers are struggling.

So, CEO of GM, Mary Barra was asked about this, and uh, check out her response, and then I'm gonna really break down how ridiculous her answer is.

VANESSA YURKEVICH: The union is demanding, asking for a 40% wage increase over four years. They're asking for that in part because they say CEOs like yourself, uh, leading the big three are making those kind of pay increases over the course of the last four years. You've seen a 34% pay increase in your salary. You make almost \$30 million. Why should your workers not get the same type of pay increases that you're getting leading the company?

MARY BARRA: Well, if you look at compensation, my compensation, 92% of it is [00:03:00] based on performance of the company. I think one of the strong aspects of the way our compensation for represented employees is designed is not only are we putting a 20% increase on the table, we have profit sharing. So, when the company does well, everyone does well. And for the last several years, that's resulted in record profit sharing for our represented employees. And I think you have to look at the whole compensation package not only 20% increase in gross wage, but also the profit sharing aspect of it, world class healthcare, and there's several other features. So, we think we have a very competitive offer on the table, and that's why we want to get back there and get this done.

VANESSA YURKEVICH: But if you're getting a 34% pay increase over four years, and you're offering 20% to employees right now, do you think that's fair?

MARY BARRA: Well, I think when you look at the overall structure and the fact that 92% is based on performance, and you look at what we've been doing

of sharing in the profitability when the company does well, I think we've got a very compelling offer on the table.

DAVID DOEL - HOST, THE RATIONAL NATIONAL: 92% of her [00:04:00] pay is tied to performance. I'm gonna get to what that means in a second here, and how it exposes one of the many things that are rotting at the heart of all these massive corporations. But first, just on its face, Mary Barra has seen a 34% increase in her compensation. Her workers have not seen that.

At no point did she explain why that's okay, why it's okay for the CEO to see a 34% increase in her pay, while the workers that are making the value in the company, the reason the company exists, why it's okay for them to not see that increase. No explanation there at all. Just, you know, trying to explain why she's paid what she's paid.

Which gets to performance-based pay. 92% of her compensation is tied to performance. Now, most people, you know, maybe not knowing much about how this all works, would think, well, I guess GM's doing very well. They're not laying off any employees, right? All the workers are doing very well. They're all making a lot of money. The whole company's doing so great, so because the whole company's doing fantastic, the CEO gets an [00:05:00] increase in her pay. That's fair, right? Except that's not what's going on. GM, as I'll get to, has been laying off a lot of employees. Yet, performance based pay, the performance, is the performance of the stock.

So, if you, as GM, are buying up your own stock through stock buybacks, which is now legal, was not legal before 1980, but is now legal, then you're going to see increases in your stock, because you are artificially inflating your own stock, and the reason why she wants to tie 92% of her compensation to performance, to the stock, is because that is not taxed the same as salary is. That's why all these CEOs... never look at what their salary is, look at what their total compensation is. That gives you the real idea of what they are actually making. Because a lot of their money is made through it being tied to the stock of the company.

Far-Right Anti-Science Conspiracies Are Literally Killing Us - The New Abnormal - Air Date 9-18-23

DANIELLE MOODIE - HOST, THE NEW ABNORMAL: These billionaire, White CEOs were born in the wrong era in time. That [00:06:00]

they really wanted to be kings. They want fiefdoms. They want, you know, bent knee and necks at their will. And that people should be grateful. As Tim Garner had said, people should be grateful to even have a job. So who cares if they're abused? Who cares if they don't have a living wage? Who cares if you need multiple jobs in order to be able to put a roof over your head? Who cares? Like, you should be grateful and thankful because you are, what?: replaceable.

And so for you, Kim, when you hear these things and we recognize, and there are so many stories that are being, you know, run about the younger generations, the Gen Z's who are basically saying, Yeah, I saw how my parents had to work. I saw extreme loss. I'm a child of recession. I'm a child of the bubble bursting. I'm a child of our home went into foreclosure and all of these things. And [00:07:00] I don't want to work like this for people who don't care about me, who steal from my pension, if you still have one.

What do you make of how this shift that was ushered in really, greatly, through COVID in terms of what power workers have with this younger generation that has also seen and lived through a lot, and is saying, No, we're not the ones?

KIM KELLY: You love to see it, right? I think it's an incredibly encouraging and necessary development. And it's gonna pay off, you know, you can't put lightning back in a bottle, you can't turn around and try and convince these younger folks like, Oh no, it's cool, we'll fix everything, it'll be cool now, just please go back to work, please don't talk to your co workers, don't give your boss any lip. That's not gonna happen.

And honestly, throughout history, it's always been the young people, even in different eras, even in different industries, under different circumstances. I mean, the first factory strike in U.S. [00:08:00] history came in 1824. It was led by young women and girls in Rhode Island who were protesting having their 12 hour workdays extended to 14, and they walked out, and they threw rocks at their boss's house, and they got that order rescinded.

Some of them were young as 15. I mean, even some of the most famous labor leaders and worker organizers we think of in American history, whether it's, you know, the Farm Workers Union, like with Cesar Chavez and Maria Marino [sic, Moreno], and Dolores Huerta, they're in their 20s. Like, the young generation has always been at the forefront of pushing for change, of pushing for something better, of looking at what their parents All of us had and were forced to endure thinking, No, we're not the ones.

Generation upon generation is built on that. And now we're just have so much more access to information and so much more connectivity and are able to learn from all of the struggles and lessons that we can pull from those younger generations now turned [00:09:00] older that put that work in before we got here. It just seems like such a culmination of, honestly, centuries of struggle is what we're seeing right now.

DANIELLE MOODIE - HOST, THE NEW ABNORMAL: And do you think, like, you're part of the Writers Union, and it's been four months, and you alluded to, and I just want to make listeners aware of, that Drew Barrymore had decided that she was going to bring her show, her daytime talk show, back on air amid the writers strike. And after being railed against, I mean, like, railed on social media, she came out recently and said she's gonna honor the strike and she's not going to bring her show back. Some hail it as a victory, others are like, this is cancel culture, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

But after four months and, you know, reports coming out of like a Warner Brothers losing, I don't know, I think it was like 200 million or something like that since this strike has [00:10:00] gone on, and what people are asking for is literally a quarter of what it is that they have already lost, do you think that there is going to be a deal that is struck, or do these studios and CEOs, because they are so wealthy, because their power is so vast, can they wait it out and do what it is that they said when they said the quiet part out loud? They want people to lose their homes. They want people to become homeless.

KIM KELLY: Yeah, they, they sure said that out in public where everyone could see it. Things like that, unforced errors like that, have really led to just the sense of militancy and stubbornness and dedication among the workers who are on strike.

Not only is your boss mistreating you, underpaying you, trying to devalue you, when they spit in your face like that, you're gonna show up in the picket line the next day even more determined to fight. And as much capital and money and power as the studio bosses do have, they know as well as everyone [00:11:00] else does, or is realizing, that they don't really have anything without the workers creating their products.

This is the thing, like, you can have as much money in the world as you want, but none of those people have ever done an honest day's work. They can't write a movie, they can't do any of the work that below the line workers who are also struggling are dealing with. Hollywood and all of its glitz and glamour and money doesn't exist without the people putting in the actual labor.

And, we're gonna win. It's gonna take a good while. Hopefully not much longer, but who's to say? It's gonna take a while, but we have to win. This is the thing. It's not only about wages. It's not only about working conditions, though it is, of course, about those things. So much of this fight is about this threat of AI, about people's likenesses being used without their consent or knowledge, about the way that technology has shaped the industry and how it's going to continue to shape the way workers are treated.

Like, whatever happens with this strike is going to impact [00:12:00] so many other industries because it's going to set a precedent. It's going to set a precedent of either, do the humans win or do the robots win? It sounds like a very sci fi, almost silly premise, but we've all seen the movies, and nobody wants to live through the movies where the robots win.

DANIELLE MOODIE - HOST, THE NEW ABNORMAL: No! No, we don't.

KIM KELLY: Yeah, like we've all seen, like, that is not a prece..., that's a slippery slope. And as, you know, maybe you, facetious as that specific example might be, like, it's the thing, the way that automation hollowed out industries across the American Midwest earlier on, the way that the gig economy is hollowing out so many other professions, this threat of AI is threatening to hollow out screenwriting, and journalism, and art, and so many other types of labor and art and creation. Like, this is a line in the sand. And when the writers and our siblings in [00:13:00] SAG-AFTRA win the strike, that's gonna set out a blueprint for the way that Hollywood and the rest of the industries we're a part of just kind of act going forward. Like, we have to set this is gonna be a precedent-setting strike. We have to make sure the precedent is on our side.

Sociopath Businessman Tells The Truth About Capitalism - Novara Media - Air Date 9-14-23

MICHAEL WALKER - HOST, NOVARA MEDIA: The last few years haven't been easy on anyone. First, we had a once in a century pandemic, then a war in Europe fuelled inflation everywhere. But according to one wealthy businessman, the workers of the world have got it too easy.

TIM GURNER: I think the problem that we've had is that we've, you know, we have... People decided they didn't really want to work so much anymore through COVID and that has had a massive issue on productivity. You know, tradies

have definitely pulled back on productivity, you know, they have been paid a lot to do not too much in the last few years. And we need to see that change. We need to see unemployment rise. Unemployment has to jump 40-50% in my view. We need to see pain in the economy, we need to remind people that they work for the employer, not the other way [00:14:00] around.

I mean there is a, there's been a systematic change where employees feel the employer is extremely lucky to have them, as opposed to the other way around. So it's a dynamic that has to change. We've got to kill that attitude and that has to come through hurting the economy, which is what the whole global, you know, the, the world is trying to do, the governments around the world are trying to increase unemployment to get that to some sort of normality and we're seeing it. I think every employer now is seeing it. I mean there is definitely massive layoffs going off. People might not be talking about it, but people are definitely laying people off and we're starting to see less arrogance in the employment market. And that has to continue 'cause that will cascade across the cost balance.

MICHAEL WALKER - HOST, NOVARA MEDIA: That was Australian millionaire property developer Tim Gurner speaking to a conference for investors. Now, it was pretty shocking, and it's gone viral. Lots of people saying he comes across as a complete sociopath, which I think he does. I'm actually quite appreciative though, that he said that, because I do think he is essentially articulating what is the dominant consensus among [00:15:00] policymakers in the capitalist world. And it's especially interesting because he was basically repeating verbatim a theory put forward by one of the 20th century's most influential leftist economists.

So Michał Kalecki, he was a Polish economist and a contemporary of John Maynard Keynes, but he was more skeptical of the promise of capitalism than John Maynard Keynes. So Keynes, he believed that smart governments could manage capitalism so that full employment would be maintained, and inflation would be kept low, and so you could have harmony between capitalists and workers, essentially. You could make capitalism work for everyone. Keynes was a big supporter of things such as the New Deal under FDR. So, you sort of pump money into the economy to maintain full employment. Businesses still make profits, workers are getting decent wages, unemployment is low, everyone's happy. That was Keynes' idea. I mean, I'm probably, you know, to somewhat, to some degree simplifying it, but that's the long and short of it.

Kalecki, though, disagreed. He doubted that capitalists would ever accept this [00:16:00] deal. Now, in his classic 1943 essay, *Political Aspects of Full Employment*, Kalecki wrote this: "Full employment would cause social and

political changes which would give a new impetus to the opposition of the business leaders. The SAC would cease to play its role as a disciplinary measure, the social position of the boss would be undermined, and the self assurance and class consciousness of the working class would grow. Discipline in the factories and political stability are more appreciated than profits by business leaders. Their class instinct tells them that lasting full employment is unsound from their point of view, and that unemployment is an integral part of the normal capitalist system."

So, Kalecki there is saying that while full employment might be technically possible within capitalism, so that's the sort of Keynes line, the politics of it won't work, and that's because bosses need to be able to control their workers, and they can only control them with the threat of unemployment, and ultimately, the threat of poverty.

Now, if you threaten your worker with unemployment, but you've got quite generous [00:17:00] unemployment payments, then, yeah, that's not going to be a particularly effective disciplining mechanism. But if you threaten your workers with unemployment, and also you have low unemployment benefits, then, yeah, they are going to find it a little bit scary to stand up to you, right?

So, basically, you want to put workers in a vulnerable, in a precarious situation, precisely so they don't get ideas above their station, precisely so they have to listen to the boss and not speak back. And it's for that reason, not necessarily because of technocratic reasons such as inflation, so often you'll hear, sort of, there's this trade off between inflation and unemployment and that's why we can't have full employment or we can't have employment to a very high level all the time. What Kalecki is saying is it hasn't really got anything to do with a technocratic issue about inflation, what it's got to do with is politics, it's got to do with power. It's about the power of the employer vis-a-vis the worker and that's why under capitalism you'll always have precarity: because they need it.

Now, Rivkah, I've always loved Kalecki's theories and that property investor to [00:18:00] me, you know, lots of people criticizing him, but to me he's demonstrated the logic of Kalecki better than any leftist academic might be able to. And for that, I'm somewhat grateful to him.

RIVKAH BROWN: It's interesting that there's been so much outrage at his comments. You know, it's a mask off moment. They expose the way in which capitalism normally operates. But it kind of, in a way, shows how much faith people put in the system day to day. That it's only at these moments, when some random Australian dude with like a massive forehead, kind of just lays out how the system works, that people are so aghast. But I think what's interesting is this

came up actually a couple of weeks ago, I think when I was on the show, when we talked about the statistic that half of renters, or more than half of renters in the UK at the moment are one paycheck away from homelessness. And I argued, and I would argue all the more so in relation to this clip, that that's by design. The Tories want a housing crisis where we are all on the verge of [00:19:00] homelessness because that disciplines the workforce and that disciplines private renters incredibly effectively, because if we're constantly, you know, lying awake at night worried that we might be made homeless or redundant or be fired then we're not going to ask for a pay rise. We're not going to ask for a rent reduction. It works fantastically well.

I mean, Kalecki has theorized this tremendously well, and I think it's really interesting, some of the stuff you've quoted there, but it's also like Marx, you know? Marx laid out the fact that integral to capitalism was this idea of surplus, or what he called "reserve humanity", people that capitalism didn't need within the workforce itself, but did need in order to discipline the working class. I mean, he argued that they were part of the working class, but also kind of like almost a shadow working class there in the background to remind you that this is what you could be if you don't get on with your work and if you try and ask for more.

I was actually reminded of a conversation that I had with a family member recently. We were [00:20:00] in central London and we walked past a homeless man. We kind of had a discussion about whether there should be homelessness in the UK and whether we should try and alleviate it by giving people money. And she was arguing, you know, what would be the point of wanting to have if there weren't any have nots? And I think that's exactly, she had internalized the logic of capitalism. She was effectively saying, it works on me, there being people in society who are marginalized, who are unemployed, who are homeless, makes me afraid enough to work harder.

And so in a way, what Tim Gurner is saying is exactly correct. This is integral to the function of capitalism, that there's a surplus section of humanity that's there in the shadows, waiting as a kind of grim reminder of what happens if you try and unionize, if you try and do a rent strike, if you try and organize in any for any kind of people power.

GOP, Corporate Media Attempt to Manufacture Conflict Between

Autoworkers and Climate - Citations Needed - Air Date 9-20-23

ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: The narrative circulating, which we discussed, that the UAW strikes threaten the electric vehicle sector, because UAW were to [00:21:00] unionize that industry and or raise labor standards and pay they would become unprofitable and die. And of course, the strikes don't involve EV plants, but they certainly are on the minds of workers. So I want to sort of start by talking about this narrative, the narrative we talked about at the intro, this idea that workers think that big bad government is forcing them to be a bunch of green hippies.

SYDNEY GHAZARIAN: Oh, my goodness, yes. I personally, I find that this narrative, this spin job, fascinating, primarily because of how I think it's boldly dishonest, and it's a glaring omission of the actual history and the dynamics at play. I don't know how anyone can even talk about the slowdown of EV production without mentioning the fact that auto executives have been actively deliberately and unrelentingly squashing the EV rollout and any pro climate auto industry regulation for decades, all while suppressing global warming research since the 1960s. You know, the fact is that it wasn't auto workers who made the decision to [00:22:00] produce polluting vehicles or to build toxic plants in working class communities of color. You know, those decisions were made by auto industry bosses like Mary Barra, Jim Farley and Carlos Tavares, you know, the Big Three auto CEOs whose primary motive was ensuring that they could pocket millions and millions of dollars a year at any moral societal or planetary cost. And that's exactly what they're doing. And that's what they've done for a long time. And what this industry narrative about UAW's demands costing too much alongside the EV transition seems to neglect is the fact that auto companies are getting billions of dollars from taxpayer funded EV subsidies to make it work. It's their responsibility to use public funding in ways that serve the public and planetary good, you know, and central to that is not leaving workers and communities behind in the transition to a green economy. And if they can't figure out how to manage taxpayer money in ways that don't further and misery taxpayers themselves, if their [00:23:00] CEOs can't bear to part ways with some of their 20 plus million dollar salaries. Why should we be trusting them with their money in the first place? Why is that money not going directly to workers and communities to figure it out for themselves?

I think earlier you had mentioned the sort of implicit pushback in the media, maybe it's an explicit pushback in the media, probably explicit pushback in the media about unionized EV jobs costing too much. You know, to me, that's honestly funny, for a lot of reasons, because this narrative seems to neglect the

fact that the auto industry has been incredibly profitable with a unionized workforce for a very long time. The fact is that the auto industry was when it was in trouble in 2008, 2009. It was UAW it was their organized workforce that made tremendous and painful sacrifices to keep the companies afloat. Their unionized workers suffered, you know, like so many of us suffered during the financial crash, while the banks and [00:24:00] billionaires were bailed out. And the Big Three are repaying this unbelievable and undeserved generosity by seemingly shocked Dr. Dang, under the cover of a clean energy transition to crush their unionized workforce, and they're underpaid. non union workers build EVs and battery engines in unsafe conditions, you know, well, they pocket fat wads of government funding. I think the audacity of this dynamic and the idea that union jobs and clean energy transition are opposed. Being used to pit climate activists and auto workers against each other is so maddening and ignorant of what the climate movement is actually fighting for. Does no one remember the last several years because I remember, you know, I remember marching, I remember rallying, I remember fighting arm and arm with hundreds and thousands of climate activists for the Green New Deal's promise of a rapid society-wide mobilization and just transition to decarbonize the economy while creating millions of high paying green union jobs. And we fought and are fighting for a Green New Deal, [00:25:00] not a green gig economy and not the auto executives dystopian vision of the energy transition. And right now the climate movement is standing up to corporate greed. And you know, I think the climate movement is standing with UAW auto workers on strike.

NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: Well, yeah, I mean, I think there's something really fascinating going on, which is something you you actually just kind of mentioned, Sydney, which is this idea that there isn't really In a war between hardhat workers and environmental activists, that that's not actually a thing, but we're supposed to believe it's a thing, based on the talking points of, you know, whether it is the automakers themselves or the media covering the story, that somehow the narrative is supposed to be that if you support the transition to more electric vehicles, then clearly, you stand against the auto workers or vice versa, right? That if you stand with auto workers, well, then clearly [00:26:00] you are not interested in the you know, Biden agenda of, you know, every two out of three cars that go to market need to be EV. And so what is always left out of this on purpose is not merely that the tension that is being reported on is not actually the real tension. It's really just, you know, which is really about owners and workers. But what is so often left out and united to this already, is the idea that the Big Three automakers are themselves actually like the major climate villains here, right that like the all the hand wringing about oh, but you know, if the if the workers are on strike that we can't make as many electric vehicles as we wish we could make because we care so deeply about the Earth, like they had been fighting this for years, if not

decades, deliberately. Can you talk about like the environmental and climate track records of these automakers, whether it's the Big Three or just the auto industry [00:27:00] in general, and how they have deliberately pushed to like, slow the transition to EV but now we're supposed to think that, you know, if only they had the workers to do it, they would do this, you know, wholeheartedly because they care so much.

SYDNEY GHAZARIAN: The fact is that the climate environmental track record of the Big Three is atrocious. The climate movement generally, you know, we generally target oil corporations, but the reality is that historically, the auto industry has been in lockstep and waging war against any and all forms of climate regulation or environmental standards. It was in 2020 that E&E news published a report revealing that scientists at General Motors and Ford knew as early as the 1960s, that car emissions caused climate change. And when their scientists took these findings to top executives, they were ignored, buried suppressed, rather than these companies doing anything to protect the environment and humanity from life threatening pollution that their products were creating. They [00:28:00] spent the subsequent decades working to crush any proposed environmental standards, as well as electric vehicles themselves. In a testimony in Congress. In 1967, a Ford executive argued against federal investments in electric vehicle research, arguing that the industry was actively developing EV technology, and would be ready to bring electric cars to market within a decade. Yeah, exactly. [Laughs]

NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED: To be fair, that was only 56 years ago.

Labor historian Nelson Lichtenstein on the UAW strike and the U.S. labor movement rising - The BradCast w/ Brad Friedman - Air Date 9-18-23

BRAD FREIDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST: I am, uh, struck in covering all of this, not just with the, the strength of the arguments from the auto workers, but the fact that the union is striking at all three major automakers at once. Uh, and, and that that has never been done in history. Is that right? And if so, what does it mean that this is happening?

Uh, now, uh, Nelson.

NELSON LICHTENSTEIN: Yes, that's, it's the first time that's happened ever. And that arises out of both weakness and strength of the union. The weakness is that pattern bargaining that is used to strike, say, Ford, and [00:29:00] then you'd move that pattern that you achieved at Ford to the other companies, and that may not work so well, partly because part of the, a lot of the industry's non union, Tesla, for example, or Toyota.

And also, it seems as if some of the companies, they just might not do it. So, uh, and the union, therefore, you know, just has unionized a smaller proportion of the industry than it used to. On the other hand, striking all three does appeal to the real increase in militancy and participation of union members.

They all want to get in. I mean, if you just strike one of them at a time, then the other people are just sitting on the sidelines. And this strike is designed to grow in size, you know, week by week as the negotiations proceed, and Uh, so there probably will be some more factories shut down toward the end of this week, uh, to sort of encourage the negotiators on the company side to get going.

BRAD FREIDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST: So, uh, as I understand it, this is called a [00:30:00] selective strike. Uh, The American Prospect's Robert Kuttner, uh, describes, uh, this today. He says it was a tactic pioneered 30 years ago by the flight attendants at the time. He says the tactic offers significant... Tactical benefits like conserving strike funds for workers, which would otherwise run out faster, allowing for more targeted strikes against parts of the supply chain, etc.,

and keeps the management off balance. Would you agree with that assessment? Yeah, that's

NELSON LICHTENSTEIN: been done. It's been had down in the auto industry actually at, at various times. Mm-hmm. in the early seventies, uh, when the auto companies were thinking of, um, uh, building non-union plants in the south. Uh, the, uh, uh, uh, the, the U aaw began to have selective strikes at General Motors.

This happened other times, but the flight attendants did, PI did, uh, do it in 30 years ago, but it's ha yes, it has happened. However, this one is, is, is, is a little different. It, it, um, it's not designed to be a rolling strike, which means you strike a company and then they. The, a [00:31:00] factory, then they go back to work the next week, and then now it's gonna be the, the, the, the workers are not gonna go back to work.

Mm-hmm. They're gonna stay out and then more workers will join them and you'll begin to get a kind of momentum

BRAD FREIDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST: there. As, as noted, this strike, uh, comes at the, at the same time as both the writers, uh, Guild strike, the actors unions have walked out here in Hollywood. Have we ever seen anything comparable to this moment in history?

It seems between that and the. You know, the things that you and I have been talking about over the last couple of years, Professor, with the strikes at Amazon and Starbucks and so forth, is it comparable to anything in history where, you know, so many sort of major unions are either forming and or walking out at once?

And

NELSON LICHTENSTEIN: Yes, uh, in fact, unfortunately, what we have today is a pale reflection of what used to happen on a routine basis, uh, uh, up through about the end of the 1970s, uh, there were 10 times more strikes each year, 20 times, uh, in, [00:32:00] in the, in the period from the, Well, from the late 30s on into the late 70s, uh, the early 1970s were just full of strikes, uh, auto strikes, uh, post office strikes, uh, uh, uh, strikes of airline, uh, employees, the, uh, uh, in the, in the, in the 70s, even as late as the, uh, mid 70s, there were big auto strikes and steel strikes, uh, Uh, yes, they had them.

Now, now there's a certain excitement about it here because the unions have been in the doldrums, uh, management's in the driver's seat, and there is clearly a, a sense of militancy and, and, and excitement, and, and it's, and also new workers like graduate students and, uh, museum employees and, uh, some retail workers would, you know, have to have gone on, either formed unions or gone on strike.

But, uh, back in the, you know, for 30, 40 years, uh, you know, between late 30s and the 70s, you know, uh, there'll be, just, just looking at the strike statistics, they were 10 times as high, uh, as this, and of course, in the great post war strike wave of 45, 46, there were probably a [00:33:00] thousand times more workers on strike, and many more unions, um, uh, so, so, but on the other hand, I mean, there's a lot of spirit, and there's a lot of excitement, and And there's public support for unions.

It's very widespread. Uh, and there are some new unions are trying to form, uh, against management hostility. But so, so it's not like nothing is happening, but I

just want to make, just, just give you the dimensions here. Uh, you know, in 1970, when the UAW struck just General Motors alone, there were 400, 000 workers on strike.

For two months in the fall of 1970.

BRAD FREIDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST: Do you expect that we might see something like that where the, uh, where all the plants are at, at all three of the automakers are, uh, shut down at once?

NELSON LICHTENSTEIN: Yeah. Well, it could be, yes, it could be yes. If, if the, the union, uh, uh, wants to, uh, handcuff and I, lemme just say one thing.

I think that, that you, you mentioned obviously these, the, uh, union wants. you know 30 or 40 percent wage increase the management's gotten that they're making lots of profits that's all true uh and i think the union is making progress on on just simply [00:34:00] getting a wage increase to make up for really concessions they offered in the past but what's really a The other sticking point here is, and it's not exactly a kind of, how should I put it, a legitimate part of the negotiations, because the companies say, we aren't going to negotiate about this.

It has to do with the new plants that will be open, mainly in the South, to build batteries. And all the, all the companies, and then also the Toyotas and Nissans and Teslas, for that matter, are building these battery plants. And often, many of them are joint ventures, meaning, you know. Partly Korean or, or, or Taiwanese or something.

And the companies say, Oh, you know, this is not part of the agreement. We aren't bargaining over that. In fact, many of the workers haven't even been employed. They haven't, they haven't built the plants and they haven't been employed. But if we're going to have a green transition, if we're going to have Electric vehicles, the wave of the future.

Uh, and you're going have a, a, a workforce, which is, you know, paid at the, at the level of that, you know, manu Auto, unionized auto workers have traditionally [00:35:00] gotten mm-hmm. , you know, you need to reach some settlement here on the, uh, some agreement on the, on the, these battery plants. And, and the, and one thing that makes it possible is the federal government is providing really, uh, I think tens of billions of dollars.

Yeah. Incentives to do that. So there's a leverage there. And one reason that Fain, uh, properly is saying, you know, we want Biden to earn our endorsement,

we aren't going to get it, is they expect the Biden administration, which is providing all of these billions of dollars, our tax dollars passed in the Inflation Reduction Act, uh, they want Biden to say, to tell these, uh, um, auto companies, look, you want this money?

You want these subsidies? You want these loans? Well, We're We expect you to have unionized, you know, good wage, uh, plants that you're building all over the South. Now that's a, that's tough because some of these plants, some of these companies that are building these plants are, um, uh, non union right now, like Toyota or Tesla.

So, uh, this is, this is, this is where the crunch is gonna [00:36:00] come. And, uh, and the, and if the union decides, and makes it clear the it wants some agreement on that then we're going to have a long strike.

Labor Decision Could Lead To A Union Revolution In America - The Majority Report w/ Sam Seder - Air Date 9-23-23

HAROLD MEYERSON: Democrats are aware that, uh, the National Labor Relations Act has been steadily weakened by court decisions and, uh, uh, some of the NLRB rulings when they were controlled by Republicans, uh, and they've been trying to strengthen, uh, labor law. Basically, all the way back to Lyndon Johnson's presidency, and every time they've tried under Johnson, under Carter, under Clinton, under Obama, they have never gotten to 60 votes in the Senate, uh, so, uh, As a result, when, in the private sector, when workers try to unionize, it's a very, very common practice for employers to do things that are illegal, according to the National Labor Relations Act, [00:37:00] like firing the workers who are leading the campaign to unionize, for which the penalties are virtually non existent.

And because this has been completely the norm, uh, increasingly for the last 40 years, uh, most unions have ceased doing major organizing campaigns. Uh, I remember when John Sweeney was running for the presidency of the AFL CIO in 1995, one of his talking points was that the, uh, if you added up all the unions and looked at their budgets, they were spending about 3 percent of their budgets on organizing, because...

They knew they would lose. All right, uh, the new, not new, but... Biden's appointee, confirmed by the Senate as General Counsel of the National Labor Relations Board, and she is basically the boss of all 500 lawyers working for the

board across the country, Jennifer Abruzzo, has been determined to, uh, as much as it is [00:38:00] possible, Restore that original National Labor Relations Act, which was written to give workers the right to collectively bargain.

Restore it to, you know, the point at which it was effective. Um, she put that out in a memo shortly after she took office, in a memo to her lawyers. And she got a case that she brought before the board, which the board, uh, issued this CEMEX decision on Friday. What the decision says is, if enough workers to constitute a majority, uh, have made clear they wish to affiliate with the union by signing cards or some other measure, the employer then has a choice.

The employer can voluntarily recognize the union. which 99.9 percent of the time the employer will not do, or the employer is legally obligated to file for a board, a board run election, then here's the teeth in the [00:39:00] decision. Then if the employer commits an unfair labor practice, the very sorts of things they routinely commit by forcing workers to go to propaganda meetings that are anti union by firing Pro union workers and so on.

Those are unfair labor practices, but there's been no penalty. In this case, if the employer during the run up to the election or during the election itself commits an unfair labor practice, wham, the union is immediately recognized, and, uh, the company is ordered immediately to commence bargaining with the union.

That is a huge change.

SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT: Okay, so prior to this... Let's just go, like, I, cause one of the examples I used yesterday was Bessemer. When, uh, Amazon workers at Bessemer, Alabama, I think it was, it was a warehouse. Um, they, they signed, uh, [00:40:00] cards. They want to get a union. So they, uh, they apply, essentially, to National Labor Relations Board.

The National Labor Relations Board looks at those cards, determines that they're valid. And says, okay, we're going to issue, uh, an election, right? Because Amazon obviously does not want to have a union. Right, right. And then the, and the election, uh, is always, like, was, like, how long out? Was there, are there, are there constraints on how long out that election has to take place within?

HAROLD MEYERSON: Absolutely not, and delay is a common tactic of employers who do not, uh, you know, want to have a union. Uh, it can be delayed, and, you know, the more you delay it... Uh, you know, the, the, the less workers generally, uh, are determined still to push through. And in the case of

Amazon... Where the average Amazon warehouse worker lasts about eight months on the job before the demands of the job, which are ridiculous, just wears that [00:41:00] worker out and he or she quits.

Uh, you know, a delay is fatal,

SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT: but it's Plus, plus they also, I mean, what Amazon does is they bring in managers from all around the country. They, all of a sudden it's like three managers for every worker there for a, you know, a brief period of time. I'm exaggerating, but only slightly. Um, and they bring in young union buster lawyers, and they bring in union busting teams, and they do, and they start to intimidate people, and they do all this, and they, and, and, so the, in Bessemer, the election happens, but afterwards, the union, uh, or the would be union files become people And the National Labor Relations Board says, we recognize these grievances, and they call for another election, and they end up losing that election, but now, once they got to that point where they recognize the, uh, unfair labor practices, boom, the union exists.

HAROLD MEYERSON: Boom, and second boom, uh, the company is ordered to, uh, [00:42:00] go to the bargaining table with the union.

Workers Fighting Back: The UAW Goes on Strike! - Revolutionary Left Radio - Air Date 9-19-23

MAXIMILLIAN ALVAREZ: If you want to know what you can do to help, be part of that groundwork. Talk to your coworkers. Even if you can't unionize just break that barrier that normally keeps you and your fellow worker from talking openly about how much your situation sucks and how much screwed you actually are being, and how much you are being screwed over by your bosses, by your landlords, by your politicians.

What a solution to that would look like, a solution that actually harnesses the pain and the power of working people brought together. You know, what could that look like? Well, we don't know, right, necessarily what it would look like here in the United States in the 21st century, but we can all be doing that tilling work to build those relationships across racial, political, uh, Gender, you know, locational difference.

We can do what we can to start building a more cohesive sense of class, of class itself and class consciousness among our fellow workers. We can do our best to sort of, to [00:43:00] deprogram ourselves and our neighbors and our coworkers from all the ruling class propaganda that that is beaten into our heads from birth.

Now, as I said, Is this an explicitly socialist movement? Is this going to lead to an explicitly socialist politics? Um, no? Maybe? Kind of? Sometimes? Sometimes not? You know, but what I want to emphasize is that this right here, this is the historical froth from which a socialist movement can be born. Yes. By which I mean a movement of working people that fights for working people and believes the people who make You know, society run should run society, and that's us.

It's not the parasitic oligarchs and corporations and their bought off politicians vampirically sucking out all of the wealth that we create for them and then using that fucking money and the power that comes with it to pillage the rest of the globe through [00:44:00] military conflict or financial occupation and domination and that movement.

begins and lives, I think, everywhere. Regular people start fighting back and fighting for a better life, and we start fighting together and building power in our numbers, in our organizational capacities to sustain a working people's movement That needs to attack on all fronts like that. This is what we can do to help be part of building that movement and be part of that full frontal attack where we need to go on the offensive in our workplaces, telling our bosses, Hey, you can't treat me like that.

You can't talk to me like that. I deserve better than this, but we also need it even in our own unions. As the UAW has shown us, if your local sucks, you need to reform that. You need to get the assholes who are in there and not serving the members. Out and you need to take control of it and make it a weapon for the rank and file, but you need to also run for school boards, get like you need to go at these moms for Liberty [00:45:00] weirdos and all these nutjobs.

We're trying to take power wherever they can in our city governments, in our state legislatures, and in Washington and dc. The point is that we need to start building power and winning. And when we start doing that, Where it goes from there, you know, is really up to us. That's what I want to leave people with.

What hap what happens next depends on what we do now. But everywhere you look, there is a front to be fought upon. So pick your battles, and let's go win this fucking thing. Mmm. Amen.

TEDDY OSTROW: I just want to add one last thing. You just killed it, ending out, Max. I love everything you said. You're absolutely right, but I just want to say on the other side...

You know, you're listening to this great podcast right now, there's mainstream media right now, hard at work, scare monitoring, trying to, you know, putting, putting out corporate talking points, they emphasize how much damage might be done to the economy and what, what they really mean is the company's profits, and I, and you know, [00:46:00] this is unfortunately really, really convincing to a lot of people, um, you know, they, the mainstream media have shown they don't particularly care about the needs of workable people, but we're at a really unprecedented moment, Where those corporate talking points are kind of cracking in people's minds.

They're starting to understand, people kind of understand, that they're wrong, you know? That the damage that will be done to working America will be much higher if the auto workers don't fight for a better contract and set the standards that will raise the livelihoods of all of us, you know? And then, we're 75 percent public support of the strikers.

People know which side they're on, um, but it's always important to help them out a little bit, push back on the mainstream media narratives. They're endlessly fed, um, and so within, in the workplace, uh, with your family, wherever, whenever. Um, start talking about it, because this is, this really is a seize the moment moment

How These Strippers UNIONIZED Their Strip Club with Equity Strippers Noho - Factually! with Adam Conover - Air Date 9-13-23

ADAM CONOVER - HOST, FACTUALLY!: I think a lot of [00:47:00] it, again, is the, Cultural perception of strippers and of the job that you do. People think it's not a job that any, you know, any decent person or intelligent person or powerful person. This is just, uh, this is a degraded job for people who aren't worth anything. And so they don't expect those folks to stand up and have power and be smart and committed and strategic.

CHARLIE: I think what they don't realize is that.

I would say a good majority of all strippers have other jobs, but they're in fields that just don't pay well, like when you're an assistant, or you're doing anything creative, like music, fashion, art, whatever, all of those things are not, like, high paying jobs when you're starting off, so it's always, for a lot of people, it's just supplemental income, which means a lot of people have a lot of work experience coming into clubs that they just wouldn't spend That club owners don't expect you to have.

Right. So they think that you don't understand what it means to have like a labor to have employee rights. Right, right. But like most people have had at least a few experiences [00:48:00] where they've been told like what their rights are. Mm-hmm. . So that's a big part of their perception.

ADAM CONOVER - HOST, FACTUALLY!: Mm-hmm. . Yeah. Tell me a little bit about the early days.

'cause this thing we skipped, uh, that, that I wanna make sure we talked about. Uh, you know, one of the most important early steps in unionizing is talking to your co workers, getting everybody on board, finding out what everybody needs, doing that basic organizing, and just tell me about that step when you were first getting started.

Like, how did that, how did that go and how did you approach it?

LILITH: I think the first time we discussed organizing was when, with the first firing of, um, this dancer, Regan, um, because she was just such a, like, emblematic part of Stargarden, she had so many Like, big customers who brought in a lot of money, so it really felt like, oh, if she is not safe and her job is not safe, then we are not either.

And so that's when discussions about, like, our protections and what we could do and how the law could, um, help us, um, started. And [00:49:00] that's, we very fortunately had a little Instagram group chat that was just to discuss, you know, random work things that very quickly became a union organizing group chat.

ADAM CONOVER - HOST, FACTUALLY!: Got it.

So this seems like this is pretty easy. You didn't have to, like, go and really bend people's ears and go, Think about it. You were all in a group chat and you were going like, Let's fucking get them.

CHARLIE: There was only, I think, 24 dancers total. And also... The, the whole, our entire movement, I think the word that could be used is urgency, like, we had maybe a week from when Reagan had gotten fired to when Selena got fired, and we were like, no one is safe, and then we were like, alright, petition, let's go go go go go, and then strike, and it was just so quick that there wasn't like, Hey, like have you ever heard of unionization?

Like, do you know if you could be protected for it? And like, it just didn't happen like that. Cause we didn't have a grace period.

LILITH: Yeah. I will say that like one of the, in our earliest discussions, um, one, the documentary, Live Girls, Live Girls Unite live, nude girls [00:50:00] unite about the Lusty Lady Unionization in the nineties.

That was mentioned as just like a touchpoint to be like, if you're afraid of the prospect of us as strippers unionizing, like, look at this and just maybe get inspired. And I watched that documentary and was absolutely like, oh, I get it now. Like, I see how this could be something like a feasible path for us.

Yeah.

CHARLIE: And we were really lucky to have had other, other strikes across America within strip clubs and also. Um, the Lesley ladies to kind of guide us in everything that we were doing. So we're definitely not the first. Um, and yeah, it feels powerful to know that like the quote unquote sisterhood of like strippers across the world exercising their rights exists.

And yeah, we got to follow footsteps.

ADAM CONOVER - HOST, FACTUALLY!: That is so cool. And do you see, um, you guys, you guys have gotten so much press. You've had so much support from the labor movement. Are you starting to see that expand? Are there folks considering this another area? Is equity going to try to. And more strip clubs, and cover more workers.

CHARLIE: Already has! [00:51:00]

LILITH: Yeah! Really? There's a club in Portland called Magic Tavern.

ADAM CONOVER - HOST, FACTUALLY!: I knew Portland would be next.

CHARLIE: I know, right? Naturally. Yes, yes.

LILITH: Yeah, they just, um, like, had their vote count, and it was, um, mail in ballots, so I think that we should have the results of that soon. That's amazing. Um, we all, a few of us, like, went up to Portland and supported them on their first picket, like, it's been very beautiful to see, because I think, like, our dream was, Unionizing our club, but also hoping that there would be other workers who And finally, I'd like to thank our sponsors for

CHARLIE: being here today.

We hope you enjoyed this episode of Magic Tavern. We'll see you next time.
[00:52:00] Huge, because it took us, how many months? Like, uh, eight?

LILITH: Like, nine. Like, we put out a baby.

CHARLIE: Yeah. Yeah, literally. That's a baby. Yeah.

ADAM CONOVER - HOST, FACTUALLY!: And by the way, I believe Portland is a big strip club town, so if one place flips, a whole bunch are gonna go next.

Absolutely. That is the hope. I bet. And what you said about having the model is... So important to see that other people have done it. You know, I, I'm a stand up comic. There's no stand up comedy union, uh, anywhere in America. Um, but I just last year read a wonderful book called I'm Dying Up Here, which is about the attempt to stand up comics in the 70s try to unionize the comedy store.

Which is a famous club still there. It, at the time, did not pay. And I, I knew that comics, oh, they went on strike. I thought they just like... Uh, you know, held up picket signs and whatever. They actually did form a real union. They like filed with the N L R B and all that. They went on strike. Um, you know, Jay Leno was on the picket line.

Gary Shandin crossed the picket line. There's all these big Hollywood stories about it. But, um, they were [00:53:00] eventually found, uh, in the seventies that they could not be a union because they were con they were found to be contractors. Yeah. Mm-hmm. . But just seeing that, oh, hold on a second. Stand up comics, at one point, did do this at a particular club, made me go, I mean, they could again, like, I don't know if I'm the one to make it happen or anything, like, I don't work at a club like that regularly, but, just like, seeing the example can really inspire people to, and I don't know, just seeing you guys do this made you's back in the marathon.

Dr. description. There's a lot of similarities between standup comedy and stripping For sure. To be quite honest. Yeah. Maybe we should think about it, you know?

LILITH: Yeah. And I think that, um, a lot of people in other parts of the country do not believe that they as strippers can unionize because we live in California where there is this law that.

There are like standards in the from the NLRB that will mean that you should be classified as an employee. And I think that in, I don't think Magic Tavern is an employee status [00:54:00] club, but they are managed like employees and they are scheduled like employees and there are all these different thresholds that they do need to be able to unionize.

CHARLIE: Yeah. If you're an independent contractor as a comedian, but you're on a strict schedule or. And if the club takes fees from you in any way or quotas, house fees, whatever, then you are being treated like an employee, therefore you're able to unionize.

Marvel workers just won the first union in visual effects history - More Perfect Union - Air Date 9-13-23

MARK PATCH: So today, we saw these workers at Marvel, um, win their election. So what does that mean? Um, I mean, ultimately, this isn't a campaign that's about a single studio or a project. This is about visual effects workers, you know, throughout the industry, demanding respect for the work that they do. But, you know, especially for Marvel workers, where we couldn't have superheroes flying

or battling or fighting or morphing or anything, without visual effects. So, when you have, uh, a whole brand, that really does rely on upon the work that we do, um, I think that really speaks to the reasonableness of what we're talking about, right? What we're really asking for, is to be paid fairly for the hours that we [00:55:00] work, um, to be given, you know, the basic...

I think that when you have workers who are so vital to providing, uh, the work that makes these projects possible, asking for these very reasonable demands that will make their lives more sustainable and allow them to continue to exercise, uh, their skills and experience at a top level. Um, this should be a win win for both sides.

If you are at a studio of your own, you can do exactly what these workers did. It starts with talking to your co workers, the people sitting right next to you, and ultimately reach out to us at vfxunion.org, and we can connect you, and ultimately build a supermajority, as we've seen at Disney and Marvel, in a matter of months.

And it's the same if you're working at the vendor side. You know, we would seek to include... 80% of you [00:56:00] to make a unanimous demand for representation. This is a grassroots campaign that puts the voices of the workers first and the union is, is you the workers. Um, this is not about ie coming in and, you know, rescuing us.

This is about. VFX workers uplifting themselves, um, and, you know, with the support, um, of IATSE, ultimately being able to negotiate a collective, uh, bargaining agreement that would improve all of our conditions. We have many more, uh, you know, campaigns, uh, in the future, and, um, ultimately every person in visual effects should be able to find their home in this new national local union.

Final comments on Biden's visit to the picket line and the importance of how moral questions are framed

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: We've just heard clips today, starting with *The Rational National*, breaking down the nonsense arguments for why executives should get raises at higher rates than workers who create real value. *The New Abnormal* discussed the dynamics of the writer's strike. *Novara Media* highlighted the CEO who actually said exactly how [00:57:00] capitalism is supposed to work. *Citations Needed* critiqued the media going along with the idea that the autoworker strike is hurting the transition to electric vehicles. *The Broadcast* looked back into the history of unionization. *The Majority Report* discussed Biden's National Labor Relations Board, which has made unionization easier. And *Revolutionary Left Radio* discussed the future of the labor movement with cautious optimism.

That's what everybody heard, but members also heard two additional bonus clips, the first from *Factually! with Adam Conover*, which hosted a conversation about strip club workers struggling to unionize and *More Perfect Union*, doing a quick report on the visual effects workers at Marvel, also pushing to unionize.

To hear that, and have all of our bonus content delivered seamlessly to the new members only podcast feed that you'll receive, sign up to support the show at bestoftheleft.com/support, or shoot me an email requesting a financial hardship membership, because we don't let a lack of funds stand in [00:58:00] the way of hearing more information.

Now, additional episodes of *Best of the Left* you may want to check out for more context include #1463 "People Are Waking Back Up to the Need for Labor Unions", that's from December 2021, and that one's interesting because it goes back into deep labor history to give better context for the struggles happening today. And 1557, "Tactics and Counter-tactics of the Struggle for Labor Rights", that's from May of this year, 2023, and it's a bit similar in that it looks at history for context, but this time with a focus on labor tactics and, of course, management counter-tactics that have been around for ages. All worth your time. Again, those were episodes 1463 and 1557.

Now to wrap up, I have a few thoughts. The first is that, news today, breaking basically as I'm putting the show together, Biden is the first president to ever go to [00:59:00] a picket line, which is exciting and new, it's never happened before, and it's obviously also about politics, and it's also obviously about economics and labor. It's just impossible for a president to separate the two, but in addition to the politics, it's also progress, so I'll take it. And maybe it'll help him carry Michigan in 2024, maybe it'll help the workers in their negotiations. What I recall for sure is how annoyed I was when Obama said that he'd put on his walking shoes and join the striking workers, but never showed up.

So, progress. Uh, next thing, this is just an amusing note. I was reading about Biden's visit to Michigan on pbs.org and I came across this, just, little section of an article toward the bottom. It says, "Dave Ellis, who stocks parts at the distribution center, said he's happy Biden wants to show people he's behind the middle class, but he said the visit is just [01:00:00] about getting more votes. 'I don't necessarily believe that it's really about us', said Ellis, who argued that Trump would be a better president for the middle class than Biden, because Trump is a businessman." And I know I don't really need to tell this audience why running a business isn't necessarily a good indicator of how good of an elected leader a person would be, but really, in this context, it's pretty stunning to hear that old talking point being regurgitated like that.

This guy, Dave Ellis, is striking to be treated better by his employers, who are, not so shockingly, businessmen and women. In fact, every time working people who constitute the middle class try to improve their lot in life economically, it's always the business people who are standing in the way. So, it really is a marvel of propaganda that anyone in the [01:01:00] whole wide world could be

convinced that electing business people to office would sort of magically be good for the working class, when any rational analysis of that relationship should be of natural enemies.

Last note, on how issues like labor and economics and fairness get framed, I've been waiting to tell this story for a little while, and I think it fits here. I had a thought recently about that old question of whether it's moral to steal a loaf of bread to feed a starving family, and I have no idea what made me think of this, but suddenly I had a thought about how that moral question is framed in a very narrow and uncomfortable way. 'Cause, I mean, my whole life I've heard that question and I've sort of struggled, like, I don't know, like, I mean probably yes, right? But I mean, and I sort of go back and forth. So I told Amanda about my thoughts and sort of argued that [01:02:00] it's asking the wrong question. We need to ask a totally different question.

She said, 'Oh yeah, I think I saw something like that on social media recently. Let me see if I can find it'. And it turned out that it was basically, it was like a socialist meme or some such that reframed the question as to whether it was moral for a baker to hoard bread when people are starving. And I thought: Closer, but no, that's still not it. That's still the same BS, overly-narrow framing of the question. It's just seen from the opposite perspective. The real moral quandary is whether it's moral for a society with abundance to allow individuals to starve so that they're forced to decide whether or not to steal to feed their family, or for a baker to have to decide whether they, individually, can afford to give away free bread.

The whole question focuses so much on the individuals involved [01:03:00] that it completely ignores the larger structural forces at play and the potential for larger forces like government to do good in individual people's lives, and instead it puts that moral onus on the individual themselves. And this is why framing is such a powerful rhetorical tool. It's so much easier to simply go along with the question as it's framed than to question it on a fundamental level. But this is what we have to do to make fundamental change, like in the worker and management conflict, to remove exploitation altogether rather than just get slightly better treatment in a fundamentally exploitative system.

That is going to be it for today. As always, keep the comments coming in. I would love to hear your thoughts or questions about this or anything else. You can leave us a voicemail or send us a text to 202-999-3991 or simply email me [01:04:00] to jay@bestoftheleft. com. Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to Deon Clark and Erin Clayton for their research work for the show and participation in our bonus episodes. Thanks to our Transcriptionist Trio, Ken, Brian, and LaWendy, for their volunteer work helping put our transcripts

together. Thanks to Amanda Hoffman for all of her work on our social media outlets, activism segments, graphic designing, web mastering, and bonus show co-hosting. And thanks to those who already support the show by becoming a member or purchasing gift memberships at bestoftheleft.com/support. You can join them by signing up today, and it would be greatly appreciated. You'll find that link in the show notes, along with a link to join our Discord community, where you can also continue the discussion.

So, coming to you from far outside the conventional wisdom of Washington, DC, my name is Jay, and this has been the *Best of the Left* podcast, coming to you twice weekly, thanks entirely to the members and donors to the show, from bestoftheleft.com.