

## Solidarity

My father was a reasonable man who seldom took up causes. He believed in himself and in a world that was basically good. He would protect himself and join with others in a just cause only when it became necessary. For him that time came sometime in the 1930's when his employer pushed workers to the wall. He joined a union and for all the time I knew him afterward he always supported labor.

As a young snot-nose brought up in the luxury provided by my father's union job, I was against organized labor for the simple reason that I had an ego larger than my capacity to understand that few of us can stand alone in life ... for very long. I was also quick to note the excesses of large unions, the criminal activities and in some places a landscape of dead bodies. And I don't mean only the ones to be found on the job.

Later in life I became a union member for a short time while teaching. I didn't have much choice, frankly. And besides, in the particular situation where I found myself, I would not have wanted to be at the complete mercy of a school administration who individually and collectively were clearly dishonest.

I have met people who are treated poorly by their management and I don't understand how or why they put up with their lot. Obligations, I suppose. I certainly won't judge them, but I don't think I could put up with it. I had a taste of it before completely retiring and had I been forced to witness a little more of it I could have wound up punching someone.

Eventually people react. Those who are the crazier among us have already done so in an unfortunately deadly manner. But cooler heads

will prevail and find methods to subvert the slave ship that the modern workplace can become.

Workers are changing. A young woman who grew up in our neighborhood is a very responsible lady who has always been a hard worker, an A student who went after what she wanted and got it. So it surprised me when a few years ago in her first job after college she told me and her father one summer afternoon that she refused to let the work in her new position overtake her personal activities and professional pursuits.

"Gee," I said to her as we ate hot dogs at a neighborhood picnic, "at your age in a starting position, I tied myself to my office door and volunteered to do anything for anyone ... anytime, anywhere."

"They aren't going to enslave me," she said. "It's their company, not mine. It's my life, not theirs."

Today, with a young family of her own, she holds a very lucrative job but she still calls the shots.

She did it her way, I guess. But she is only one of many I am hearing and reading about who will not be coerced by the corporate mentality. They will find ways around it. And when we hear some of them say they will give up the job and live in the woods, if necessary, they mean it. But I have the feeling that before they load up their back packs, this new breed will seek common ground with their peers to force employers to be more reasonable.

It will eventually happen. Workers will form organizations once again. Whether they will call them unions, I can't guess.

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The Windswept Press  
Murrells Inlet, South Carolina

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