Rails Need to Crank Up the Pressure and the Heat on Biden and Co.

I'd like to pick up where I left off in the Winter 2021 issue of The Highball with my commentary, “Railroad Brothers and Sisters: Why Do We Put Up with This?” I trust that it's a generally accepted premise that railroad workers’ struggle for safety and dignity on the job, as well as quality of life on and off the job, clash head on with the insatiable and unscrupulous quest for profits by the railroad bosses, CEO’s and freeloading investors. Essentially the same can be said for workers across the spectrum, from manufacturing, transportation, distribution, construction, infrastructure maintenance etc., to service and retail. Public sector workers, such as teachers and postal workers, are at the mercy of local, state and federal budgets controlled directly by politicians. While private sector CEO’s may not have direct input on government budgets, you can be certain that their influence on the political process ensures that whatever they pay in taxes doesn't hurt their bottom line.

So essentially all workers have to confront a combination of CEO’s, investors and politicians to address our collective and respective concerns, issues and grievances that impact our daily lives on and off the job. As I've stated previously, I became disillusioned with the Democratic Party 40+ years ago. That said, I get the collective satisfaction of the 78 million who voted for President Biden, being able to tell Trump, "You're fired!"

I also get why so many workers voted for Trump in 2016, because they couldn't stomach the thought of voting for Hillary Clinton. Now the following is my personal opinion and analysis, but I'm convinced that enough of those same workers who voted for Trump, could have been won over to vote for Sen. Bernie Sanders, the only serious challenger to Clinton in 2016. Sanders could’ve appealed to those same workers who bought Trump’s, “Drain the swamp”, anti-establishment schtick.

Sanders was clearly the peoples choice, filling up football stadiums with energetic rallies across the country. But the Democratic National Committee (DNC) used their clout to steal the nomination from Sanders and hand it to Clinton, as if she were the entitled heir. By doing so, the DNC deprived us of what would've been must-see TV, the splendid theater a Trump vs. Sanders contest could've and would've been.

My personal opinion is that Sanders could have defeated Trump. Trump lost the 2016 popular vote by 3,000,000. But he won the presidency only because of a few thousand votes from under-standably disgruntled, blue collar workers in Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania. Winning the popular vote in those four states, albeit by narrow margins, gave Trump the decisive electoral votes, and the rest, as they say, is history. I'm convinced Sanders could have appealed to those same workers, with a much more coherent pro-labor/anti-big business message, but we'll never know.

So compliments of the DNC’s heavy-handedness, four years later, instead of discussing the limitations of a self-proclaimed Democratic socialist, pro labor president, we're just relieved to be liberated after four years of Trumpian Hell. Even I have to concede that Biden is a breath of fresh air after Trump’s putrid, subterranean low bar. Compared to Trump, Biden comes off like a conquering hero, as he strives to get the covid plague under control. While I appreciate his efforts on vaccine production and distribution, as well as economic relief, this is the bare minimum obligation and responsibility of government. We should expect and are entitled to nothing less, in addition to so much more. As the front page article points out, the American Rescue Plan has some bones and trinkets for rail workers. As this issue goes to press, there's discussion about some kind of infrastructure, bill that is high on the Biden administration's wish list - potential obstruction from Sen. Mitch McConnell (the self-proclaimed “Grim Reaper”) notwithstanding. Pardon me for digressing for a moment, but what kind of evil, deranged sociopath takes pride in such a nickname, much less how he's earned it? He spews repugnant BS with an arrogant smirk, as he kills any legislation that might give us a few crumbs of relief, better health care, safer workplaces, cleaner environment etc., while he arrogantly rams through tax cuts for the rich.

If I can walk and chew gum simultaneously, then I can call out the Republicans for being vile and subhuman, without drinking the Biden Kool-Aid. Now it's not my intent to urinate on anyone’s Biden victory parade and the, “Hallelujah! It’s a new day!”, celebrations, but I have a personal beef with all the pro-labor accolades heaped on Biden by the unions’ leadership.

While rails have been battered and bruised by PSR the last few years, I experienced it several years earlier when Hunter Harrison became CEO at CP Rail in 2012. My last few years before I retired in January 2016 were sheer torture and hell. The new regime unleashed a reign of terror, effortlessly imposing their will, violating work-rule agreements left & right, over-under-sideways-down. Biden was Vice-President at that time, and he never uttered one syllable in our defense, reinforcing that we can’t sit back and wait for a savior. So let’s use this breath of fresh air to rejuvenate ourselves and seize the moment. The following article on Page 7 has a list of numerous tasks to prepare for the inevitable clash over single-employee crews.

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