



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on December 30, 2010

Damning Charge: Slow NYC Snow Clean-up Was Sanitation Department Budget Protest

The plot came to light after a group of conscience-wracked sanitation workers met with City Councilman Dan Halloran and blew the whistle. The *Post* continued:

The snitches “didn’t want to be identified because they were afraid of retaliation,” Halloran said. “They were told [by supervisors] to take off routes [and] not do the plowing of some of the major arteries in a timely manner. They were told to make the mayor pay for the layoffs, the reductions in rank for the supervisors, shrinking the rolls of the rank-and-file.”



(Note: It’s wrong to characterize people who alert their fellow man about immoral, unethical and possibly criminal behavior with the negative term “snitches.” They should be called “honest.”)

The problem is that this collective temper fit didn’t make the mayor pay as much as it did the city’s residents, at least two of whom died as a result of snarled streets impassable to emergency vehicles. The two victims were a 75-year-old Queens woman with breathing difficulties who had to wait three hours for EMS workers and a newborn in Crown Heights who was found unresponsive when finally reached by police and firefighters nine hours after an emergency call.

Of course, such consequences were entirely foreseeable. In the wake of a blizzard, sanitation workers provide an emergency service as much as the police, firemen, and EMS workers whose movement they impeded do. Thus, their action is a bit like disenchanted emergency-room personnel conspiring to effect a slowdown: It is deadly immaturity. There are ways you protest and ways you don’t. You can assemble at city hall on your own time and dime, give speeches, and make news, but what you don’t do is exhibit a blatant disregard for human life by shirking life-or-death responsibilities while on the taxpayer-funded clock. This job slowdown is the most damnable, shameful, immoral of actions.

It also is an outgrowth of our modern, spoiled-brat spirit of entitlement and is the same phenomenon that caused the riots in Greece and France. Too many people today behave as if money grows on trees, as if wanting something — be it nationalized health care, another handout, or plum salaries and benefits — is enough reason to get it. Perhaps they really do mistake government for God and thus believe that “budget crunch” is a euphemism for a punishment visited upon them by an omnipotent entity that could, if it weren’t bent on tormenting them, manufacture wealth from thin air. Yes, daddy’s just being mean in taking the T-bird away, and we’ll throw a tantrum until he relents — even if people have to die.

And this is a mentality epitomized by unions, which, if they ever had any usefulness, have long outlived it. To paraphrase a commenter under the *Post* article, unions are like diapers: Once some maturity is realized, they’re no longer necessary. Although, given the actions of NYC’s sanitation workers, it could be said that their union is more like the baby who soils the diapers.



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And there is an irony here. Many of the union rank-and-file and virtually all the bosses have long supported the tax-and-spend politicians and policies that caused the budget woes by which they feel unfairly victimized. You know who they should be protesting? Themselves.

As for the wider society, we've spared the rod and spoiled the child for too long, and it's time for accountability. What should be done? American Thinker's Gene Schwimmer suggests that criminal charges could be filed. While he points out that he's no lawyer, he wonders:

if (a) these "Sanitation Department Bosses" can be identified and (b) a grand jury can be convinced that the "Sanitation Department Bosses" did, in fact, order the slowdown, with reckless disregard of the potential consequences, could someone be guilty of at least negligent homicide, manslaughter or at least accessories to one of the two?

I'm not only no lawyer, I'm not even an optimist. So I won't hold my breath waiting for justice. But there is no doubt that the NYC sanitation union — along with most other unions — needs to be thrown out with the trash.



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