



On, Wisconsin!

In case you've missed the news, 14 liberal Democratic members of the Wisconsin state Senate fled the state so there wouldn't be enough members present to allow a vote to be taken. They've been hiding out in Illinois for more than two weeks now.

While the Democrats don't have the votes to defeat Governor Scott Walker's efforts to balance the state budget, by fleeing to Illinois they can prevent the Senate from having a quorum. No quorum, no votes. It may be one of the most undemocratic things I've seen in years. It's despicable.



Oh, and speaking of despicable, how about the violent and obscene demonstrations against Walker and his conservative supporters by members of the teachers union and other public employees? These folks have been feeding very well at the government trough for decades. Now they are going absolutely ballistic at the thought of their plum benefits being trimmed by even a nickel.

Here's the problem in a nutshell: The state government in Wisconsin, like that of almost every other state, has been playing a game of financial kick-the-can for decades. Ever since President Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society," politicians have been voting for generous pay and retirement packages for all sorts of government workers — teachers, policemen, firemen, bureaucrats.

The problem is, while they approved the spending, they never planned on where the money would come from to pay for all of their generosity. Just like our President today, whose spending spree makes a drunken sailor look frugal, they decided to placate their constituents now and let someone else face the consequences tomorrow.

Now tomorrow has arrived — and there isn't enough money in the till to pay for it. Of the 222 pension plans operated by various state governments on behalf of their employees, 116 are currently underfunded. There are some bad times ahead, my friends.

Making the problem even worse is that so many people have figured out how to game the system. For example, many municipalities decided that the pensions for retiring policemen, or firemen, or their own paper-pushers would be based on a percentage of their income for the last two or three years they worked.

Not being stupid, guess what many of these employees did? They started putting in 20 to 40 hours of overtime every week. They managed to inflate their pay so much that some of them are now getting more than \$150,000 a year in retirement benefits — even though their salaries never reached half that amount. Is this a wonderful country or what?

As you know from the nightly news, union leaders are so furious with Walker and his allies — and so worried that other states and municipalities might also try to restore some sanity to the budget process — they've declared all-out war in Madison. Angry parasites are being bused in from all over the state and even from out of state, handed signs, and told to scream their heads off. Thousands are gladly



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complying.

But what is it that the Governor of Wisconsin wants to do? The protestors make it sound as though he's going to force their offspring into sweatshops and make them live on cat food. But what exactly is it that this heartless, mean-spirited, cheapskate SOB is proposing? Ready?

One, that most government workers in Wisconsin, who now pay less than one percent of the cost of their pension plans, start paying almost six percent. Ask anyone you know who works for private enterprise how much their company contributes to their retirement, would you? The highest I've heard is a matching contribution of 25 percent to a 401(k). The more common response was a laugh.

Two, that government workers pay for 12 percent of their health-insurance premiums as opposed to the current six percent. Or to put it another way, that the state can go from paying about 94 percent to just 88 percent. Does anyone out there who is not sucking at the government teat have a deal this sweet?

Three, that government unions no longer be allowed to use collective bargaining to argue for pensions and other benefits. In this context, "collective bargaining" means "I ain't gonna do what you want. And I'll bust the skull of anyone else you hire to do it."

Four, that the State will stop forcibly collecting union dues from its employees and turning the money over to union bosses. Union dues "contributed" by government workers would become — gasp! — voluntary. No wonder the union leaders are quaking in their boots.

Five, the unions would be forced to let their members vote every year on whether they wanted to continue to be represented by the union. Can you imagine bringing democracy to rank-and-file union members? What an un-American idea! (Oh, wait, I think I got that wrong.)

I don't want to sound like a cranky old grandfather (although my children will assure you, that's exactly what I am), but in six decades of working for others and myself, I never had a deal as lucrative as government employees enjoy today.

And what sort of gratitude do we get? In New York City they refuse to plow the streets. In Pennsylvania they allow goons and thugs to intimidate voters — and the Justice Department looks the other way. In Texas, Illinois, Nevada, and probably dozens of other places, they steal elections.

And what does the President of the United States have to say about it? He attacks the Governor of the sovereign state of Wisconsin for trying to bring some fiscal sanity to his State. Looking at the positive side here, at least it kept President Barack Obama from battling Arizona again for trying to stem the invasion of illegal aliens, or Honduras for daring to kick out a Marxist dictator-in-the-making.

The Wisconsin state Assembly has voted 51 to 17 to support Walker's reforms. The state Senate can't take a vote at this time, of course, because 14 liberal legislators remain in hiding South of the border.

How will all of this be resolved? Calmly and sensibly, I hope. Violently and acrimoniously, I fear. If you live in Wisconsin, or know anyone who does, ask them to please give the democratic process a chance and tell the 14 AWOL Senators to go to work. They just may find out that solvency works — and feels good, too.

Now please excuse me. I'm going to put John Phillips Sousa's "finest of college marching songs" in my CD player and turn up the volume. "On, Wisconsin!" indeed.

Until next time, keep some powder dry.

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