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Labor Watch

The Untold, Racist Origins of 'Progressive' Labor Laws

Protecting "white jobs" was the purpose of union-backed legislation

By Horace Cooper

Summary: *Most Americans take for granted that the minimum wage and the 40-hour work week came about as a result of an effort in the early 20th Century to improve the lives of working Americans. Not true. In fact, these measures were rooted in the racism of the era and were part of an effort to benefit white workers at the expense of black tradesmen. The policies helped create persistent high unemployment among blacks—and shed a light on the real motivations of so-called Progressives.*

After Progressive icon Woodrow Wilson screened the pro-Ku Klux Klan movie *Birth of a Nation* at the White House, the author of the original book promoted the movie as "Federally endorsed" and the KKK became one of the nation's most influential groups.

"The Caucasians . . . are not going to let their standard of living be destroyed by negroes, Chinamen, Japs or any others."

— Samuel Gompers, founder of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), 1905

With support from labor unions, politicians and bureaucrats often intervene in labor markets, creating laws and regulations that (they say) are needed to improve wages and working conditions for working people. The truth is that many of these efforts do harm to the economic interests of blacks, particularly black males.

Most people would be surprised to learn that this harm to blacks has historically not been an unintended consequence of these pro-union policies, but the intended result. From Davis-Bacon "prevailing wage" requirements to the creation of a government agency mockingly labeled the "Negro Removal Agency," the government has undermined blacks' efforts to achieve success and to make the American Dream a reality.

Many federal labor laws in the United States originated in efforts to saddle black men with extra burdens and limitations, in order to (as racists often put it) "protect white jobs." Tragically, these laws, in one form or another, remain on the books today and continue to hamper the ability of blacks, especially men, to enjoy gainful employment. Yet so-called Progressives hail these laws for their supposedly humanitarian effects, and praise the sponsors of these laws for their supposedly good intentions.

The idea of restricting blacks' access to "white jobs" was planted early in the 20th Century; took root in the 1920s; and blossomed during President Roosevelt's New Deal—a "deal" created in significant part by an Alabama Klansman.

June 2014

The Davis-Bacon Act of 1931

The Davis-Bacon Act of 1931, passed in the early days of the Great Depression, was a precursor to New Deal labor laws. Davis-Bacon is a federal law that requires employers to pay "prevailing wages" on all federally financed or federally assisted construction projects. As originally passed, it "required that contracts in excess of $5,000 for the construction, alteration, or repair of Federal public buildings specify wage rates for laborers and mechanics not less than the locally prevailing wages for work of a similar nature." (The description comes from a 1982 law review article by then-Senator John Warner, R-Va.) In practice, the "prevailing wage" requirement meant that employers on federal projects had to pay the going local union rate. Thus, the federal government mandated union-level wages on all federal projects and on all state and local projects receiving federal funds.

Despite repeated calls for its repeal and mounting evidence that the law is outdated and burdensome, Davis-Bacon remains on the federal books and still garners support on Capitol Hill from unions and their allies. In 1995, Sen. Diane Feinstein (D-Calif.) read into the *Congressional Record* a message in support of the law from then-Mayor Richard Riordan (R-Los Angeles): "Retaining Davis-Bacon and our prevailing wage laws is critical to the public-private partnership which has worked so well in developing our public infrastructure." Last year, a representative of the left-wing Economic Policy Institute testified before the House Subcommittee on Workforce Protections that "The need to keep the federal government from depressing construction industry wages, the need to support the development of the next generation of skilled workers in the construction trades, and the need to ensure the highest quality work on federal construction projects are just as great today as they were 30 years ago or even 80 years ago. The Davis-Bacon Act has served the public well, and nothing should be done that might undermine the effectiveness of the Act in achieving these important purposes."

If only those "important purposes" had been the *actual* purposes of the Act. Hidden in the hoopla over "prevailing wages" and "public infrastructure" is the fact that Davis-Bacon was racist in intent and effect.

The primary object of Davis-Bacon was to make it harder for black tradesman to compete for work on federal construction projects. As Sen. Warner explained in recounting the history of the act, "The brief hearings and debates on the [Act] leave little doubt as to the practice against which they were directed. They were designed to protect local construction wage standards by preventing itinerant contractors from bidding for Federal contracts on the basis of wages lower than those prevailing in the area and then bringing in a lower-paid work force to do the job." The chief architect of the legislation, Rep. Robert Low Bacon (R-N.Y.), admitted as much:

> A practice has been growing up in carrying out the building program where certain itinerant, irresponsible contractors, with itinerant, cheap, bootleg labor, have been going around throughout the country "picking" off a contract here and a contract there, and local labor and the local contractors have been standing on the sidelines looking in. Bitterness has been caused in many communities because of this situation.

Much of that "bitterness" in those communities was due to the color of the competition's skin. As legal scholar David Bernstein observes, "In particular, white union workers were angry that black workers who were barred from unions were migrating to the North in search of jobs in the building trades and undercutting 'white' wages."

During the debate over Davis-Bacon, Rep. John Cochran (D-Mo.) told his colleagues that "I have received numerous complaints in recent months about southern contractors employing low-paid colored mechanics getting work and bringing the employees from the South." Rep. Miles Clayton Algood (D-Ala.) noted: "Reference has been made to a contractor from Alabama who went to New York with bootleg labor. This is a fact. That contractor has cheap colored labor that he transports, and he puts them in cabins, and it is labor of that sort that is in competition with white labor throughout the country." Rep. William Upshaw (D-Ga.) griped about the "superabundance or large aggregation of Negro labor," and American Federation of Labor president William Green complained that "Colored labor is being sought to demoralize wage rates."

In the 1920s and '30s, black tradesmen were generally barred from joining most labor unions, which meant that any mandated "union wage" was effectively a "white man's wage" and, at the time, would not be paid to an

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itinerant, non-unionized black construction crew. At a 1935 hearing, the chairman of the NAACP's Legislative Committee declared:

> Organized labor is hostile to colored people. Practically every labor organization in the country denies Negroes the right of membership therein. Those which admit colored people restrict their employment to the least desirable work, and, because of the race or color of the darker members of the union, deny them the right to the skilled and, in some instances, the semiskilled positions, regardless of their training, skill, or experience. When a factory or job is unionized, the members of the union refuse to work with the colored workers because they do not belong to the union, and refuse to admit the Negroes to the union because of their color.

Charles W. Baird of the Cato Institute has explained that, "Excluded from white unions, the only way blacks could compete for construction jobs was to work for union-free contractors for market wages lower than union-scale wages. Those union-free contractors and their black employees were effectively excluded from those projects by Davis-Bacon, which was racist in intent and effect."

During the Great Depression, when jobs were scarce and people were understandably panicked about losing their jobs, politicians created a system of, in Prof. Bernstein's words, "protection for local, unionized white workers' salaries in the fierce labor market of the Depression." They cloaked this racist agenda in the language of "prevailing wages," and the ruse worked. Today, most of the people who have heard of Davis-Bacon think of the law as a benign effort to boost wages; they don't focus on the racist intentions behind it.

Black men made up 20% of the craftsman and construction workers in the North before this law took effect, but passage of the Davis-Bacon Act virtually eliminated their opportunities to work on federally funded projects outside the South. Consider the construction of Hoover Dam. This technological marvel constructed in 1931-35 employed some 22,000 workers—fewer than 25 of them black.

The New Deal agenda and the "poisoned spoonful"

Much of the New Deal was a raw deal for black working men and their families. New Deal racism went straight to the top. Economist Bruce Bartlett noted in a 2008 interview that, "While assistant secretary of the Navy in 1913, [Franklin D. Roosevelt] signed the order creating separate washrooms for blacks and whites in what is now known as the Old Executive Office Building next to the White House. When he established the Warm Springs facility in Georgia to treat polio victims in the 1920s, it was for whites only. And when Roosevelt had his first opportunity to appoint a member of the Supreme Court in 1937, he chose Hugo Black, a life member of the Ku Klux Klan from Alabama. Later Roosevelt appointed another outspoken racist, James F. Byrnes of South Carolina, to the Supreme Court as well. After leaving the Court, Byrnes ran for governor of his home state for the express purpose of blocking school desegregation."

In those days, segregationist Democrats ruled the roost at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue. Harvard Sitkoff of the University of New Hampshire wrote: "Throughout the [1930s], the representatives of Dixie remained entrenched in the most powerful seats in Congress. Southern Democrats controlled over half the committee chairmanships and a majority of leadership positions in every New Deal Congress," with the result that Southern Democratic support or acquiescence was necessary to pass any New Deal legislation.*

"Southern Democrats in Congress were unified in their desire to uphold segregation and to resist any threats to the Jim Crow South. They voted as a bloc to uphold the racist values of their region," wrote Prof. Juan Perea of Loyola University Chicago law school." Any federal interventions that might improve the lives of blacks economically or make it easier for black men to work was sure to be met with stiff resistance from these powerful Democrats. Accordingly, "the price of Southern Democratic support for New Deal reforms was the exclusion of blacks from federal benefits and protections. Only in this way could Southern Democrats both support the reforms, which benefitted white industrial employees principally, without threatening the political economy of the racist South."

This is the New Deal legacy that self-styled Progressives willfully overlook, but blacks and civil rights leaders at the

*As late as 1950, half of the Democrats in the U.S. Senate came from states that had been part of the Confederacy or were culturally Southern. This continuing influence of the South was reflected in the fact that, as late as May 1972, Alabama Gov. George Wallace was the front-runner, in terms of total votes, for that year's Democratic presidential nomination. Wallace, who won primaries in such states as Michigan and Maryland, ended the primary campaign only two percentage points behind the nominee, George McGovern. In 1976 and 1980, Democrats nominated for president a Georgian, Jimmy Carter, who had been nominated for governor in 1970 as a segregationist. Former Ku Klux Klan recruiter Robert Byrd was the leader of Senate Democrats from 1977 to 1989.—*SJA*

time did not overlook these aspects of the New Deal. Ken Kersch of Boston College wrote:

> The National Recovery Administration, or "NRA," a linch-pin of Franklin Roosevelt's First Hundred Days, did not fare well in the African-American press. "Negro Removal Act," "Negroes Ruined Again," and "Negroes Robbed Again," were only a few of the epithets launched at what many blacks took to be a poisoned spoonful of alphabet soup. The NRA, a component of the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA), was a giant step toward a European-style welfare state: It created national minimum-wage and maximum-hours laws, it guaranteed collective-bargaining rights and industrial production codes, and it poured vast amounts of tax dollars into public-works projects. When, on "Black Monday" [May 27, 1935], the Supreme Court struck down the NIRA as unconstitutional, no one cheered more heartily than American blacks. And when the NIRA's collective-bargaining provisions were later resurrected as part of the Wagner Act, African Americans were dismayed. The National Urban League, the NAACP, and other civil-rights organizations vehemently opposed it.

According to his biographer Sheldon Avery, civil rights leader William Pickens "concluded that most of the New Deal's legislative innovations for relief and recovery, including the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA), the National Recovery Act (NRA), the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA), the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), and the Public Works Administration (PWA), either provided little or no assistance for Negroes or worked to their disadvantage."

Pickens branded the NRA as the "Negro Removal Act," because, according to Avery, he understood that "'One of the first effects of the NRA programs to raise wages is to oust many Negroes from employment altogether.' Minimum wage rates imposed by the NRA were generally higher than Negro workers were receiving and employers preferred replacing previously cheap black labor with whites."

Donald Richberg co-wrote the National Industrial Recovery Act, and was general counsel and executive director of the National Recovery Administration. He also co-authored the Railway Labor Act, the Norris-LaGuardia Act, and the Taft-Hartley Act. The same Donald Richberg was later a leader of "Massive Resistance," the effort to preserve segregation in Virginia schools. In 1956, he helped author a bill introduced into the Virginia General Assembly which would have stopped the school desegregation process.

It was in the age of Jim Crow that the New Deal was born. Just as with the Davis-Bacon Act, the racist intentions of New Deal labor laws lurked beneath the surface, hidden from direct view by the race-neutral language of compromise, in Prof. Perea's words, "that did not alienate northern liberals or blacks in the way that an explicit racial exclusion would." The supporters of these New Deal measures resorted to the use of regulatory codes, "occupational and geographic classifications in the NRA's industry codes. The codes contained detrimental occupational classifications that excluded jobs performed by blacks, so that minimum wage scales applied mostly to white workers."

Ironically, Progressives today ignore the history of racism hidden by regulatory codes even as they claim to see racism in every conservative reference to "welfare reform" and every expression of opposition to Obamacare.

The seemingly race-neutral means of discrimination at the heart of New deal labor laws can be readily seen in the occupational exemptions found in the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) of 1935 and the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) of 1938.

The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) of 1935

The NLRA—the quintessential labor-law achievement of the Progressive movement—guaranteed workers' right to organize and join labor movements, to choose representatives and bargain collectively, and to strike. Actually, it guaranteed those so-called rights for some people. The act was applicable to all firms and employees in activities that were said to affect interstate commerce—with the racially significant exceptions of agricultural and domestic workers: "The term 'employee' shall include any employee, . . . but shall not include any individual employed as an agricultural laborer, or in the domestic service of any family or person at his home . . . ."

Notably, these exemptions were not part of the original version of the law. As originally drafted, the law would have protected *all* employees seeking to organize and bargain collectively. But after some debate in the Senate, the bill was sent back to the Senate Committee on Education and Labor where it was amended to exclude farmhands and domestic help from its intended protections. The new exemptions did not go unnoticed.

Rep. Vito Marcantonio (a socialist Republican from New York who, in 1937, would join the American Labor

Party) decried the farming exclusion as another example of "virtual slavery" and the "damnable" plantation system; and he chastised fellow lawmakers for failing to confront the "worst conditions in the United States . . . the conditions among the agricultural workers."

Cynically, Democrats in Congress redefined the protections afforded by the NLRA so as to remove agrarian laborers—a group composed predominantly of blacks—from those protections, to preserve the racially subordinate role of the black worker. It is a strange kind of social reform indeed that flatly and purposefully excludes those for whom the reform would purportedly be the most helpful.

Some have argued the NLRA would have posed a bureaucratic burden too great to bear for the small, agrarian farmers of the Dust Bowl. Again, Prof. Perea:

> If Congress's main interest [in the exemption] had been the protection of small family farmers, Congress could simply have exempted small family farms. Instead, Congress excluded the whole class of agricultural and domestic employees, an exclusion of the greatest benefit to the largest, plantation-style agriculturalists in the South whose quasi-slavery, peonage-based method of operation remained untouched. In addition, Congress explicitly rejected size limitations and made the NLRA applicable to all employers of any size.

Moreover, there was a catch-22: When blacks chose to leave the farms and plantations for opportunities in the North, the NLRA empowered the racist trade unions to lock them out. Is it any wonder that black unemployment eclipsed the national average and skyrocketed to elevated levels?

The hard fact remains that New Deal solutions aimed at the perceived social problems of their day not only failed to solve the problems faced by working black men, they expressly were not adopted for that purpose and in many cases were enacted to make their situation worse. Nevertheless, given the Southern Democratic machinery operating at the time, such failure to aid all Americans (black and white) should not be surprising—such failure was the advocates' desired goal. And more New Deal "success" was on the way.

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) of 1938

In his 2013 State of the Union Address, President Obama once again called for raising the federal minimum wage and setting it to increase automatically in the future (tying it directly to the rate of inflation as that rate is measured by federal bureaucrats).

The federal minimum wage shares a history with whites-only trade unions. It was born out of expedience and compromise that, University of Iowa law professor Marc Linder wrote, "preserved the social and racial plantation system in the south—a system resting on the subjugation of blacks."

On May 24, 1934, deep into the Great Depression, President Roosevelt pressed Congress to pass more New Deal programs. "One third of our population, the overwhelming majority of which is in agriculture or industry, is ill-nourished, ill-clad, or ill-housed," he lamented. He called for the passage of legislation "to help those who toil in factory and on farm. We have promised it. We cannot stand still."

Congress responded with bills in both chambers. Hugo Black, an Alabama Democrat and staunch New Deal supporter, introduced the Senate version, while Representative William Connery, Jr., a Massachusetts Democrat, introduced the House version. After rancorous debate and amendment, the measure was signed into law by Roosevelt as the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) of 1938. It established a national minimum wage of 25 cents and it created a standard 42-hour work week with higher pay for overtime.

The FLSA included a number of peculiar exemptions, of classes of employees and workers not covered by the Act's wage and hour requirements. One of those classes explicitly excerpted: "any employee employed in agriculture"—a curious exemption in light of Roosevelt's claimed concern for the nation's "ill-nourished, ill-clad, and ill-housed" farmhands.

The justifications given for the agricultural exemption are few and unconvincing. Sen. Black argued that exemptions were granted for "businesses of a purely local type which serve a particular local community, and which do not send their products into the streams of interstate commerce, can be better regulated by the laws of communities and of the States in which the business units operate." Patrick M. Anderson of the University of Wyoming College of Law wrote, "This rationale, while certainly applicable to small agricultural operations which sold their products locally, had no logical relation to the huge agricultural combines of California and the cotton plantations of the South which employed thousands of workers and marketed their products almost exclusively in interstate commerce."

Congressional opponents of the legislation saw through such flimsy excuses. Rep. J. Mark Wilcox (D-Fla.) objected that there is "no justification for discrimination for or against any group . . . . Now, one of two things is true: either the legislation deliberately, purposely, and intentionally

discriminates against certain classes of working people, or the sponsors, realizing that the proposal would be a bad law, have undertaken to minimize its bad effects by making it applicable to only a very small number of people." And Rep. Fred Hartley, Jr. (R-N.J.) touched the heart of the matter when he explained why agricultural laborers were exempt:

> Political expediency rather than relief for the exploited workers of America has dictated the terms of this bill. . . . We are told that this measure will raise the wages and lower the working hours of the exploited workers of America. If that is the case then why is it that the poorest paid labor of all, the farm labor . . . has been omitted from this bill? The answer is that the votes of the farm bloc in the House, the best organized bloc we have here, would have voted against the bill and defeated it.

That organized farm bloc was ruthlessly controlled by Southern Democrats who occupied critical committees and chairmanships. "President Roosevelt and his legislative allies recognized that in order to pass any New Deal legislation at all, it was necessary to compromise with Southern Democrats intent on preserving white supremacy," wrote Perea.

During the Depression, the vast majority of agricultural employees were in the Southern states, and the majority of those employees were black. They provided relatively inexpensive labor that formed the backbone of a system that was, in some ways, an attempt to replicate aspects of slavery. Democrats in Washington weren't going to require their white farming constituents to pay higher wages and overtime costs.

As the Democratic bloc saw it, the agricultural exemptions from the FLSA's wage-and-hour restrictions helped protect the plantation system. It amounted to a two-pronged attack on black male workers.

►First, it protected white tradesmen from their lower-priced black competitors by mandating a generally applicable minimum wage outside the South, thus denying black firms and workers the opportunity to win contracts by underbidding white firms and workers through lower labor costs.

►Second, whatever advantages industrial laborers might gain through a minimum wage were not to be enjoyed by agricultural and domestic laborers, two labor forces disproportionally composed of black workers. For all of Roosevelt's rosy promises, New Deal legislation explicitly left the predominantly black agrarian labor force vulnerable to lower wages, undercompensated overtime, and longer hours demanded by the predominantly white agrarian landowners—and, at the same time, its operation in the North placed sharp limits on black employment.

The Davis-Bacon Act had already made it harder for Southern, itinerant blacks willing to travel north for work to compete against the racist, all-white trade unions. The NLRA strengthened the competitive position of whites-only union members in the industrialized north, while denying those same advantages to Southern black field workers. Now, under the FLSA, blacks seeking non-agrarian work who may have been willing to offer lower initial wage rates and work longer hours to get themselves in the door were forced to abide by a nationally regulated workweek and to charge their prospective employers the same minimum-hourly wage as their white counterparts—creating yet two more hurdles for the black breadwinner to overcome.

The miserable experience of blacks during the Great Depression can't be overstated. At its height, black unemployment reached 50% (almost double that of whites), and even those who could find work were only able to earn a third of what comparable white workers made. Adopting these new laws that intervened in the labor market at this critical period exacerbated blacks' plight, and not by happenstance.

Jobs "for white men"

The context of the (so-called) Progressive labor legislation of the New Deal era is clear from the PBS website "The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow," which notes:

> In 1929, the Great Depression devastated the United States. Hard times came to people throughout the country, especially rural blacks. Cotton prices plunged from eighteen to six cents a pound. Two thirds of some two million black farmers earned nothing or went into debt. Hundreds of thousands of sharecroppers left the land for the cities, leaving behind abandoned fields and homes. Even "Negro jobs" —jobs traditionally held by blacks, such as busboys, elevator operators, garbage men, porters, maids, and cooks—were sought by desperate unemployed whites. In Atlanta, Georgia, a Klan-like group called the Black Shirts paraded carrying signs that read, "No jobs for n■■■■■s until every white man has a job." In other cities, people shouted "N■■■■■s back to the cotton fields. City jobs are for white men."

This transformation needs to be understood in context: At the beginning of the 20th Century, *black unemployment was lower than white unemployment*. But the dual effects of the Great Depression and the new laws that tilted heavily against blacks led the black male unemployment rate to soar from 3.3% in 1929 to over 50% by 1932.

Hugo Black, liberal hero and Klansman

Racist preferences and exploitation were masked, hidden beneath the banner of economic "fairness" by politicians like Hugo Black of Alabama, the chief sponsor of the FLSA and a long-time champion of wage-and-hour limits. Black took the oath to become one of 10,000 members of the Robert E. Lee Klan No. 1 on September 11, 1923, in Birmingham, Alabama. He became an officer of the organization and read the Klan oath as members were initiated. Black was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1926 with the Klan's support; the Exalted Cyclops of the Lee Klan was his finance chairman, while the Grand Dragon served as his unofficial campaign manager, arranging for Black to visit nearly all 148 Klaverns in Alabama. The Grand Dragon also advised Black to "give me a letter of resignation and I'll keep it in my safe against the day when you'll need to say you're not a Klan member." Black obliged, but he coyly signed it in Klan code: "Yours, I.T.S.U.B. [In the Sacred, Unfailing Bond], Hugo L. Black." After he won the Democratic primary against four more prominent Alabama politicians, Black thanked Klansmen at a rally for their support, which had secured him the nomination: "I realize that I was elected by men who believe in the principles that I have sought to advocate and which are the principles of this organization."

He went on to defeat his Republican opponent with over 80% of the vote, and won re-election to the Senate in 1932 with 85%. A so-called Progressive, he championed Roosevelt's social reform legislation and fought against anti-lynching legislation—filibustering that legislation at a time when filibusters meant stand-on-your-feet, talk-until-you're-hoarse, all-night monologues. When a filibuster killed anti-lynching legislation in 1935, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported: "The southerners—headed by Tom Connally of Texas and Hugo Black of Alabama—grinned at each other and shook hands."

Given that Hugo Black was the legislative father of the Fair Labor Standards Act, it should come as no surprise that the act was seen as part of an effort to keep black men down.

Conclusion

The minimum wage law, the 40-hour work week, the prevailing wage rule, and a host of other federal government interventions in the labor market were supposedly undertaken to improve the condition of American workers. Some say the laws had that effect overall; others say any beneficial effects would have happened anyway. But their specific effects on blacks is clear: The laws all but eviscerated opportunities for blacks, particularly unskilled black men, and the racial consequence—to use a liberal term, the *disparate impact* of these laws—continues today.

Today, unemployment is a serious and seemingly intractable problem within the black community. For more than 35 years, the black unemployment rate has been higher than average, and the unemployment rate for younger blacks has been even higher. In the last five years, as federal intervention in the economy has expanded rapidly, the problem has only worsened. Today, this disparity is the New Normal; most Americans simply accept it as the natural order of things.

Before these laws were enacted, blacks were making rapid progress. Hiring blacks made good economic sense and practically every black man that wanted a job could have one. Black employment empowered the community and led to dramatic gains in terms of lifestyle. Black employment was so robust that non-black communities organized and successfully created roadblocks to give one group—white men—a competitive advantage. The effects of these policies persist today.

So-called Progressives showed themselves more than willing to sacrifice the ambitions and hopes of millions of people—people who could be readily identified by the color of their skin—in order to achieve their own goal of establishing the legitimacy of federal government intervention in the economy. Today they have convinced many of their victims that their aims were noble and their cause moral. The record shows otherwise.

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LaborNotes

Media Matters for America (MMFA) is a left-wing, **George Soros**-funded group that attacks journalists who expose corruption in the **Obama administration**. It also shills for unions. For example, when some in **Congress** opposed a "card check" law and insisted workers have a right to a secret-ballot election before their workplace is unionized, MMFA called it part of "a wave of **Republican** anti-union legislation [that] has placed obstacles between workers and union representatives."

Yet—surprise!—MMFA has refused to accept union representation for its own employees via "card check," as requested by the **Service Employees International Union** (SEIU). Instead, the organization has demanded a secret-ballot election. In response, a writer at the left-wing magazine ***Mother Jones***, which was unionized by the **United Auto Workers**, tweeted that "Lefty orgs should walk the walk," and the organizing committee at MMFA declared that "Many Media Matters employees feel betrayed by the unexpected and unexplained path" that the organization took on unionization.

Meanwhile, the ***New York Times*** has abruptly fired its first female editor, **Jill Abramson**, after she complained that she was paid less than her male predecessor. As we went to press, no comment has been heard from the Obama **White House**, which, according to the method that leftists use to calculate discrimination, pays women staffers 88 cents for every dollar paid to men, and which (according to journalist **Ron Suskind**) was described by its former communications director, **Anita Dunn**, as "fit[ting] all of the classic legal requirements for a genuinely hostile workplace for women."

We're reported previously on the UAW effort to unionize the **Volkswagen** plant in **Chattanooga** in hopes of gaining a beachhead in unions' campaign for the **South**. Despite the support of the company, the UAW lost a secret-ballot election 716 to 626, but it appealed to the **National Labor Relations Board**. It based its on the claim that Republican politicians and conservative activists, by campaigning against the UAW, had deprived workers of their right to unionize. **Gov. Bill Haslam** and **Sen. Bob Corker** (both R-Tenn.) were among 19 people subpoenaed to testify. But the UAW suddenly, without explanation, dropped its case mere minutes before the NLRB was set to hear the appeal.

In **Philadelphia**, five educators were arrested in connection with cheating on standardized tests. **Evelyn Cortez**, principal at **Cayuga Elementary**, allegedly used the loudspeaker to tell students to write their answers on scraps of paper and let teachers check them before they entered them on the real answer sheets. Prosecutors says teachers tapped on desks to signal correct answers, that Cortez and others came into the school on weekends to change answers, and that students and teachers who didn't go along with the scheme were reprimanded. During the time of the alleged cheating, fourth-graders scored at 89% proficiency on math and 84% on reading, compared to 31% and 25% after a crackdown. During the period of cheating, students who could not read or write in English were rated as proficient in reading. The case is similar to one last year in **Atlanta**, in which 35 people were charged, many of them pled guilty, and a superintendent faces trial in August.

The ***New York Post*** reported on comments by the president of the **United Federation of Teachers**, which represents most New York City teachers: "Believing he was among friends, UFT boss **Mike Mulgrew** showed what he's really made of during a closed-door meeting with union activists—spewing hatred toward education 'reformers' and charter schools, and even admitting he sabotaged teacher evaluations. 'We are at war with the reformers,' Mulgrew said bluntly in an extraordinary admission during a gathering of 3,400 union delegates . . . . 'Their ideas will absolutely destroy—forget about public education—they will destroy education in our country.'"

Teachers unions in **New York City** refused for five years to negotiate with **Mayor Michael Bloomberg**, but things have changed now that **Bill de Blasio** is mayor. Announcing a new contract, the UFT's Mulgrew proclaimed he couldn't "thank the mayor enough." With an 8% retroactive pay raise and a 10% increase by 2018, teachers' starting pay will be $54,411, with the maximum almost $120,000, and "mentorships" (30 to 55 hours a year) that add $7,500 to $20,000 a year—plus free health insurance and more.

Remember that scheme by unions to have state-subsidized home healthcare workers, many of them caring for their own relatives, declared to be state employees, and then to unionize them by mail, in an election in which only a few people would vote? That practice in **Illinois** is currently under examination by the **U.S. Supreme Court**, in ***Harris v. Quinn***. In **Michigan**, the SEIU unionized the workers in a vote-by-mail "election" with a 19% turnout—but when the state law was changed to give workers a choice on whether to join the union, membership crashed, from more than 55,000 members in 2012 to fewer than 11,000 in 2013.