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Brad Spangler writes:

> To accept that the state is banditry but simultaneously deny that the poorest among us are undoubtedly among those who have been stolen from the most (in one fashion or another) is not rational.
>
> Against that backdrop, libertarians ought to re-evaluate their historic hostility to labor organizing. In a genuinely free market, all would rightfully have the opportunity to seek and negotiate the best deal for themselves and their associates that they can. If whatever price the market will bear is good for the plutocrat, it's just as good for the worker negotiating wages. Personally, I'm proud to be a dues paying IWW member.

I recall seeing a lot of tsk-tsking from Paul Birch and others of like mind in some discussion forum several months back, about what blackguards union workers were for demanding higher wages when their labor was most needed. Golly, aren't these the same people who defend "price gouging" by the oil companies?

Here's what I think it boils down to. For Nixon and Bush, "when the President does it it's not illegal." And for vulgar libertarians, when big business and the rich do it it's OK. In response to someone who said it was perfectly rational for a worker to see how much pay he could get for the least work, Birch replied in offended tones that it might be rational to steal, too, or something to that effect.

Well, before we put "employers" on too high a pedestal, let's consider this quote from a vice president of PR at General Motors (in David M. Gordon's *Fat and Mean*):

> …We are not yet a classless society… [F]undamentally the mission of [workers'] elected representatives is to get the most compensation for the least amount of labor. Our responsibility to our shareholders is to get the most production for the least amount of compensation.

And here, from the same source, is an advertising blurb from a union-busting consulting firm:

> We will show you how to screw your employees (before they screw you)–how to keep them smiling on low pay–how to maneuver them into low-pay jobs they are afraid to walk away from–how to hire and fire so you always make money.

That kind of honesty is quite refreshing, after all the smarmy Fish! Philosophy shit I've been wading through lately.

I know, I know, I've read *Economics in One Lesson*. I'm familiar with the argument that "in a free market" wages are determined by productivity. I've also seen, in the real world, real wages that have remained stagnant or even fallen slightly since the 1970s, as the real GDP nearly doubled. That brings to mind a quote from Mises:

> If a contradiction appears between a theory and experience, we must always assume that a condition presupposed by the theory was not present, or else there is some error in our observation. Thedisagreement between the theory and the facts of experience frequently forces us to think through the problems of the theory again. But so long as a rethinking of the theory uncovers no errors in our thinking, we are not entitled to doubt its truth. [*Epistemological Problems of Economics*]

When the theory predicts that *in a free market* wages will be determined by the productivity of labor, and we see that they aren't, what's the obvious conclusion? That we're dealing with power relations, not market relations.