

## A Sermon on Labor Extortion

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for December 10th, 2023 (and beyond)

This sermon is dedicated to Wat Tyler and those who prize religious freedom and the free market worldwide. Last month I interviewed for a union job at a company that solely operates in Washington State with multiple locations statewide though also claims to be a federal contractor. I didn't know they were unionized when I applied. During the interview I was told I had to join the union if hired and that there was no job if I opted out. Applicable federal and state laws mandate employers with 50 or more employees provide comprehensive health insurance benefits as well as a minimum of 1.5x pay for every hour worked overtime. So, the unions don't negotiate that as it is mandated by law and therefore no negotiation is needed. The union does take out Dead Peasant Insurance on members who have no choice but to join if they want their job. The starting gross annual hourly wages are \$4,512 less than the average gross pay for that position in other companies in Washington State whether unionized or not. The high end for the annual gross starting wage on that position elsewhere in WA State amounts to \$9,994 more than the starting gross union wage offered where I applied. However, the starting wage is more than minimum wage in WA State. The position I interviewed for pays \$19.25/hour full-time (40 hour week). So, I don't feel nor think the union is good at negotiating the contract or even necessary for many things people raise as issues such as health coverage or overtime pay. The union dues are 1.5% of gross individual income taken out of each paycheck. But, it is forced and I still haven't mentioned the benefits provided beyond a portion of the life insurance should you die designated to your nearest of kin while the lion's share of the policy goes to the union and/or employer.

After careful consideration and some math, I found out that at most I'd be paying \$554.40 the first year of my employment, should I get that job now, in union dues for supposed benefits like negotiating my contract for me with my employer. So far, it doesn't seem they are necessary or negotiate effectively. But, the law doesn't mandate paid vacation, personal, and bereavement days. WA State labor laws state "At a minimum, employees must be provided one hour of paid sick leave for every 40 hours worked. You must provide paid sick leave to all your employees regardless of full-time, part-time, temporary, or seasonal status." Source: <https://www.lni.wa.gov/workers-rights/leave/paid-sick-leave/paid-sick-leave-minimum-requirements#:~:text=Most%20of%20the%20specific%20policies,and%20Chapter%20296%2D128%20WAC.&text=At%20a%20minimum%2C%20employees%20must,%2C%20temporary%2C%20or%20seasonal%20status>. However, paid vacation and personal days are not mandated by law in WA nor any other state to my knowledge though some cities and counties do mandate it at the local level. Source: <https://lni.wa.gov/workers-rights/leave/holiday-vacation-bereavement-leave> So, the union negotiates paid vacation and that's the extent of the power they wield in terms of the contract because the other benefits are mandated at law. As stated, the wage for the position was \$4,512 less per year than average for same position everywhere in WA State and if they negotiated that, they did a poor job of it. The union does set the pay scale according to the supervisor who interviewed me for the position. I was denied further consideration for refusing to join the union if hired.

And, in terms of paid vacation, this employer offered 24 days of paid vacation per year. The union negotiates that too. But, when I worked for Key Bank before returning to finish university, we started out at 3 weeks of paid vacation, 1 week of sick leave, and after 5 years with the company an additional week of paid vacation giving us 5 total weeks when combined. It wasn't unionized and still isn't to my knowledge. I worked for another company in my early 20s that wasn't unionized and employees got 7 weeks of vacation from year one of employment but it mostly employed members of the owner's family. Still, that's 5.5 weeks of paid vacation at non-unionized companies along with comprehensive health coverage and overtime pay mandated by law. I'm just not sure why I'd join the union unless coerced or forced to do so if I wanted the right to work at all at the company. WA State needs no express law prohibiting it because it is a federal crime known as union racketeering to force or coerce anyone to join a union. But, 28 states expressly do not allow companies to partner with unions to impose privatized fascism on employees denying equal opportunity to those who would rather not tithe to a union for lesser wages and reduced vacation time.

I did some research on the union and found they find their alliance with the Catholic Church vital to their cause for labor rights. They also tout their political action committee. It may have seemed an offer I can't refuse at this time for practical reasons, but in my heart I sincerely refuse and hope this sermon helps you find the courage to fight for freedom including the free market and freedom of religion/first amendment values.

I'm aware that the experience with the prospective employer evidences RICO violations on their part and have reported it to the proper enforcement body with evidence in writing from the company evidencing the violations. I just don't like the idea of any percent of me or my labor being considered the property of a union allied with the Catholic Church where if I refuse I can't get a job. To me that flies in the face of the first amendment and everything Wat Tyler stood for and the French and American Revolutionary Wars were about for the most part. That is likely why it is a federal crime.

What do the union leaders make a year? Source:  
<https://www.wesselsherman.com/salaries-of-union-leaders/>

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Tag days are unnecessary for union leaders today. Here is a smattering of union leader salaries from around the Midwest. We include also some salaries for heads of international unions.

Union Official and Title	Union	Total Disbursements (Salary + Allowances)
Terence O'Sullivan, General President	Laborers National Headquarters	\$663,981
Patrick Flynn,		

Resources

Stay up-to-date about developments in the Midwest.

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Charles Anderson, Secretary-Treasurer	Painters District Council 30, Aurora, IL	\$254,499
Rocco Terranova, President/Bus Mgr	Sheet Metal Workers Local 73, Hillside, IL	\$227,996
Thomas Balanoff, President	SEIU Local 1, Chicago, IL	\$226,968
Ronald Powell, President	UFCW Local 881, Rosemont, IL	\$225,288

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Where's the solidarity? Where's the equity? At least I know where union dues go even when they negotiate less than average pay and vacation for members.

Happy Holidays!

For those interested in starting #TaoFu Self-Defense Exercises, please see <https://www.cope.church/taofu.htm> and begin at any time.

There are opportunities to send messages, receive mystery bonus blessings, and more with or without donating available now on our "Pass the Basket" page at <https://www.cope.church/basket.htm> . Thank You.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32 KJV Willful blindness is an abomination.

COPE accepts Feedback, critical and complimentary. Learn more at <https://www.cope.church/feedback.htm> . For the sake of keeping myself and others humble, a sense of humor is welcome on all sides.