

Unions turn into fat cats

Ever since 1972, when the International Brotherhood of Teamsters union decided to support Richard Nixon for president, the Democrats have not been able to count on total labor union support. Illinois labor unions on the state level sometimes support Republican legislators even if they have only supported labor-backed legislation 30 to 50 percent of the time. Why? Because they are playing it safe. They won't take the chance of supporting a Democratic State Representative candidate in our district, (the 94th) for example, who would vote for their interests nearly 100 percent because he or she might not win. The unions want to be on the good side of the winner. They would rather take what morsels they can get from our Republican legislators than fight for better representation.

It's a vicious circle, of course. If they supported the challenger for once, he just might win.

It's been my opinion for years that because labor unions have mostly gotten what they want: higher wages, good benefits, good health insurance, family leave, paid vacations, unemployment compensation, workman's compensation, safety in the workplace, (thanks to the Democratic party) they have become too comfortable and complacent. They've lost their edge and their fighting spirit on behalf of the underdog and the powerless.

The Democratic party has also lost labor union support because the party fought for the rights of women and minorities. In the Midwest especially, labor unions in general are known for their prejudice against women and minorities. The American Federation of Federal, State and Municipal Employees and the teachers' unions are exceptions, of course, because their membership is primarily women. But these labor unions also regularly support our

district Republican legislators, for no other reason than that they are incumbents. Just to be on the safe side.

This, in spite of the fact that when our State Representative Donald Moffitt was chairman of the Knox County board in 1982, he tried to bust the union at the Knox County Nursing Home. State Senator Carl Hawkinson, now a candidate for the Illinois Supreme Court, was Knox County State's Attorney at the time.

The local unions continue to support Democratic presidential candidates and Congressman Lane Evans, but this year the Maytag union and the United Transportation Union, comprised of a number of railroad unions, are supporting some Republican candidates. Fortunately, unions don't vote — members do.

What all independents, Democrats and union members must remember this year is that whatever political party gets control of the Illinois Supreme Court and the Illinois House will be able to redraw the legislative district lines next year. The die is cast for the next ten years. Labor union interests are hardly going to be supported by a conservative Illinois Supreme court. And voters who don't want another decade of Republican representation from this district had better vote for Democrat Josh Watson for State Representative.

So this is not the year for union members to be supporting Republican candidates. There's too much at stake. In fact, there always is.

I believe one major reason union organizations in Illinois have lost their clout over the last several decades is because they too often play footsie with the Republican party, which fought against every benefit organized labor has ever received, including the ability to organize.

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