

Opinion

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LETTERS

For the People

I wrote a letter a week ago called, "Why do our citizens loathe democracy?" arguing that unions are democratic organizations like our government and don't deserve the unrelenting criticism they receive in the news today. Alice Losasso took issue with my letter, claiming that unions are synonymous with the mob rule that Thomas Jefferson warned us about. Democracy, therefore, using this logic, infringes upon the rights of the minority and eventually leads to socialism. This pervasive nostalgia of wanting to return our country to the constitutional republic our founders created is short-sighted and misunderstood. Fortunately, the fifth article of the Constitution makes it a living document, one that allowed President Lincoln in the Gettysburg address to describe our republican representative democracy as a "government of the people, by the people, for the people..." The constitutional republic that Ms. Losasso speaks so highly of was one which would not have allowed her to vote as a woman; in addition, it enslaved millions of people.

Fortunately, our Constitution has been amended to include the right of women to vote (19th Amendment) and has outlawed slavery (13th Amendment). It is through organizing and unionizing that our democratic country also outlaws child labor, enforces worker safety legislation, and ensures the right to bargain collectively for living wages and benefits. Many of these rights enjoyed by Ms. Losasso have been won by the unions.

Contrary to Ms. Losasso, the majority of people don't want to give up these rights either as indicated in a recent poll by Peter D. Hart. Unionized workers make about 15 percent more than non-unionized workers according to the Economic Policy Institute. Equitable union pay and benefits force other employers to pay more, thereby elevating the pay and benefits of all workers in this country. Amazingly, even though unions have been with us through our capitalist country's history, businesses have competed successfully and have profited all along. Unions, and the democratic principles that they espouse, only insist that the laws that govern the workplace are written by the people and for the people.

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