

Wisconsin Gov. Threatens Workers' Rights

Michael Sean Winters | Feb. 16, 2011 | Distinctly Catholic

[Harold Meyerson has an article](#) [1] today about the attempts by Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker to deny unions to the right to collectively bargain on behalf of their workers. This is a direct, frontal assault on one of the mainstays of Catholic social teaching, dating back to *Rerum Novarum* in 1891 and reaffirmed by Pope Benedict in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* and, as recently as Monday, by Cardinal Peter Turkson in his address to the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering.

This conservative attack on unions in America calls to mind Ronald Reagan's attack on unions in the 1980s. Reagan liked unions in Poland but not in Peoria.

I went to the website of the Wisconsin Catholic Conference and found no statement there reaffirming the consistent teaching of the Church. There is [one document, on their 2011 legislative goals](#) [2], that mentions workers' right, including the right to join a union, but nothing specific. Shame on them. They should be leading the fight against Walker's attack on the dignity of workers.

In America, the decline of the union movement is one of the single worst things to happen in the past forty years. It has resulted in constant squeezing of the working class so that the super-rich can get ever larger tax cuts and large corporations can get special tax breaks. Corporate welfare is not a cardinal principle of Catholic social teaching. The rights of workers to unionize is.

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Links:

[1] <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/15/AR2011021504339.html>

[2] <http://www.wisconsinatholic.org/2011%20Public%20Policy%20Positions.pdf>