

A Vice President Speaks Henry Wise

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Corporations Are People - Give Me a Break

On January 21, 2010, the U. S. Supreme Court's five conservative Justices ruled that corporations are people. In its 5-4 decision the court ruled in favor of a right-wing conservative group, *Citizens United*, who had been barred from running ads for a movie attacking Hillary Clinton during the 2008 Presidential campaigns.

Without going into great detail, the result of the decision, simply stated, now allows corporations to funnel unlimited money into political campaigns, sometimes under the cloak of secrecy. In fairness, it should be stated that the ruling also included unions. But, does anyone believe unions have the same purchasing power as big corporations? Of course not.

You may wonder why I write about a two-year old ruling. The damage from the ruling is reaching its apex. For the past two years, corporations have been free to spend as much as they wish in order to influence politicians and legislation. The impact has been obvious.

The Koch Brothers (Koch Industries) and other corporate interests have managed to influence the political process in such a way that has left us with a number of governors and law makers that have made it their mission to destroy unions and the middle class while working to eliminate any sensible regulation on industry. Of course, the talking points are, reduce corporate taxes, eliminate regulations on corporations, and through their benevolence they will respond by creating thousands of jobs. So far, the only sign of job creation by these corporations has been in foreign sweat shops.

How crazy is it that corporations that are spread across the globe, and have no allegiance to any one country are treated as American citizens with all the individual rights that entails?

If corporations are people why are they not held to the same legal standard as individuals? There are too many instances when corporations have caused death and destruction only to go unpunished or simply pay a fine. A prime example of this was the Union Carbide Bhopal Disaster which resulted in the deaths of 3,787 people and was completely brought to closure by a \$470 million settlement. If a real person caused the death of another person through his or her careless actions they would, at a minimum, be charged with manslaughter. Yet, corporations continue to cause harm to people and the environment with little or no accountability.

Without political change in this country, I see no hope to reverse the damage done by this ruling. In my opinion, the only hope is that regular Americans will wake up and vote in their own interest. In order to do that they have to stop buying the right wing garbage being spewed by certain individuals on am radio and certain TV fake news channels.

There appears to be a trend in the right direction. A number of state law makers have been recalled after initiating and supporting anti-worker legislation, and the fact that Ohio's bill to strip public sector workers of bargaining rights was repealed by an overwhelming margin, are positive signs. But, corporate funded politicians in Congress are still pushing ahead with a number of union busting measures aimed at further weakening workers' rights.

I read somewhere, "Human beings are people; corporations are legal fictions." Human beings still have the power of the vote and can make a difference. But, it requires each of us to make a commitment and make our voices heard.

