

Cheap Words From A Labour Faker

“Politicians serve because we—the voters—put them there, and it’s our job as union members and citizens to hold them accountable”

Joseph C. Talarico
Former President of UFCW Local 1,
And former General Secretary Treasurer UFCW International Union
Convicted Union Embezzler

Read his pretty words in “Straight Talk” from the May-June 1996 edition of UFCW Action Magazine and then read what the U.S. Department of Labor says in a July 28, 1998 news release.

He’s a convicted felon and a labour faker who was full of cheap words and dirty deeds. Was his an isolated case? It was not. Is your local union free of labour fakers capable of cheap words and dirty deeds?

People and Politics

People joining together can change the world.

We've seen it happen around the globe ... in South Africa, Beijing's Tiennamen Square, and right here at home.



BY JOSEPH C. TALARICO
INTERNATIONAL
SECRETARY-TREASURER

The power of grassroots action was demonstrated clearly by what happened recently with the so-called Ballenger OSHA "reform" bill. It was one of the worst, most regressive pieces of legislation concocted by anti-worker congressional extremists in recent memory.

UFCW members and other labor activists mobilized an intense, aggressive, unrelenting campaign to expose the truth about the bill. They took particular aim at legislators who had cosponsored the bill and those who serve on the subcommittee that considered the legislation.

Several factors were key: knowledge, education, and persistence.

Unionists uncovered exactly what the measure proposed and how it would affect them directly.

Then, they took their message to the press, the public, and the doorsteps of elected officials and made sure they were heard. Ultimately, Rep. Ballenger (N.C.) acknowledged that trying to move the bill forward might not be smart politically. So he withdrew the bill. Though we still have a scaled-back version of the measure to battle, the victory still is significant.

This story illustrates democracy at work. We elect officials to represent us in national, state, and local forums where budget and policy decisions are made. Politicians serve because we—the voters—put them there, and it's our job as union members and citizens to hold them accountable.

Holding politicians accountable for their actions is a critical part of the UFCW's role in effectively representing members. But the most important part of ensuring accountability doesn't happen at headquarters in Washington, D.C. ... or even in local union offices.

It happens every day right where you work. It happens because of the thousands of UFCW union stewards who serve as the critical link between members and their union. Stewards are the union's eyes, ears, and voice in the stores, warehouses, factories, offices, and health care facilities where UFCW members work. Information from the union to members and from members to the union flows through the union stewards—information on politics as well as a broad range of other issues that touch members' lives. The stewards listen ... counsel ... inform ... mobilize ... and assist coworkers in countless ways.

Stewards take information the UFCW provides through fact sheets, newsletters, special alerts, and at conferences and seminars—and put it where it really counts: in the hands of UFCW members. Union stewards may not always get the recognition they deserve for the essential role they have, but they get my vote for the UFCW's Most Valuable Players.

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DON'T BUY USA TODAY—The AFL-CIO is coordinating a program of support for workers on strike against the *Detroit News and Free Press*, and is asking consumers not to buy *USA Today*. The *Free Press* is owned by Knight-Ridder Corp. and the *News* by Gannett Publishing, two of the largest media conglomerates in the world. *USA Today* is owned by Gannett. More than 2,000 union members have been on strike for nine months to protest the employers' unfair labor practices and to fight for a fair contract. The strikers are members of The Newspaper Guild/CWA, Graphic Communications International Union, and the Teamsters.

The Labor Beat

NEWS FROM
AROUND THE
LABOR
MOVEMENT

'UNION SUMMER' RECRUITS PARTICIPANTS—The AFL-CIO is seeking young activists around the country to participate in three-week internships at one of several dozen sites around the country. Activities will include union organizing campaigns and other projects that support working families. Sessions are scheduled from late May through Labor Day. Contact your local union for an application.



TOYS 'R' US WORKERS IN SWEDEN BREAK THROUGH—Workers at three Toys 'R' Us stores in Sweden have won what is believed to be the first union contract in the world with the aggressively antiunion multinational retail chain. Workers won after a three month strike and solid support from other unionists around the world, the public, and the international trade union group FIET.

NEWS BY FAX FROM THE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

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201 Varick St., New York NY 10014

Contact: John McGlynn
(212) 337-2550

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FORMER LOCAL UNION OFFICIALS SENTENCED IN FOOD WORKERS UNION EMBEZZLEMENT

Three former officials of a Utica, New York, union local were sentenced today in federal district for tax evasion connected with embezzlement from their union.

Joseph C. Talarico, 56, his daughter Marlene Talarico Biernat, 31, and his son Samuel J. Talarico (Samuel John), 40, all of New Hartford, New York, had entered guilty pleas on February 9 to charges related to embezzlement of funds from Local Union 1 of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) in Utica, New York- In addition to the tax charges, Joseph C. and Samuel John entered guilty pleas to embezzling union funds.

According to John McGlynn, Regional Inspector General of Investigations, Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of Labor, Joseph C. Talarico was sentenced to 30 months of incarceration to be followed by three years of supervised release, was barred from union office for 13 years, ordered to pay \$1,096,696.78 in restitution and a special assessment of \$150. Samuel J. Talarico was sentenced to 12 months and a day of incarceration, to be followed by 3 years of supervised release, barred from union office for 4 years, ordered to pay \$81,195.60 in restitution and a special assessment of \$150. Marlene Talarico Biernat was sentenced to 12 months of probation, ordered to pay \$27,462.16 in restitution and a special assessment of \$50.

Joseph C. Talarico was president of Local Union 1, then secretary-treasurer of the International Union until his resignation in July, 1997. Marlene Talarico Biernat was an administrator of the Local Union 1 Education, Safety, and Cultural Fund. Samuel John Talarico succeeded his father as president of Local Union 1 in May, 1995.

Joseph C. Talarico admitted to filing a false individual income tax return in April, 1993. He acknowledged that his 1992 personal tax return omitted at least \$140,000 in services and other things of value he received from third parties by virtue of his employment with UFCW LU 1. He also admitted that from 1984 to April 1997 in Utica, New York, he personally benefited when UFCW LU 1 paid invoices submitted by vendors which purported to cover only work legitimately performed for or merchandise legitimately sold to UFCW LU 1, but which, in fact, also included substantial charges for work performed by the vendors on the personal residences of Joseph Talarico and other UFCW LU 1 officers, free or discounted merchandise provided by vendors to Joseph C. Talarico for his benefit and the benefit of other union officers, and the payment of personal financial obligations of Joseph C.

Talarico and other union officials. The vendors cited included general, electrical, plumbing and heating/ventilation/ air-conditioning contractors; a printing company; a carpet supplier; a landscaper and an automobile dealer.

As part of his plea agreement Joseph C. agreed to terminate any relationships with UFCW and any subsidiary or related employees benefit fund and never again accept any office, position or consulting or other agreement with LU 1. He waived any objection to debarment from holding certain positions with any labor

organization for 13 years. He agreed to restitution of not less than \$925,000. As part of the agreement, the May 22, 1997, indictment against Joseph C. will be dismissed.

Samuel John admitted to filing a false individual income tax return in February, 1995. He acknowledged that his 1994 personal tax return omitted at least \$45,000 in services and other things of value he received from third parties by virtue of his employment with the UFCW District LU 1. Samuel John, who succeeded his father as President to UFCW LU 1 on May 1, 1995 and had previously served as an Executive Vice President, admitted that from 1993 to January 1997 he personally benefited when UFCW LU 1 paid invoices submitted by the vendors which included substantial charges for work performed by the vendors on his personal residence, free or discounted merchandise, and cash.

As part of his plea agreement he agreed to terminate any relationships with UFCW and any subsidiary or related employee benefit fund and never again accept any office, position or consulting or other agreement with LU 1. Samuel John will be debarred generally from holding certain positions with any labor organization for a period of not less than three years or more than 13 years. He agree to restitution of not less than \$91,488.

Marlene Talarico Biernat pleaded guilty to a one count information charging her with filing a false individual income tax return. Biernat, also known as Marlene R. Fragapane, acknowledged that she had omitted approximately \$26,000 worth of services she had received by virtue of her position as administrator of the United Food and Commercial Workers, LU 1 Education, Safety and Cultural Fund of Utica, New York.

As part of her plea agreement she agreed to resign from every position with UFCW and any subsidiary or related benefit fund and to make restitution of at least \$27,461 for services-in-kind received from Donald Barron, A.T. Nurseries, Oneida Electric and/or James O'Leary.

The maximum penalty for the union embezzlement is 5 years' imprisonment and a fine of \$10,000. The maximum penalty for the tax violation is 3 years' imprisonment and \$100,000 fine. The court could impose an alternative fine of twice the amount of the loss of the victim.

This brings to 13 the number of people convicted in this ongoing investigation with the Department's Office of Labor Management Services, IRS, FBI and Housing and Urban Development's Office of Inspector General. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Andrew Baxter in Syracuse, New York.