The Daily Dish

# Just Add a Pinch of Collective Bargaining

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**Eakinomics: Just Add a Pinch of Collective Bargaining**

Unions are the not-so-secret sauce of Bidenomics. Need to solve income inequality issues? Get some good-paying, union jobs. Need to cool the planet? Order up some good-paying, union clean energy jobs. Tired of any kind of inequity – gender, racial, pay, conduct, dress, comfort animals – in the workplace? Add a pinch of collective bargaining to mix and then just sit back and…Nirvana (NOT the band).

To this end, the president has formed a White House Task Force on Worker Organizing and Empowerment, stating, "it is the policy of my administration to encourage worker organizing and collective bargaining." The task force is chaired by Vice President Kamala Harris, with Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh as vice-chair. Heads of federal agencies and cabinet members are well-represented. AAF's Isabel Soto has a deep dive here.

It is hard to make sense of the unionization obsession. Granted, when unionization was at its peak (35 percent of workers) in the 1950s, single-earner families headed by high school graduates could live pretty well. That's a far cry from 2021. But there is no way that one can replicate the situation of the 1950s today. The United States was an industrial monopoly as countries around the globe literally rebuilt from the devastation of World War II. There were lots of monopoly profits that could fund wages and still permit corporations to be the vessel of social benefits such as health insurance, pensions, and the like. In 2021, mandating pensions, paid leave, child care, health insurance, pensions and more is a recipe to see offsets in cash wages, reduced employment, and damaged international competitiveness.

The Biden platform implicitly recognizes this reality by proposing that the taxpayer pick up health insurance, paid leave, child care, child support, and more. What are the unions supposed to bargain for? And while you are answering that one, if unions are such a bonanza, why has private sector unionization fallen below 7 percent? If the demand for a product falls by more than 50 percent, one might start to wonder about the product.

The 21st century labor force is much more diverse, requires more flexibility, and demands greater education and skills than in the past. As Soto discusses, "Many independent workers value their flexibility, and when asked, fewer than 1 in 10 independent contractors would prefer traditional employment." A relentless push to restore unions and the employer-employee relationship of 70 years ago will not work and is not the route to a successful future.