

Labor Day

By Howie Flomberg

Summer is bound by Memorial Day at the front and Labor Day at the end. When I was a kid Memorial Day meant no more school, Labor Day meant the end of summer and trudging back to school. Labor Day also meant sitting in front of the TV for endless hours watching the Jerry Lewis Telethon. We begged our parents to let us make a pledge and listened intensively for our name.

Today, Labor Day is a cause for sales of everything from cars to toilet paper. However in America any holiday is a cause for holiday sales. Last week was the anniversary of Colorado becoming the 38th state. I'm willing to bet that somewhere on the east coast some department store had a "Colorado Day" sale, in spite of the fact that 90% of their patrons had no idea what a Colorado is. What exactly is Labor Day? According to Wikipedia:

Labor Day is a United States federal holiday observed on the first Monday in September, that celebrates the economic and social contributions of workers.

That definition is correct. I could also call an arm a "body thing" and that would also be correct. Sometimes brevity is not the soul of wit. Labor Day was proposed by various unions as a day to honor those in the Labor Movement. The first Labor Day was Tuesday, September 5, 1882. "The Central Labor Union" celebrated it. Rapidly the CIO joined up and then when the CIO and the AFL became the AFL/CIO the power of organized labor backed the holiday becoming a National Holiday. I did some research about Labor Day, as I do every topic. The US Department of Labor website, "Force of Labor", implies that Organized Labor, is great and wonderful and insures that we all brush our teeth daily.

In the 19th century labor unions were needed. The triangle factory fire was the tipping point for American Labor. As an aside, my grandmother's sister died in that fire. We can thank Labor Unions for being the driving force behind Social Security, the NLRB, OSHA and much of the humanistic, and needed, legislation created in the first half of the twentieth century. In 2010 however, only 11.4% of workers belonged to some form of organized labor. Our national hobby of finger pointing has identified Public Sector unions as the force that brought our economy down. No one, it seems, has identified poor legislation as the culprit.

Why do I take this stand? I am 66 years old. Social Security/Disability is the major part of my income. Medicare is the major part of my health insurance. In spite of the fact that I've been putting money into these organizations for about fifty years, if Congress decides to lower my income or health insurance I have nowhere to turn. There is a movement afoot to lower the amount of money spent to support Kidney Dialysis.

If that happens, one scenario is that I will then die.