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A Brief History of Public Sector Labor Relations Feb. 6, 2014

(or: Today’s Wisdom is Tomorrow’s Folly)

Dark Ages: Unions are totally inappropriate in the public sector:

* They are inconsistent with public sovereignty
* Collective bargaining would undermine democratic control
* Unions mean strikes, and strikes are intolerable

 Englightenment (Sort Of): Public sector workers should have the right to organize, but:

* No bargaining, just conferring
* No exclusive representation
* No union security
* Strikes prohibited
* No grievance arbitration

Revolution: The public sector should look just like the private sector (almost)

* Duty to Bargain
* Exclusive representation within designated bargaining units
* Agency shop
* Grievance arbitration accepted
* Strikes maybe, except for essential services and then interest arb.
* Oversight through administrative agency

Counter-Revolution: The public sector is really, really different from the private sector:

* Public sector unions have too much power
* Public needs to be protected from results, especially pensions
* Public employees need to be protected from unions
* (This means no exclusive representation, no agency shop)
* Public needs to be protected from strikes and arbitrators

References:

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