



*Brandon
Kutner*

Editor's Note: This Editorial by Brandon Kutner was submitted to the Ocala Star-Banner and published on April 25, 2010.

Always Thinking

The Godfather finds out that his bookkeeper, Enzo, has cheated him out of ten million quid. His bookkeeper is deaf. That was the reason he got the job in the first place. It was assumed that Enzo would hear nothing that he might have to testify about in court.

When the Godfather goes to confront Enzo about his missing money, he takes along his solicitor who knows sign language. The Godfather tells the lawyer, "Ask him where the ten million quid is that he embezzled from me."

The lawyer, using sign language, asks Enzo where the money is.

Enzo signs back, "I don't know what you're talking about."

The lawyer tells the Godfather, "He says he doesn't know what you are talking about."

The Godfather pulls out a pistol, puts it to Enzo's forehead and says, "Ask him again!"

The lawyer signs to Enzo, "He'll kill you if you don't tell him."

Enzo signs back, "OK. You win! The money is in a brown briefcase, buried behind the shed in my cousin Bruno's backyard!"

The Godfather asks the lawyer, "What did he say?"

The lawyer replies, "He says you don't have the guts to pull the trigger."

Don't you just LOVE quick thinking lawyers!?!?

Editorial From the President of the

North Central Florida Chapter

Sheriff Dean: Union Member, but Not a Union Advocate?

On Feb. 24, 2010, **Marion County Sheriff Ed Dean** fired off a letter to his employees — and provided copies to the Marion County Commission and all Marion County constitutional officers, as well as the Marion County budget director and county administrator — in an effort to address recent newspaper reports that his agency, that is not represented by a bargaining unit, received no pay raises while other union-represented employees in Marion County received raises upward of 6 percent last year.

In his letter, Dean promised his employees that he would personally right this travesty of justice and employed the assistance of a consulting firm to compare his agency's wages to that of the fire services in Marion County. In his effort to compare apples to oranges, Dean has thrown some barbs toward his fellow sheriffs in surrounding counties and around the state.

In the letter to his employees, Dean wrote that his agency is "a role-model organization that has received the Governor's Sterling Award." He goes on to explain that "a role-model organization has role-model employees [and] role-model employees need to be treated as role models."

Undoubtedly feeling the pressure from the growing desire of his deputies to organize for collective bargaining, in his very next sentence, Dean writes, "I do not believe a union is necessary at the Marion County Sheriff's Office..." Dean qualifies his reasoning by explaining that "unions have their place where employees are ignored or mistreated."

Those are some pretty bold statements coming from a member of one of the largest and most influential police unions in our state, The Florida Sheriff's Association.

I would be curious to see what **Sheriff Darnell** (Alachua), **Sheriff Parker** (Brevard), **Sheriff Lamberti** (Broward), **Sheriff Wise** (DeSoto), **Sheriff Morgan** (Escambia), **Sheriff Fleming** (Flagler), **Sheriff Slaughter** (Gilchrist), **Sheriff Whidden** (Hendry), **Sheriff Benton** (Highlands), **Sheriff Smith** (Levy), **Sheriff Demings** (Orange), **Sheriff Bradshaw** (Palm Beach) or **Sheriff Knight** (Sarasota) would have to say in retort to such disparaging remarks about the way in which they handle their employee relations. All of the aforementioned sheriff's offices have standing contracts with the PBA, so, according to Dean, those agencies must be in shambles, right? It must be a daily living hell to work in those organizations compared to the utopian bliss under which the Marion County Sheriff believes he operates his agency.

Now don't get me wrong, I know quite a few deputies serving the residents of Marion County, and I am certain that the Sheriff's Office is a class-act organization staffed by extraordinary men and women dedicated to serving their community with the utmost professionalism, integrity and zeal. But to say that labor organizations only have standing in "dysfunctional agencies" is absurd!

Reputable law enforcement and corrections labor organizations, such as the Florida Police Benevolent Association, are invaluable to their membership. The Florida PBA provides legal services to their members on a daily basis. The PBA also possesses the strongest, most active and most adept political analysts and lobbyists in the state, making sure that the interests of law enforcement officers are taken care of at all levels of government. The PBA's full-time trained staff of representatives are invaluable to their members during internal investigations and grievance proceedings, as well as in instances where administrators and agency heads run roughshod over the men and women sworn to uphold the law (just look at the debacle at the High Springs Police Department). With over 36,000 members from Key West to the Panhandle and up and down the East and West Coasts, our organization is the most professional, powerful and influential labor organization in the State of Florida.

Additionally, there are numerous examples around the state in which the relationship between the PBA and the agency head are extremely productive, often symbiotic, in solving budgetary issues and benefit inequities, not unlike those plaguing the public servants in Marion County. At the same time, PBA has fostered an improvement in agency morale and bolstered the sheriff's political standing in their respective community. It is this type of cooperative effort, rather than the traditional adversarial employer-employee relationship, that benefits all concerned parties by assisting in improving morale, increasing pay and safeguarding benefits, while, at the same time, raising the level of service to residents as we simultaneously reduce operating costs and put hard-earned tax dollars back in the pockets of residents.

To unilaterally admonish labor organizations — especially those representing our public servants who defend our rights, property and lives with their own — is insulting and begs the question as to whose best interest Dean really has in mind. ●

From Your Membership Secretaries...



*Sherry Hannon
Ext. 400*



*Marcia Eggers
Ext. 411*



*Liz Mixson
Ext. 412*



*Laura Spraker
Ext. 413*

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