

ION

quare
rieve

ing an attempt to save crews. n the property, and has ded to buy the property ovate the property, the tion would turn it into a nity center. hope this plan works, e it is likely to be the ort made to put the his- cademy buildings to this plan fails, the ny Square Foundation ve the buildings. cial developer and he

to a developer, there uildings to use. There s, apartments, muse- oney it would take to und — even conserva- ans have failed. as at least as much ed over the years — ce for the property.

umerous BYU stud- d, and this plan de- n intends to raise the d funding from busi- months — and if the cademy Square, the

ood system for BYU se. If enough money rotting buildings on ors get their money

a will also donate. ce the Academy — \$500 apiece to raise ey can (for the good t Provo residents pare the Academy. out the Academy. ect for its heritage ah. It's time to see ne to put away the

eting tonight at 7 lyly Universe hopes ny will be in atten- ll be supported —

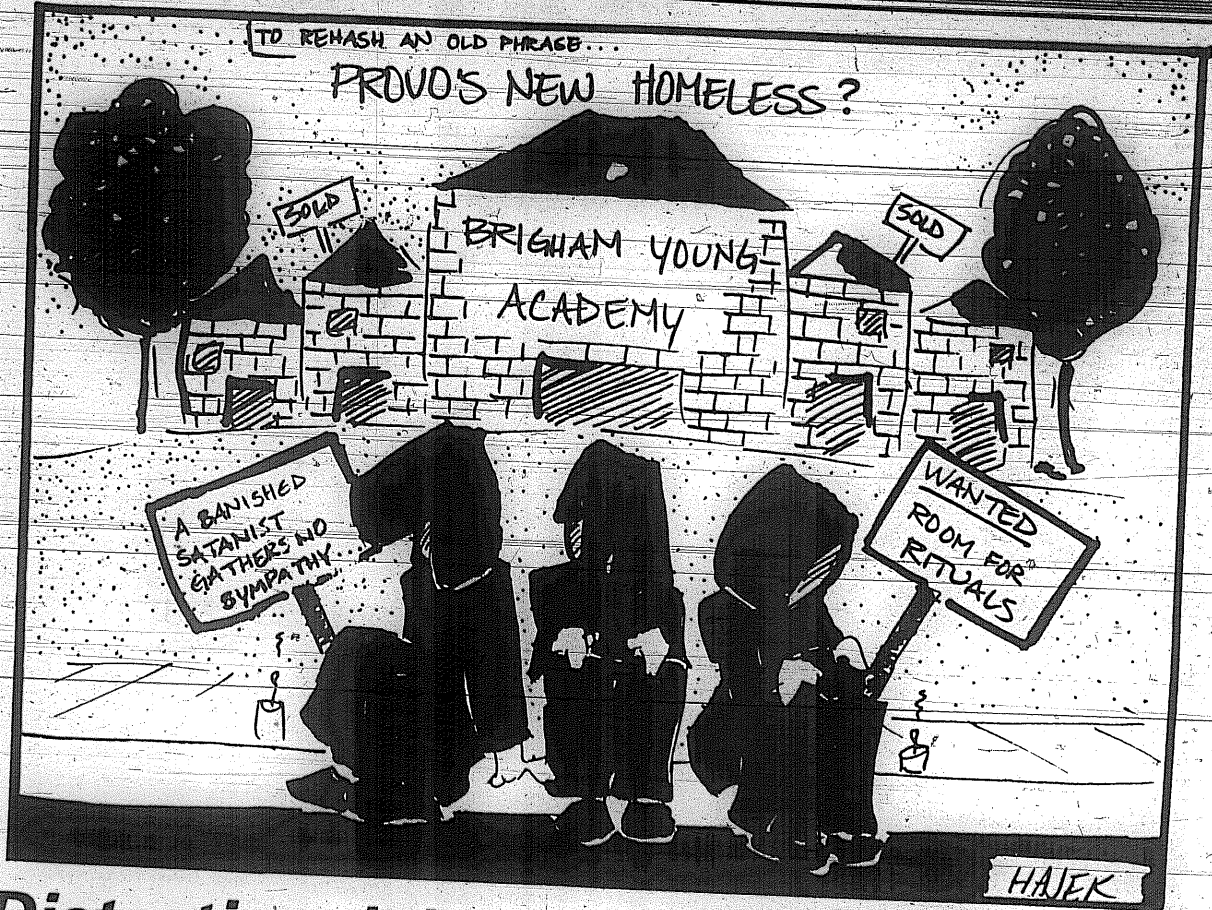
iverse Editorial itor, opinion page- nt staff member. gham Young Uni- h. The Editorial All meetings are

ology
YU

POINT

women) has been er-day Saints by a of the Genesis Moses, and a too- the temple enact- When we make

etation, we act in lieve. We fail to ing given at the mple enactment ut only figurative



Distorting labor erasing the past

VIEWPOINT

The recent opinion article, "Unions must change to survive," by David Rout, raises several interesting issues about the labor movement. It also perpetuates uninformed myths about workers and their organizations. A more balanced view provided quite a different understanding.

Clearly, American unions are hurting these days, dropping from more than 30 percent of the workforce to less than 18 percent. Rout suggests labor brought the problems on itself, an allegation which is based on naïveté rather than the hard realities of history.

The fact is that American workers have suffered an aggressive attack upon the rights of working people in recent years. While our cousins in Canada and Western Europe experience the dual blessing of a strong economy and workplace democracy, American officials have waged class war on U.S. unions.

For nearly a decade the White House has led the assault, resulting in a bifurcated society in which the rich become richer while workers get poorer. Under President Reagan, we suffered near-Depression levels of unemployment, plant closings and the Pacto strike. In his first year as president, George Bush vetoed legislation to slightly increase the minimum wage from a lousy \$3.35 an hour, and this after no increase for the past eight years. Utah Senator Orrin Hatch advocates the curious goals of the council for a Union Free Environ-

ment, voting extreme positions straight down the Republican company line. While blocking programs to help the little guy, Hatch spent \$4 million in his last Senate campaign against a newcomer with only \$200,000. So much for fairness.

To correct a few of Rout's errors, the following facts may be useful:

1. The PACTO (not Pecto) strike by air traffic controllers was not for "better pay and fewer hours" but against intolerable working conditions which jeopardized public safety and tormented stressed-out employees.
2. The Wager Act does not give unions control of "hiring, firing and bargaining." Management hires and fires, and it still takes two parties to bargain. If labor had the advantage in negotiations they would not have given up billions of dollars during the past decade in wage concessions, medical care and other sacrifices to prop up managerial incompetence. Of course, the Wagner Act itself was amended by the Taft-Hartley Act clear back in 1947.
3. Japan, South Korea and other Pacific Rim countries have not yet reached their "economic summit." A lot of factors besides unionism con-

tribute to recent Asian economic success. Currently the fledgling labor movement in South Korea has devastated corporate and public officials, and year-long strikes have sent the country into somewhat of a crisis.

4. The assertion that American steelmakers closed their mills because of union wages is ridiculous. Big steel refused to invest in new technology and was outgunned by new mills overseas. Japanese and West German steelworkers have enjoyed a decade of greater wage increases than their U.S. counterparts. Meanwhile, more than 140 steel mills have been shut down, largely because of poor production systems, bad quality, disinvestment and corporate shifts of their resources into oil, gas and real estate. Well-managed American steel firms, on the other hand, have been extremely profitable.

5. "Labor leaders have gotten rich taking from the rank and file," Rout fantasizes. Name one case. Someone has taken from the workers, but it's corporate executives, not union officials. A decade ago not a CEO in America received a million-dollar paycheck. Today thousands do, of small and large companies, and the average CEO make up to six times the pay of corporate heads in 14 other industrial nations.

6. The Pittston (not "Pittman") coal struggle is not because "companies in this country have finally smartened up." This battle, like many classic fights before, is between the Haves

and the Have Nots. Top management broke the moral code last year, cutting off benefits to 1,500 UMW retirees, pensioners and widows — the most vulnerable of all who had mined the coal over previous decades, sustained management and reaped huge profits for owners. While the company has attempted to justify its decision, 47,000 miners in nine states have struck in support of the Pittston union-local. Grandparents, wives and children have laid their bodies in front of company trucks. They are harassed and physically attacked by company goon squads, hired by Vance Security, which advertises for ex-military men in *Soldier of Fortune* magazine.

So when BYU students graduate and start a career, they ought to thank organized labor that they weren't exploited in children's sweatshops like their ancestors were. If they get a decent wage, enjoy health insurance, a pension, paid vacation or day-care facilities for their children, they ought to reflect on the legacy of labor. Non-union employees share all the fruits of a century-long union struggle. Marches, strikes and collective bargaining forged the decent working environment most of us currently experience. It's unfortunate that we so quickly forget the blood, sweat and tears of those who paid the price for the good life we enjoy today.

Warner Woodworth is chairman of the Department of Organizational Behavior at BYU.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR