

THE PROVOCATEURS MAKING JOKES ABOUT SELLING THE GOODS FOR THE DEVOS COMPANY



Dick DeVos Nothing in this story indicates the reporter was not punched....so?
5 hours ago · 3

The Michigan State Police are confused. They have issued a statement deeming the protests in Lansing Tuesday reasonably peaceful for an event of that size. But when WaPo asked about Steven Crowder's claims to have been assaulted, they say they don't understand why he hasn't submitted a police report.

But what about the Steven Crowder thing? "We were aware of some reports of minor altercations," Banner said. "Considering [the] number of people and the intensity of the emotions, I think all things considered, this was a very peaceful event."

[snip]

Says Michigan State Police Inspector Gene Adamczyk: "No one has filed a complaint on that assault." A spokesman for the Lansing Police Department says that they've gotten no complaint in connection with the event and would have routed the matter to the state police in any case.

[snip]

Why no charges? "If somebody assaulted you, you'd file a complaint right away," says Adamczyk of the state police.

"Something doesn't make sense here. If there is a complaint, we haven't heard about it." [my emphasis]

To TPM, Adamczyk noted that they can't investigate this alleged assault unless Crowder files a complaint.

"You can't leverage the law for personal gain," he said. "Either you're the victim, or you're not. So if he's the victim of an assault, and he wants to file a complaint, we will definitely investigate it."

[snip]

"If somebody broke into your house, wouldn't you immediately report it to the police? If someone assaulted you or your family member wouldn't you report it immediately to the police?" Adamczyk said. **"Well, why wouldn't you, unless there's a personal agenda there."** [my emphasis]

As I have noted, I share the MSP's confusion.

That said, something has stuck with me through all this. Crowder, who called himself a provocateur while on Hannity, responded to an accusation that he worked for Dick DeVos the other day by joking about selling soap.

According to Spitzley, Crowder had an exchange with two pro-union men wearing blue jeans, hard hats and Carhartt clothing. One of the men accused Crowder of working for Amway, the family company of Michigan businessman Dick DeVos. Crowder joked that he sells soap.

"He said, 'I sell soap. I should sell you some,'" Spitzley said, quoting Crowder.

Crowder said he never suggested the men needed soap or could use a bath. "That wasn't my intent," he said.

It was a joke, surely, and Crowder wasn't the one who brought up Amway, the union guys were.

But I'm struck by how a DeVos affiliated organization, the Michigan Freedom Fund, is treating Crowder's alleged attack. Yesterday, they issued a reward: (h/t Josh Pugh)



I'm rather interested in the formulation here. They're issuing a cash reward to any information leading to "the arrest **and conviction** of those responsible for throwing punches at local residents and journalists or for the disgusting, racist assault against Clint Tarver."

The formulation is rather curious, given that they're rewarding people for information on alleged assaults on "local residents and journalists." Putting aside that Crowder didn't present himself as a journalist and has called himself a provocateur, I'm not sure he'd qualify in any case. Do they mean they'll award information only for local journalists? Crowder was precisely what the right wing projected the unions were: an outside agitator brought in for the event.

There's also the problem that thus far, only AFP's Scott Hagerstrom has filed a complaint with the cops, not Crowder or—at least a few days ago—Tarver. If the victims they list never file complaints, there can't very well be any convictions, and MFF doesn't offer a reward for the complaint—allegedly damaged tent and computer equipment—that AFP did file.

And look where MFF is sending people? To the Lansing Police Department, not to the Michigan State Police, who have jurisdiction and who had 350 cops onsite and responded to the incident.

That is, to some degree, MFF is offering a reward for something that they likely know won't

happen: convictions related to victims who have shown a reluctance to press charges.

There are two more problems with all this.

First, as Eclectablog lays out in excruciating detail here, AFP and Clint Tarver both claim the perpetrators were two guys in masks (though video evidence suggests Stacy Swimp, was orchestrating movements prior to the tent coming down, who has ties through the National Center for Public Policy Research to Crowder).

As I've been pointing out all along, if there is a crime, it is important to report that crime. And we MI taxpayers made that particularly easy on Tuesday by paying \$300,000 to have 350 cops onsite.

But if you are a victim of a crime perpetrated by men wearing masks, it is all the more important to report the crime immediately, because otherwise, it will be almost impossible to identify those masked men.

And then there's this: according to Tarver, the masked men came into the second tent with tickets—distributed by AFP—for free hot dogs. It seems that, both from those hot dog tickets and because, according to Tarver, they took off their masks before he gave them hot dogs, AFP is the only entity that knows the identities of the culprits.

Yet it took them two days before they decided to press charges.

I'm glad some people, at least, are involving the police (I do hope they involve the police that have actual jurisdiction). Yet it seems that the right wing noise machine is now making a show of pressing charges, though bracketing off their most outrageous allegations, the ones being used to drive the right wing noise machine.

And then there's the comment I've posted at the top of this page. The billionaire behind coercing people to ram through this law, Dick

DeVos, has taken to trolling his own organization's comment threads to try to sustain the increasingly weak story of a self-described provocateur who joked that he was selling soap for Dick DeVos' family company.

Why is DeVos so personally invested in sustaining this story?

Update: I reworded this to more correctly describe what Swimp appears to have done.

GRAND RAPIDS PRESS: A POX ON ALL THEIR HOUSES, BUT NOT OUR OWN

The local rag posted an editorial "reflect[ing] the views of The Grand Rapids Press editorial board," blaming **almost** everyone involved in the so-called "right to work" fight for the ugly way things went down Tuesday.

Right-to-work laws may or may not end up helping Michigan, but no one should be pleased with what happened in Lansing this week.

The whole process that led to the bills prohibiting workers from having to pay dues or fees to unions as a condition of employment has a patina of ick that unnecessarily divides and casts the state and its lawmakers in the national spotlight for all the wrong reasons.

[snip]

We're disappointed in the whole lot.

The issue deserved the sunlight of the traditional legislative process, not

moved through a lame duck session at breakneck speed amid threats and raucous protests, all played out in the national spotlight.

That's not the Pure Michigan image we're hoping to project as we rebuild the state's economy and attract new businesses.

We all deserved better.

It blames Rick Snyder for betraying his "relentlessly positive" promises and flipflopping on an issue he had said wasn't on his agenda.

It blames union leaders for all the violent images (some—perhaps most—not the unions' fault), including the disputed tent collapse, the riot gear clad cops, and Jimmy Hoffa's promise of a "civil war."

It blames legislative leaders, calling out Doug Geiss and Dave Agema for their violent language and Lisa Posthumus Lyon for her hypocritical attempt to exempt her husband's profession from the law.

Yet oddly (or maybe not so oddly), the Grand Rapids Press placed no blame on the man who, perhaps more than anyone else, bears responsibility both **that** this went down, and for the nasty way it was jammed through.

As (the umbrella that owns the Press) MLive's own senior political columnist Tim Skubick explained, this went down in the way it did in significant part because of Grand Rapids' most prominent citizen, Dick DeVos.

Surely you remember the GOP candidate for governor and former CEO of Amway. Well he's back on the political field and he worked tirelessly behind Gov. Rick Snyder's back to push Right to Work.

[snip]

Having performed the 180, Mr. DeVos ramped it up. He told senators that if they don't vote for this thing, he would launch a petition drive to place this before the voters.

Recall that Mr. DeVos spent \$35 million of his own money to beat Gov. Jennifer Granholm, (money wasted). Legislators on the other end of his phone calls knew he has the deep pockets to not only gather the required signatures, but also to find a way to sell it to the voters.

Other press outlets (and presumably Senate Majority Leader Randy Richardville) were less polite, calling what DeVos and his anti-labor friends did "threats" and "arm-twisting."

Precisely the kind of implicit violence the Press found so distasteful when union leaders or legislators did it.

It's all very nice for the Press to blame people on the other side of the state for the ugliness in Lansing on Tuesday. But they're utterly irresponsible if they don't also blame the ugliness here at home.

They're right: We all deserved better. And the place to start demanding better is from Dick DeVos.

HOW TO SOLVE A CRIME: REPORT IT TO THE POLICE

I apparently wasn't clear enough about the alleged assault on Steven Crowder on Tuesday to be understood by the people sent over by the right wing noise machine. So let me try to say it very simply.

If Crowder was assaulted, by all means let's prosecute the assailant.

My post was intended as a warning that naive local journalists should not rely exclusively on videos from people who have a history of creating firestorms around heavily edited videos launched through Drudge to Fox. There is a long history of James O'Keefe associates just doing that. If the right wants to report events with any credibility, they'd be well served to avoid that route.

A number of people—including the NYT—have exposed why Crowder's original video was problematic.

Unfortunately for Mr. Crowder, a look at the video broadcast on the Sean Hannity show appears to show quite clearly that he left out an important section of the footage when he put together his edit. A section of the Fox News broadcast preserved by the Web site Mediaite shows that Mr. Hannity's producers at Fox News started the clip five seconds earlier than Mr. Crowder did. What the extra footage reveals is the man who punched Mr. Crowder being knocked to the ground seconds before and then getting up and taking a swing at the comedian.

But aside from the obvious editing in the Crowder video—possibly hiding that the punch was not the first event in the altercation—I pointed out that Crowder didn't report the event to any of the 350 cops who were brought in to make sure something like this didn't happen.

Unlike most of the people engaging in this, I'm a MI taxpayer. Which means I paid my share of the reported \$25,000 an hour (which would add up to something like \$300,000 for the day) to make sure we had 350 out of town cops on site to prevent violence.

And yet Crowder chose not to report his alleged

assault to those 350 cops.

That's the other reason—aside from the obvious heavy edits—why I don't immediately accept Crowder's story. Why, when taxpayers like me paid good money to make sure this event was heavily patrolled, would you go and edit a video (possibly—though I haven't been able to confirm the time of the alleged attack—for up to 3 hours) rather than tell the cops?

Why would you let the crime scene grow cold?

Why wouldn't you report the crime immediately to make sure you could prosecute the alleged assailant?

This is basic law enforcement stuff. But as a Michigander, I'm rather offended by the right wingers who suggest I should be happy that Crowder wasted the money we spent on cops.

We have cops. Their job is to solve crimes. Crowder alleges a crime was committed. Yet (last I heard—he didn't respond to my question about this) he didn't even talk to the neutral arbiters about his side of the story.

That suggests, to me at least, he's not very interested in neutral fact-finding about what occurred.

THE LIBERTARIANS AGAINST COERCION APPLAUDING DICK DEVOS' COERCION

I had a pretty revelatory experience last night interacting with a bunch of self-identified libertarians about alleged violence in Lansing

yesterday and so-called Right to Work. I asked several of them why they were supporting a bill that should be anathema to libertarian principles. Here's a more coherent version of the argument I made.

I also consider the restrictions right-to-work laws impose on bargaining between unions and businesses to violate freedom of contract and association. So I'm not cheerleading for the right-to-work law just passed in Michigan, which bans closed shops in which union membership is a condition of employment. I'm disappointed that the state has, once again, inserted itself into the marketplace to place its thumb on the scale in the never-ending game of playing business and labor off against one another.

[snip]

The ideal role for the government in business-labor relations is to stay the hell out of it and let the parties work things out themselves. I may *prefer* one outcome or another, but I don't have the right to enforce it by law, and that's what right-to-work legislation does.

While I don't embrace that view, it is the stance I would expect true libertarians to adopt. I'm gratified a couple of libertarians weighed in and pointed out the inconsistency of the arguments my interlocutors were making, which at least caused them some confusion (and led one to admit he would freeload on taxes if it were not for fear of legal repercussions).

One thing these self-identified libertarians kept coming back to, however, was alleged union coercion. They don't want to be coerced into joining a union, paying dues or representation fees. These people at least pretended to be adamantly opposed to coercion.

Which is why this detail of Michigan's union-

busting is an important part of the narrative.

Michigan Senate Minority Leader Gretchen Whitmer, a Democrat told MSNBC that some of her **Republican colleagues complained to her privately that DeVos was twisting their arms** over the anti-union legislation.

"I spoke with someone in Republican leadership who was angry because these heavy-handed tactics were being used with the members," she said. Republicans told her, she said, that DeVos had "threatened primaries, threatened to spend whatever it takes to beat them if they don't support these bills."

It's not just Gretchen Whitmer saying this. Detroit Free Press said it specifically about Randy Richardville, who flipped his position on RtW.

Certainly, there are a large number of Michigan legislators who are beholden to Americans for Prosperity, or the Koch brothers. Word is **the groups threatened Senate Majority Leader Randy Richardville's leadership post**, and promised him a primary challenge in 2014, if he refused to move right-to-work forward.

And Tim Skubick named DeVos too.

Having performed the 180, Mr. DeVos **ramped it up**. He told senators that if they don't vote for this thing, he would launch a petition drive to place this before the voters.

Recall that Mr. DeVos spent \$35 million of his own money to beat Gov. Jennifer Granholm, (money wasted). Legislators on the other end of his phone calls knew he has the deep pockets to not only gather the required signatures, but also to

find a way to sell it to the voters.

Folks in MI are fairly clear about one thing: a billionaire who was soundly defeated by voters in 2006 has instead brought about a radical change in the state's law by coercing people, precisely the kind of thuggishness "Right to Work" supporters claim unions engage in.

"Right to Work" supporters insist that no one should feel like their job depends on capitulating to coercion about who or what to support.

Except that Dick DeVos and his thuggish special interest group friends used precisely that kind of coercion to cram this law through. Randy Richardville, among others, was told his job depended on supporting policies and groups he otherwise wouldn't support.

I guess libertarians like the kind of thuggishness billionaires engage in?

ONE COWARDLY NERD

It's done. Governor Snyder signed the bill in the secrecy of his office or a closet or wherever else he goes to deal with the shame of turning his state into Indiana or Mississippi or Bangladesh because he wasn't tough enough to stand up to Dick DeVos.

Michigan is now the 24th state that limits union contracts and only union contracts on fees.

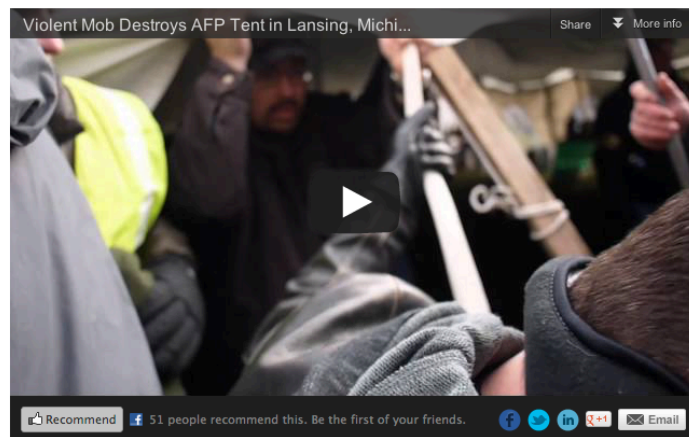
And unless we change it the Democratic Party will become even more captured by the oligarchs.

BREITBART FOLKS APPEAR TO FAKE VIOLENCE IN LANSING

[youtube]GtbWbw66KrI[/youtube]

When I saw this video—claiming that a “violent mob” destroyed the tent the Koch brothers had paid for in front of the Michigan Capitol—I knew right away it was likely a false flag. After all, Stranahan, James O’Keefe’s buddy, first posted it. Within minutes it was up at Drudge.

UNION MOB DESTROYS TENT WITH PEOPLE INSIDE



A mob destroyed the Americans For Prosperity tent on the lawn of the Michigan State Capitol during the protest against "Right-To-Work" legislation. While destruction happened, there were people inside the tent and some in the crowd that were armed with knives.

11 Dec 2012, 9:53 AM PDT | [POST A COMMENT](#)

Just as this whole narrative was rolling out, Dick DeVos’ paid hack was calling for RICCO [sic] charges against union leaders.



All this, in spite of the fact that witnesses say the Americans for Prosperity people were trying to provoke union members to violence, and witnesses reportedly saw AFP people loosening the ropes on the tents so they would come down. And in spite of the fact the place was crawling with cops (shipped in from around the state) who

didn't do see anything amiss. (Cops are as we speak arresting people engaging in civil disobedience at the Romney Building, where the Governor's office is.)

Sadly, many of MI's local journalists don't know enough to distrust anything a Breitbart affiliate says and have repeated the violence narrative, based on such discredited sources.

This is developing (and I'm home sick, so working remotely). But it appears the KochBots just staged a false flag.

Update: And now Fox is going with the narrative.



And all this is happening just as Michigan State Police begin to mace those peaceful protestors at the Romney building.

So literally coinciding with the roll-out of actual police violence we're seeing this narrative of violence.

Apparently according to Gongwer, a news service in MI, "State Police downplayed the incident and said no one was arrested."

Update: Here's a picture of Steve Crowder deliberately provoking peaceful union people from before he was claiming to have been attacked.



I assume, given that the cops say the tent was no big deal and no arrests have been made, Crowder did not share his accusations of assault with any of the hundreds of cops standing right near by.

Update: Here's Steve Crowder's very obviously heavily edited video.

[youtube]u_F3oev06i0[/youtube]

Given that there were witnesses to the early confrontation, where Crowder was clearly inciting people, it amuses me he tried to make a video showing the same people.

Update: Here's witness Tom Duckworth describing the NRA-clad guy who he had earlier seen with the other AFP people deliberately taking down the tent.

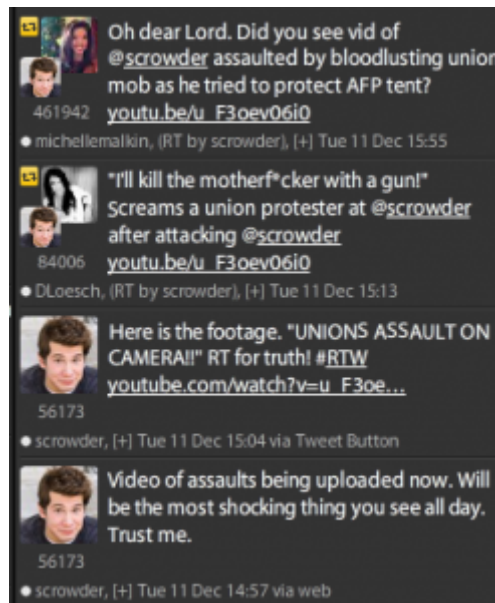
[youtube]rt6I8BrQCVY[/youtube]

A few points about his story. First, the collapse of the tent (with people inside) would explain why the video showed pushing shoving: because they were trying to get people out from underneath the tent. Second, there was a Sheriff onsite immediately who apparently did nothing, besides get the crowds away. That also means that—at least given the juxtaposition of the tent collapse and the purported assault on Crowder—there were not only hundreds of MSP in sight, but there was a Sheriff on hand to whom Crowder could have reported the alleged assault. I'll be curious to see if he did.

Update: I asked Steve Crowder on Twitter whether he reported his “assault” and why he released such a heavily edited video.



He deleted them from his timeline so his followers don't know he's dodging such obvious questions.



Update: One of Crowder's followers says he can see my tweets. I can't. But in any case, Crowder is not answer that question.

IT'S NOT ABOUT WORKERS, IT'S ABOUT CEOS

Many of the editorials about the anti-union attack in MI have supported the unions or—even from conservative papers—criticized the way the Republicans crammed it through. This is one of

the few in favor.

Predictably, this one, from Daniel Howes, either doesn't know or chooses to deceive readers about how unions work.

And organized labor, fresh from a failed effort to enshrine collective bargaining rights in the state constitution, faces its most serious existential threat since the Sit-Down strikes and Battle of the Overpass cemented the institutional permanence of the UAW.

Until now. **A right-to-work law that gives members the choice to join a union rank-and-file – or not to join –** threatens to stanch materially the union dues flow, membership and, accordingly, the political muscle predominantly used by unions in the service of the Democratic Party.

Workers already have a choice whether to join a union or not. If that's what Howes wants, that's what he's got already in Michigan.

But I appreciate it for one thing. Unlike the propaganda Snyder is tweeting out like a nervous school girl, which claims this offers anything for the workers—union and non-union—who will lose \$1,500 in wages, Howes identifies honestly who this is meant to impress.

CEOs. Not workers.

It probably won't. But the move, coupled with a coming financial workout for Detroit, is likely to reshape positively the debate about Michigan and its largest city among CEOs and investors looking for opportunity and growth – provided the national economy isn't pushed back into recession by Washington's plunge off a "fiscal cliff" of its own making.

This is the same "job creators" nonsense that

Mitt spewed for a year, unsuccessfully.

But you have to look no further than this anti-union campaign to discern whether impressing CEOs will do a damn thing for workers.

In the million-dollar ad campaign Windquest and former Amway CEO Dick DeVos has ponied up, rather than using real Michiganders or paying local actors to bray about “freedom,” he used stock photos.

Even if you impress Dick DeVos, it seems (and he is the one bankrolling and twisting arms to make this happen, he’ll still treat workers like a cut and paste.

It’s very simple. Impressing CEOs who prefer disempowered, desperate workers doesn’t actually help workers.

LEVIN BROTHERS: RICK SNYDER DOESN’T UNDERSTAND HOW UNIONS WORK

[youtube]Nny-q2pcuQ0[/youtube]

Michigan’s Democratic Senators and Congressmen met with Governor Snyder this morning to urge him either to veto the so-called Right to Work bill, defer its passage until next term, or take the appropriations out that would make the law referendum-proof.

On a conference call describing their meeting, their chief message served to rebut Snyder’s claimed reasons to pass RtW—that he wanted to “get beyond” this issue and that RtW would help jobs. Discussing this bill as a “right to work cliff,” Carl Levin said that if this passed, the Governor “will allow us to plunge into endless

strife." And it would do so, Senator Levin noted, after labor and corporations have achieved more cooperative relations of late (presumably a reference to the auto industry).

But the most interesting point that Senator Levin made—which his brother, Congressman Sander Levin elaborated on—is that Snyder doesn't understand how unions work. "The Governor in his statement [last week] said it incorrectly" Sandy said, when he suggested workers would lose their job if they didn't join a union. "And today I still don't think he understands." Sandy continued. Congressman Levin went on to remind that the principle that workers could not be forced to join a union has been enshrined since he and then-Governor George Romney negotiated collective bargaining law back in 1965.

Now, in accusing Snyder of not understanding how unions work, I guess the Democrats wanted to do two things: treat his obviously false excuse for passing this as a good faith statement, and then to correct the lies that false excuse was based on. But also to shift the blame for the labor unrest that will come as a result of this law onto the Governor; because he went along with what Carl Levin called a "parliamentary gimmick" that will push this through as referendum-proof, Snyder will be responsible for the negative effect this will have on Michigan's economy.

I don't know whether that will work or not. But one thing I didn't hear is a criticism of Snyder's vision for Michigan. Making MI a RtW state effectively embraces a vision of the state as Indiana or Mississippi or Bangladesh. Making MI a RtW state embraces the idea that we should be dumb labor, not innovative technology, just another entry in the race to be the cheapest, most desperate state.

I'm glad such key participants as Sandy Levin schooled Snyder on the last 50 years of MI history and what that history means for Snyder's decision tomorrow. But ultimately we need to be calling Snyder out for his terrible vision for the future of MI.

Update: I've added an MSNBC appearance by State Rep Tim Greimel (from Auburn Hills, where Chrysler is located). It's one of the better descriptions of what what RtW does I've seen.

MI RIGHT TO RAM ROUND-UP

The reviews on MI GOP's anti-union power-grab on Thursday are still coming in. And they're mostly blisteringly critical, especially of the way the GOP rammed this through the legislature.

At MLive, Susan Demas argues it undermines the entire *raison-d'être* of Snyder's Administration.

In a single day last week, he did far more than flip-flop on RTW. Rick Snyder undid the entire premise of his governorship: government transparency, data-driven decisions and bipartisan cooperation.

No, governor, you don't get to have it both ways anymore after you unfurl these words at a Thursday press conference:

"I'm asking that we pass an act that gives workers freedom in the workplace. When it arrives on my desk, I will sign it."

You asked for it. You own it. It's yours.

[snip]

Now I'm sure Ricky and Republicans will be whining a lot in the months and years to come about how Democrats aren't playing fair, whether it's voting "no" on all bills, filing recalls against Republicans or going for a constitutional amendment.

Sorry, boys (and the very few girls on your side). You didn't just give up the moral high ground. You obliterated it on Thursday by choosing a government process one would expect in the Soviet Union of old, not the modern-day USA.

Expecting moderate responses to radical actions is usually unwise.

The Free Press called bullshit on Snyder's rationale.

Watching Snyder explain his right-to-work reversal was disturbing on several levels.

His insistence that the legislation was designed to promote the interests of unionized workers and "bring Michiganders together" was grotesquely disingenuous; even as he spoke, security personnel were locking down the capital in anticipation of protests by angry unionists.

Snyder's ostensible rationale for embracing right-to-work legislation – it was, he insisted, a matter of preserving workers' freedom of association – was equally dishonest.

The real motive of Michigan's right-to-work champions, as former GOP legislator Bill Ballenger ruefully observed, is "pure greed" – the determination to emasculate, once and for all, the Democratic Party's most reliable source of financial and organizational support.

And the Livingston Daily (in SE MI's conservative Ex-Urbs) decried the abuse of democracy.

Elected Republican officials in Lansing last week showed in breathtaking manner how little respect they have for the democratic process. In one of the

Capitol's most amazing days Thursday, the House and the Senate rushed through lame-duck legislation that will make Michigan a so-called right-to-work state.

[snip]

But Republicans thumbed their noses at the quaint (to them) concept that voters matter. Right-to-work legislation was introduced and passed in a flick of an eye Thursday. No referral to committees, no meaningful debate, no hearings.

Who needs facts when you have a overwhelming majority?

If this was such important and fact-supported legislation, Republicans could have introduced it at any time in the last two years. But that would have made them put their cards on the table before the last election. They could have waited until January, when they would still have legislative majorities – albeit a slightly smaller edge in the House – and let the decision be made by the lawmakers most recently selected by the public.

But democratic procedure – as well as any pretense of factual argument – gets in the way of Republican lawmakers who are beholden to special interests and who are eager to stick it to labor unions. This was about punishment and revenge, not good public policy.

MI doesn't have much of a newspaper culture left (thanks, in part, to union busting). But it is fairly remarkable how unified even papers from places like Holland and Livingston have been about the abusive way Republicans rammed this through.

The GOP will still vote it through on Tuesday. But by then they won't be able to claim they had

any moral authority to do so.

REPUBLICAN “FREEDOM:” PEPPER SPRAY, LOCKED DOORS, AND LEGALISTIC GAMING

Yesterday, both MI’s House and Senate passed so-called “right to work” bills.

The measure will be unpopular enough in this state—particularly if Democrats and unions successfully communicate to all workers the law will mean a cut in pay even for non-union employees.

But one of the initial reactions has to do with how the measure was passed. Even before the vote was taken, the conservative Holland Sentinel (in Erik Prince’s hometown and where Dick DeVos, who pushed Republicans to pass this, has a mansion) scolded Republicans for rushing through bills now after they had taken much of the summer off.

Michigan lawmakers are in a headlong rush to cram a year’s worth of policy making into a few frantic weeks. The same legislators who took off much of the summer and fall for vacation and campaigning are now trying to resolve issues ranging from right-to-work to education reform to wolf hunting in their “lame duck” session. The haste is unnecessary and simply bad government — the best thing senators and representatives could do for Michigan citizens right now would be to go home.

A lame-duck legislative session — the

meetings between the November general election and the expiration of the current legislators' terms at the end of the year – is always a dangerous time. With the election passed and, in many cases, their departure from office imminent, legislators often cast votes and push bills in a lame-duck session they would never do if they had to answer to voters for their choices.

After last night's votes, the Detroit Free Press (the more liberal of Detroit's two newspapers) called the lame duck shenanigans a rampage.

If the Michigan Legislature maintains its current pace, it won't feel right to call the weeks between the election and the end of the year the "lame-duck session" any longer. This year's lame-duck session has been more like a raging bull – or a runaway steamroller, flattening constituencies and citizens' rights in the process.

It called out a number of the tools Republicans are using (notably, appropriations that will make these laws referendum-proof) to make these rash decisions even more dangerous.

And all that's before you look at how the anti-labor bill was passed yesterday: The police shut protestors out of the Capitol (one was even overheard saying they were keeping just the union members out). To get rid of a few protestors, they sprayed pepper spray inside the building. Even after Democrats got an injunction to open the Capitol, the House declared itself immune from the injunction. And as they're doing with an Emergency Manager bill meant to override the referendum that eliminated Governor Snyder's changes to that anti-democratic policy, they attached appropriations to the anti-labor law to make sure it couldn't be overturned via referendum.

The biggest irony? To introduce this gross abuse of democracy, Snyder used the word "freedom" eleven times. This is what Republicans think freedom is: not only the "freedom" to work for \$1,500 less a year, the "freedom" to have more accidents on the job, the "freedom" to send our kids to crummier schools. But also the kind of "freedom" delivered with mobs of cops holding out citizens, the "freedom" to be pepper sprayed, the "freedom" that can't be overturned by democratic vote.

This is what Republicans have been talking about when they discuss "freedom" all along, I guess.