

“A” Is for Agitation: Radical Chicago Teachers on Parade

Chicago Teachers Union President Karen Lewis walks, talks and barks like a rootsy Occupy Wall Street activist. But this Big Labor loudmouth who's leading the abandonment of nearly 400,000 schoolchildren in the Windy City is just another power-grabbing union fat cat.

Instead of academic excellence, she rails about “social justice.” Instead of accountability, she fumes about “profits” and curses merit pay. Lewis has marched with the Occu-clowns denouncing capitalism and promoting “socialism (as) the alternative.” She raves: “Occupy Wall Street and the whole concept of the 99 percent is an extraordinarily important movement.”

And she earned praise as a “fist-in-the-air, crowd-rousing, dynamic union leader” by former Communist Party revolutionary turned Obama-funded “school reformer” Michael Klonsky.

While she pays solidarity lip service to the 99 percent, Lewis is part of the deep-pocketed elite of public employee union chiefs who blame everyone else for their own financial and educational ruin. She's good at pandering to her Che Guevara T-shirt-wearing colleagues and trash-talking the political machine. But she is the machine.

The Chicago Teachers Union rakes in nearly \$30 million in forced dues from rank-and-file teachers every year. CTU is an affiliate of the behemoth AFL-CIO, which dropped an estimated \$100 million in forced dues to support Democratic candidates and causes during the 2008 and 2010 election cycles.

Before Lewis took control of the CTU, the union was teetering on bankruptcy and owed millions of dollars in loans. The previous CTU president pulled down nearly \$300,000 a year in

base salary and compensation. Local union watchdogs reported that top CTU officers and staff with six-figure salaries and bonuses also received:

“... a monthly expense account for each administrator – officers, coordinators and field representatives – of \$1,500; a car allowance of \$7,000 per year (whether or not you have a car); 85 percent of car insurance and expenses paid; parking allowance; cellphone allowance; life insurance paid with union dues; and among other perks, a 53rd week of yearly pay for “working” over the Christmas holiday.”

Lewis assumed the CTU presidency in June 2010. “Teachers union officials declined to provide information on Lewis’ salary,” The Chicago Tribune reports, but records show that she made more than \$71,000 for half a year’s work in 2010 – along with compensation from the Illinois Federation of Teachers in 2011 totaling at least an additional \$64,000 on top of her unknown base salary and benefits.

When she’s not urging other teachers to ditch the classroom or organizing traffic blockades to impede everyone else in Chicago from getting to and from their jobs, Lewis spends her time trashing public charter schools and business leaders trying to reform our Soviet-style monopoly in education. The results speak for themselves: While CTU members earn an average of \$74,000 a year and are now spurning 16 percent pay hikes, 71 percent of the third-largest school district’s 8th-grade students can’t attain the most basic level of science proficiency, and nearly 80 percent are not grade-level proficient in reading.

Lewis, a vulgar standup comic wannabe who has joked publicly about smoking weed in college, sneered at parent-centered charter schools that defied the strike on Monday as not “real” schools. Competition is the enemy of union-enforced stagnation. She also played the race card like a Vegas poker pro. And in a stem-winder straight out of the Barack

Obama/Elizabeth Warren/Occupy rhetorical handbook, Lewis blasted the “wealthy” at a strike rally this week: “You don’t make money by yourself,” she hissed.

Nope. In Social Justice World, you make that money by climbing up the public employee union ladder and extracting it forcibly through a compulsory dues racket that redistributes hard-earned dues from nearly 30,000 captive members to the union leadership’s class-warfare demagogues.

It bears repeating often: The goals of the teachers union radicals are not academic excellence, professional development and fairness. The goals are student indoctrination, social upheaval and perpetual grievance-mongering in pursuit of bigger government and spending without restraint: 2, 4, 6, 8! One agenda: Agitate!