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Anti-Union Sen. Tim Scott Has Drunk Deeply of GOP Kool-aid Solidarity America By John Funicello BC Columnist

With the appointment of Rep. Tim Scott to fill the U.S. Senate seat being abandoned by Sen. Jim DeMint, South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley has made certain that the same negative attitude toward lawmaking will continue.

Rep. Scott, now Senator Scott, is as rabidly anti-union as DeMint and as off base as DeMint about the role of government and, especially, the role of unions in American life. It is safe to say that both DeMint and Scott hate unions and, by extension, hate workers just as fiercely. That is, unless workers take what they are offered, accept the lowest pay in the land, are willing to work under unsafe and dangerous conditions, and will thank their employer and Republican politicians for passage of their right-to-work-for-less laws.

Scott has not been around politics long, but he could be described as South Carolina's darling of the extreme right wing of the Republican Party. Scott won a seat on the Charleston County Council in 1995, and became the first black South Carolinian elected to office since 1900. He became the first black Republican elected to any office in South Carolina since 1900. His record in Congress is not extensive, having won the state's First Congressional District seat in 2010.

Nevertheless, Haley chose him because he was someone who could fill DeMint's shoes. For example, he wasn't long in the House, when he associated himself with the Tea Party, a perfect home for someone who believes that "right-to-work" laws are an essential part of a state's or

region's economic development program. He and others believe that South Carolina would not have a Boeing plant were it not for the regressive anti-democratic law.

For workers and their unions, the so-called right-to-work laws are derided as "right-to-work-for-less" laws, and for good reason. It has been pointed out by economists and others that, in the states with such laws, the average worker is paid about \$1,500 less than workers in free union election states. Also, there are no known companies that have stated publicly that the reason they located a plant or business in one of the 24 states with "right-to-work" laws was the existence of a right-to-work-for-less law. "Right to work" laws allow workers, where there is a union, to refuse to join the union or pay a fee in place of dues, even though they receive all of the pay and benefits of a dues-paying member. These workers are known as "free riders" or parasites by some trade unionists.

The Economic Policy Institute, a think tank that provides research and information aimed toward a fair economy for all Americans, pointed out in the past several weeks that, in Indiana, where a right-to-work law has been in effect for some time, there have been some sizable corporations that have moved out of the state, to states where there are no right-to-work-for-less laws.

Scott is not the first Republican to repeat the nonsense that passes for GOP policy on economic issues and he won't be the last, but is it possible that Scott can contribute any more to the public good than DeMint, who sees government as poison?

Rather, Scott was quoted in South Carolina's *Post and Courier* last spring, calling the right-to-work law part of "our strategic advantage... it is part of our DNA." These are fact-free opinions that have been expressed by Republicans across the country, especially those of the Tea Party stripe. And, those policies were soundly rejected by American voters in last November's election. That election, in which large numbers of minorities and young people engaged, soundly rejected the GOP line on most things (economic and environmental) and returned President Obama to the White House.

You'd never know that from the strident call for "austerity," by which is meant the cutting of any social programs first, including such things as food assistance for the growing number of families who find themselves in poverty, college tuition, day care, Medicaid, Medicare,

and even Social Security which does not contribute a cent toward the nation's deficit, before asking the rich to pay their fair share of taxes.

Scott's position on that has been consistently that "we have a spending problem in America...not a revenue problem," and that means that he would protect the riches of the wealthiest 1 percent against the people's interest in surviving the potentially deadly downturn in the economy. The downturn is setting the stage for hunger and ill health, the likes of which we have not seen in the U.S. for a long time. His and his party's policies can only extend the disaster that the American economy has become into every part of the nation's life. In many ways, this time of great recession and continuous war is worse than the Great Depression, because one war (like World War II) will not take us out of the depths, but will see that we keep digging the hole deeper.

Like many GOP and Tea Party politicians before him, Scott likes to point to his hard scrabble upbringing by a single mother and he enjoys telling his audiences that his mother worked 16 hours a day to keep the family together. No doubt, he would be against an increase in the minimum wage, but, if the minimum wage had been a livable minimum wage, his mother might not have had to work the equivalent of two full time jobs to make ends meet. Did he ever ask his mother if she enjoyed having to work two-thirds of her life every day, rather than be at home raising her children? Probably not.

It calls to mind another GOP politician who was confronted by another single mother, who described working more than one job and the difficulty she found in raising her family. The politician was George W. Bush. He listened to the young mother, and then expressed wonder at the greatness of America, where a young woman would go out and work more than one job to make ends meet. He had no clue what the woman was talking about and that she was decrying her need to deprive her children of her presence by working so damned hard, not bragging about how much she had to work.

Such is the Republican Tea Party mind. There is no understanding of, let alone empathy for, the real lives of tens of millions of average Americans. Tea Partiers like Scott have been convinced by the millionaires and billionaires who stoke their political furnaces with money that taxing the rich will stifle the "job creators."

Most of the jobs created by such people are the jobs in the halls of power, where politicians do their bidding. They are not many jobs, but

they are the important ones, the jobs that will guarantee the flow of laws, state and federal, that protect the wealth and power of the 1 percent.

Little is said about one of the major economic crises, the lack of well-paying jobs, jobs that will allow a family to live a decent life, not by the higher European or Japanese standard, but just by our own standard. It is a crisis and no one in power seems to be alarmed by it, neither major party, but the Republicans and the right wing are defiant in their refusal to address this problem head-on. A problem of such enormity is, indeed, frightening, but one would think that one of the parties would take on the burden of finding another model for a sustainable economy. Right now, it is becoming apparent to most people who think that what we have is not sustainable and changing that is a very scary prospect. No elected officials seem willing to get ahead of the pack on this.

So we have Tim Scott, South Carolina's contribution to the national debate on job creation, a faltering educational system, toxic air and water, dependence on fossil fuels (from domestic *or* foreign sources), a food system that is making us sick, national health care that is no system at all, and continuous war that is both making the U.S. a pariah nation among the other 200 nations and bankrupting us. You can be sure that he will fall into line with the others on the right-most fringe of American politics.

But it is his view on the rights of workers that is so indicative of his view of democracy, itself. The right-to-work-for-less laws of which he is so enamored are the antithesis of a democratic society. Workers in America have a string of rights and privileges that come with their Constitution and Bill of Rights, but they don't have any rights in the economic sphere and that's the way the wealthy and corporate class have always wanted it. A union contract is a legal document, binding on both the workers and their employer. It is negotiated and ratified by the rank-and-file workers. It gives them rights in the workplace. And that's why the 1 percent has fought unions and unionization of workers. They want a docile and tractable work force, and so-called "right to work" laws are part of the continuing effort to neutralize organized labor and to quash any hope of workers to gain their just rights.

Scott seems to be completely ignorant of the history of his state or his country, so how would he ever be able to suggest a way forward? In

that, however, he joins a crowded field in the nation's capital. He'll feel right at home in the GOP-Tea Party Caucus.

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