Three Strikes and You're Outraged!

Several weeks into the AIG executive bonus fiasco and what have we learned?

Our generous federal government has (so far) given AIG $173 billion in "bail-out" funds (i.e. taxpayer money) because the insurance giant is "too big too fail." AIG then passed out promised bonuses totaling $163 million, resulting in a mad dash to the news cameras by Senator Charles *"Left is my better side"* Schumer to excoriate the company for trying to keep its key employees from jumping ship. ACORN staged a bus tour of the expensive homes of AIG executives in order to further rile up the public and encourage violence. In a bid for populist publicity in his eventual run for Governor, New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo demanded that the bonuses be paid back. Senator Christopher Dodd, who inserted language in the stimulus legislation to ensure that the AIG bonuses were paid, feigns outrage and shock that they were paid. (Dodd, for those of you who are keeping score, was the recipient of over $280,000 in campaign contributions from AIG employees. Dodd's wife, Jackie Clegg Dodd, worked as a director for IPC holdings, Inc., a Bermuda-based company affiliated with AIG.)

Senator Schumer, by the way, had written a letter last year to the Office of Thrift Supervision and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation expressing doubts about the solvency of IndyMac Bancorp, Inc. On June 26 Schumer leaked the letter to the media, causing a run on the bank ($1.3 billion was withdrawn), a run that made several potential bank buyers change their minds about a takeover. The federal government then temporarily took over the bank, until it was bought at a fire sale price of $13.9 billion. Who bought the bank? A group of investors that included a fund controlled by Obama's billionaire leftist pal and former Nazi sympathizer, Hungarian George Soros. (This is where astute readers ask: *"Why did Schumer leak the letter?"* and *"How much did Schumer get in the deal?"*)

Senator Dodd, meanwhile, insists he knew nothing about the AIG bonus payments even though his fingerprints were all over the arrangement in the stimulus bill. Former Senator Fred Thompson said, *"You know, it is – it was a blown cover-up… he (Dodd) got caught in a flat-out lie, and just at a time when you think the American people can't get any more cynical, I think they are… And people are going to keep their money under the mattress until they have that confidence, and when they see that people in the administration are not being frank with them about relatively – some people might say minor things – then they don't have any confidence in them with regard to anything else."* (Dodd's father, the late Senator Tom Dodd, was one of few Senators ever censured for financial misconduct while in office. It's a genetic thing perhaps.)

AIG executives, in the mean time, fear for their lives. Most of them are likely hard-working, tax-paying Americans who had nothing to do with the massive AIG losses – which were a result of one small part of the company's operations. But they now have to hire bodyguards and watch for strange cars driving down their streets, quickly whisking their kids inside and away from windows lest they be hit by a Molotov Cocktail thrown by one of ACORN's "community organizers."

Perhaps not surprisingly, AIG's lucrative insurance operation – flush with taxpayer cash – is now reducing its rates in an effort to attract more customers. (You can never insure too much Manhattan real estate.) AIG's business competitors have complained to Federal Reserve Board Chairman Ben *"Can you print that money any faster?"* Bernanke that the massive amount of federal bail-out funds given to AIG has allowed it to lower prices on policies and unfairly undercut its competition. AIG is therefore gaining new customers and increasing its market share, aided by the government, at a time when the government continues to repeat that the company had to be saved from bankruptcy because it was *"too big to fail."* If it was to big to fail before, how will making it bigger be an improvement?

All the media attention given to AIG might make people believe it was the only recipient of federal bail-out funds. Among the other beggars at the government trough was banking giant Citigroup – also considered "too big to fail." In three bail-out payments since October, Citigroup has been handed a cool $45 billion in hard-earned taxpayer dollars.

Unlike AIG, however, Citigroup clearly needs the money. After all, one wouldn't want Citigroup to cancel its plans to have its name on the new stadium of the New York Mets baseball team. For the privilege of calling the 45,000 seat ball park *"CitiField,"* Citigroup is paying $400 million – almost triple the annual payroll of the Mets team roster.

A more appropriate name might be "Chump Taxpayer Stadium."

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