



Bluff City Grill owner responds following labor protest

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON – Cathy Gross was surprised this week to see labor picketers out in front of her business, Bluff City Grill, with a large protest sign.

The sign said: “Labor dispute, Shame On Bluff City Grill.”

Gross was uncertain why exactly the picket display was started, but she thought it might have something to do with **Governor Bruce Rauner** coming to her restaurant on Wednesday for the Madison County Lincoln Day Dinner.

A few men were asked if they could talk about their issue, but said they couldn’t in front of Bluff City Grill on Wednesday night. One man handed over the card of **Alan Rubenstein**, the business representative for the **International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers**.

"We have a couple of issues with Gov. Rauner and organized labor," Rubenstein said. He also mentioned he hadn’t orchestrated this particular protest in front of Bluff City.

“Gov. Rauner is trying to institute workman’s comp reform and wants Illinois to be a right-to-work state,” Rubenstein said. “All our electricians are certified in the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. Our workers come out of places like Ranken with an electronics degree and we invest in four more years of training. Our costs are higher on the hour, but we have a very qualified person who competes against the guy out of the back of his pick-up truck.

“I talked to Cathy way before she opened. She said she had a tight budget, but she wanted to use organized labor. Her uncle is one of our members.”

Rubenstein said he knows Gross used some organized labor on her remodeling of the old Eagles Building on Broadway in Alton, but it wasn't completely that way. He said he didn't plan the protest that occurred this week and doesn't plan to protest in the future and that he appreciated that she had used union labor for her project. He said he has not been asked yet to protest about the fact that Gov. Rauner came to the restaurant.

Gross said she spent almost \$175,000 with local unions on the remodeling and appreciates their business to her restaurant.

"I come from a union family and know how important it is in the community," she said.

She provided this list of union contractors she used on the remodeling of the old Eagles Building.

The Union Contractors Bluff City Grill used in the renovation process was as followed:

GRP

Camp Electrical

JBC Carpentry (Union at the time of Hire)

Loellke Plumbing

Omni Refrigeration

Kane Fire Protection

Kane Mechanical

Hamilton Fabrication and Steel

Alton Sheet Metal

Demond Signs

Advanced Elevator

"This has been upsetting to me and my employees," Gross said. "I feel kind of back to being in elementary school and someone being against me. I think it makes customers feel uncomfortable. I don't understand why they are here."

In a message on her Facebook, Gross also mentioned how the trailer had been double parked. Not only is the parking already limited on Broadway, this has potential effects not only to her restaurant, but also other businesses on the busy street as well.

"I sincerely hope someone in the Carpenters Union will contact me and we can resolve this matter. If they do not and continue to protest, I do have two requests: When you bring your trailer and sign to Broadway, could you please not take up two parking spaces? Broadway parking can be very limited during the day and you aren't just affecting my business when you do that. The

businesses around Bluff City Grill have nothing to do with your protest. Also, if your protesters could not display any unfriendly hand gestures to my employees or customers. This matter also has nothing to do with them."