

NSA Overheard.... Again

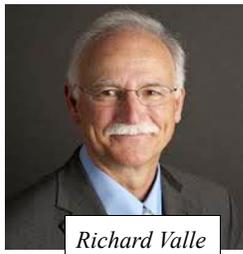
On Sunday, October 27, the conservative S.F. Chronicle political columnists Matier & Ross carried a report on how various Democratic politicians pressured the BART Board of Directors to accept the union offer and bring the strike to a close.

They explained how “state Assemblyman Robert Wieckowski and Alameda County Supervisor Richard Valle... went thumping on BART board member Tom Blalock's door one night,” the previous week to pressure him to accept what the Union negotiators were offering. “Other Democratic officeholders were just as busy in the shadows and on the phones, urging BART directors to take labor's terms.” They explain that Oakland Mayor Jean Quan and California Lt. Governor Gavin Newsom were also very involved in pushing the settlement.

We are now able to “reveal” conversations Matier and Ross weren't privy to. Following in the footsteps of J. Edgar Hoover, but with far, far greater technical resources behind them, the NSA is now spying not only on foreign heads of state like German Chancellor Merkel; they are spying on almost every US politician. This includes placing bugs around the homes of almost all of them, especially if one is caught up in a significant struggle. As a result, we were able to overhear the conversation between Wieckowski, Valle and Tom Blalock. Here's how it went:



Robert Wieckowski



Richard Valle



Tom Blalock

They got ahold of Blalock fairly late at night. Blalock opened the door and asked, “What are you guys doing here at this time of night? What happened? Somebody else get killed?”

Wieckowski. “Nothing like that, but we have to talk.”

Blalock: “Cant this wait till tomorrow?”

Valle: “No, it can't wait. We need to talk, and we need to talk now. You going to invite us in, or we going to stand here on the doorstep?”

The voices faded a bit until another bug, somewhere else in the house, picked them up.

Wieckowski: “Look, Bob, you are being completely unreasonable. What are you, some sort of true believer? You've got to settle this.”

Blalock: “Look, we have these people on the run. Their negotiators have already caved in on almost everything. Not only that, but we've got all the major papers and news channels in our pocket and they've done a number on the unions. The public is more with us than ever before.”

Valle: “They were, but you guys really screwed up when you let that train run over those two guys of yours. What the hell were you thinking?”

Blalock: “Yeah, that was unfortunate. Bad P.R. But people will forget it soon enough and they'll go back to blaming the unions for being stuck in traffic. I'm telling you, we got them on the run.”

Wieckowski: “Bob, get real here. This isn't Texas or Georgia. These unions have some clout around here. We get major donations from them. And we're not some Republican lunatics who think we can just roll over everybody. Sometimes you have to take what you can get and wait to get the rest till later. Look at it like this: We accomplished a lot for you guys. We got those negotiators to agree to major concessions. True, it wasn't everything you wanted, but that's how the game is played. Now you got to settle and work on getting the rest – and more even – over time.”

Blalock: “Look, fellas, first thing: I'm not at all happy that you came knocking on my door at this time of night, so I'm not really in the mood. Second, I got my backers – some contractors and some real estate guys – and they want me to go all the way. So that's what I'm going to do. These guys, they've been talking with our negotiator, Hock, and he's telling them that every strike recently has been defeated. He's saying, 'all you got to do is wait them out. The union – they're like a headless horseman. Their leaders have done nothing to prepare them for a strike. They're not doing any fund raising to help their members through a longer strike.'

“He's kind of right. True, that unfortunate accident where a couple of our guys got killed set us back, but we can overcome that. All we got to do is wait them out. And we've already got a bunch of busses running. I believe we'll have a few trains up and running in a week or so. Not a lot, but enough to make some of those union hot heads start to worry. We've got them on the run, why not go for the jugular?”

Wieckowski: “I understand what he's saying, but things are different. You have some good allies in those unions. Do you really want to weaken them? Do you really want some of those hotheads running against them the next time the unions hold elections?” You see what happened with AC Transit? Those guys voted down their contract twice. Not once. Twice. And there's already something stirring at BART. You go for broke here, you're liable to lose the best friends you have in SEIU and ATU. You see they already had to put one member off the negotiating committee cause she was against what you've gotten so far. And that caused a shit storm. You keep going like this, I don't know if those people will be able to control things much longer.”

Valle: “Look, Tom, you're near the end of your career. You've got a lot of accomplishments under your belt. But now, with this strike, a lot of shit is being stirred up. You see those articles in the East Bay Express about how our friends in real estate are getting away with murder, making a killing when BART opens up a new station and not having to pay a dime in taxes? You want that stuff to keep getting out? It's going to throw a monkey wrench in everything you've worked so hard for, everything you want to be remembered for.”

Blalock: “Look, what you say makes a lot of sense. But I've got some young hotheads on this Board. They think they can make a name for themselves with the right people. They think they can go a lot further if they hang tough on this thing.”

Valle: “Well, Tom, they voted for you as president of the board. You got some clout with them. You simply have to explain the political realities to these guy. You explain to them that we all tap into the same money tree, and a lot of our big donors are not happy with what's happening here. They want a well-funded campaign against them next time they run? They want to go further in this racket? Then they better get on board. It's okay to have one or two, like Mallett for instance, vote against this contract. But you've simply got to get the majority in line. Now, do you think you can do that for us, or do we have to go around you?”

Blalock mumbled something inaudible at this point.

As they were walking away, they could be overheard saying to each other:

Wieckowski: “I think we convinced him. What do you think?”

Valle: “I think so. You see how his expression changed when we asked what he wants to be remembered for? Only thing is, can he convince those young hotheads on the board?”

Wieckowski: “I think we'll be okay. Don't forget, Blalock isn't alone. We got Gavin working the phones for us, and Quan will be back soon. She's going to help. These young guys just have to learn. They think they can be another damn Scott Walker over there in Wisconsin.”



*Wisconsin Governor
Scott Walker*

Valle: “Well, this isn't Wisconsin and they're not Scott Walker. There's a reason we got our Party here and they got theirs in Wisconsin or Texas or wherever. The Republicans can do their thing there in Wisconsin, but it won't fly here in the Bay area. The way they're going, they're going to upset the whole apple cart.”

And with that, the BART Board of Directors approved the contract.