

That's not fair



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“Time Enough at Last” is an episode of the 1950s television series “The Twilight Zone.” The episode tells the story of Henry Bemis, played by Burgess Meredith, who loves books, yet is surrounded by those who would prevent him from reading them.

“Witness Mr. Henry Bemis, a charter member in the fraternity of dreamers. A bookish little man whose passion is the printed page, but who is conspired against by a bank president and a wife and a world full of tongue-cluckers and the unrelenting hands of a clock. But in just a moment, Mr. Bemis will enter a world without bank presidents or wives or clocks or

anything else. He’ll have a world all to himself...without anyone.”

Henry takes his lunch break in the bank’s vault, where his reading will not be disturbed. Moments after he sees a newspaper headline, which reads “H-Bomb Capable of Total Destruction,” an enormous explosion outside the bank violently shakes the vault, knocking Bemis unconscious. After regaining consciousness and recovering the thick glasses required for him to see, Bemis emerges from the vault to find the bank demolished and everyone in it dead.

Leaving the bank, he sees that the entire city has also been destroyed, and realizes that a nuclear war has devastated Earth, but that his being in the vault has saved him. Finding himself totally alone in a shattered world with food to last him a lifetime, Bemis sees the ruins of the public library in the distance. Investigating, he finds that the books are still intact and readable; all the books he could ever hope for are his for the reading, and (as he gazes upon a huge fallen face of a clock) learns that he has all the time in the world to read them without interruption. Just as he bends down to pick up the first book, he stumbles, and his glasses fall off and shatter. In shock, he picks up the broken remains of the glasses he is virtually blind without, and says, “That’s not fair. That’s not fair at all.”

Eddie Ryder is a city letter carrier, and a proud non-member of the union. He considers the dues-paying members suckers, and is very comfortable enjoying the wages, hours and working conditions that have been negotiated for by the union. Each night, Eddie meticulously counts out 78 cents, which is the cost of being an NALC member, and

chants, “78 cents for me, none for them....”

Eddie doesn’t like hearing about union events and feels left out of the rallies, fundraisers or social events that his co-workers seem to celebrate. He would like to just be left alone and wishes all this union stuff would just go away. Returning home one evening following dinner at a fast-food place, Eddie feels a little queasy and turns in early. He awakens the next day and feels something is amiss, although he can’t put his finger on it. He readies himself for work and another 78-cent victory.

Entering the post office, a bizarro world awaits. One where there is not, and never has been, a union. Eddie clocks in at \$9.40 an hour, and glances at a sign reminding him that his generous employer has decided to pay above the \$7.25 minimum wage. He heads to his hold-down, but there is no such thing as a hold-down without a collective-bargaining agreement. Eddie is told at the supervisor’s desk to shape up. He protests when given an undesirable assignment; however, seniority carries no weight without a contract. Eddie begins to feel ill, and puts in to go home sick. The supervisor tells Eddie not to bother coming back; there is no job security. Paid time

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off—no such thing. And while Eddie may qualify for health benefits, he can’t afford them. He asks for representation and is told there is none. “That’s not fair. That’s not fair at all!” Eddie cries.