

# Forced-Unionism Abuses Exposed

The facts Big Labor bosses would rather you didn't hear about.

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*Compulsory unionism breeds corruption. In each issue of "Exposed," the National Right to Work Committee will highlight yet another example of union-boss abuse spawned and perpetuated by Big Labor's government-granted privilege to force workers to pay union dues, or be fired.*

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## **Will John Kerry Distance Himself From Scandalous Teamster Hierarchy?**

Minnesota tractor-trailer driver Brent Lindberg is a flesh-and-blood example of the "hard-working Americans" who are a staple of modern American political rhetoric, especially in presidential election years.

After 22 years with his firm, Lindberg learned last December that his future retirement benefits were being cut back and his health-care premiums raised.

The benefit cutbacks and premium hikes, which are affecting 380,000 workers and their families, as well, are substantial. For example, employees who retire at age 56 or younger will now pay \$510 a month for individual health benefits, and \$1020 for couples. Before the plan revision, they paid \$150 to \$200 a month.

Lindberg and other drivers were naturally upset about the news. First, they asked pension-fund trustees for access to the quarterly reports on its finances, so they could investigate for themselves whether the cuts are justified and whether the fund had been mismanaged. They got stonewalled. Eventually, they hired an attorney and redirected their request to the fund's administrator. On April 26, they got their answer: No.

"That pension fund is basically our money," Lindberg pointed out last month. "If you had your own investment manager, they would certainly explain to you what's going on, and that's simply not happening."

The company pension fund trustees' callous indifference to worried employees' pleas seems like something that would make Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry's blood boil. Except it's not a company pension fund – it's the Teamster union hierarchy's notorious Central States Pension Fund (CSPF) that's slashing benefits and withholding information.

And Kerry is apparently too busy gratefully accepting endorsements, PAC contributions, and, most important, forced union dues-funded "in-kind" support from the bosses of the Teamster

union and its affiliates to feel any outrage about the maltreatment of Brent Lindberg and hundreds of thousands of other Teamster-"represented" employees.

Together with fellow UPS driver Tommy Burke, a North Carolinian, and Michael Brady, a dispatch clerk at Roadway Express in Toledo, Ohio, Lindberg filed a federal suit last month to get the CSPF's financial records released.

After two international Teamster Presidents, Jimmy Hoffa and Roy Williams, were convicted of misusing CSPF assets, the fund was put under the supervision of court-appointed administrators in 1982. But local Teamster bosses still select fully half of the CSPF trustees, and many members of the two Teamster selection boards are also on the payroll of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT). They thus draw multiple union salaries and pensions.

Nevertheless, Teamster czar Jim Hoffa, Jimmy Hoffa's son, incredibly maintains that the union has no involvement in the suit, even though he and the CSPF's union trustees could obviously have averted it by waiving their (legally suspect) confidentiality deal with administrators.

And as long as Hoffa and his fellow Teamster bosses keep the CSPF's financial records secret, workers may rationally worry that its balance sheet is continuing to deteriorate.

If Hoffa were the CEO of a major corporation, Kerry would likely be excoriating him in his campaign stump speeches. Hoffa would be an especially tempting target for Kerry, since until recently the Teamster boss was actively courted by the Bush Administration, which repeatedly sought his counsel on energy policy and labor appointments.

And the CSPF lawsuit isn't the only scandalous news about the Teamster brass. This spring, Hoffa-appointed union corruption investigator Edwin Stier and his staff of 20 quit to protest alleged interference in their probes by high-ranking Teamster bosses, including Carlow Scalf, Hoffa's executive assistant.

But Hoffa is very different from a CEO in several important regards. For one thing, he has the power to get roughly a million workers fired if they refuse to fork over forced union dues and "fees" averaging \$70 a month or more. Forced dues and "fees" pay for the salaries and benefits of thousands of Teamster officers and professional staff members.

And unlike a CEO, whose priority always has to be ensuring that his or her firm makes money, Hoffa and his lieutenants can without hesitation order hundreds or thousands of paid staff members to provide "volunteer" assistance to a political candidate for weeks or months at a time during campaign years.

The prospect of receiving countless millions of dollars in unreported, forced dues-funded campaign assistance is obviously sufficient to make Kerry overlook how Teamster bosses are cutting worker pensions and benefits without allowing workers to investigate why, and the fact that, as Stier puts it, "Organized Crime again threatens the union."

The willingness of so many politicians to trade in their integrity for forced-dues electoral support is the biggest union corruption scandal of all. And it won't abate until Congress removes the federal authorization for forced union dues.

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