

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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'Little Kittens Look Good in Frying Pans'

“[T]he last time I checked, we live in the United States of America . . . we are the Land of the Free. Why is it that we should be forced to join a union?”

“If the CNA [California Nurses Association union] is voted in, membership will NOT be voluntary, and YOU WILL have to give them \$80.00 a month whether you like it or not. If the CNA really cared about any of us, then they would let their reputation speak for [itself], but they have no reputation and they have to force you to join them.”

Scott Barnes, a nurse at the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, Calif., posted the words cited above last month on an independent nurses' web site. Barnes was leading ongoing efforts to prevent CNA union officials from seizing monopoly power to negotiate with management over nurses' contracts at Cedars-Sinai.

For taking this courageous stand, Barnes had already been personally vilified in a CNA mailing to his coworkers and subjected to numerous anonymous threatening phone calls. According to a July 2004 decision by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), Barnes, a pet owner and animal lover, received a total of 7-10 such ugly calls in November 2002.

Callers “variously told him to stop f***ing with the Union”; that “little kittens look good in frying pans”; that they would stab his dogs; and that “wouldn't it be terrible if [his] Corgis [the breed of dog Barnes owned] were run over.”

Barnes wasn't the only leader of independent nurses to be threatened. Beginning in August 2002, his colleague Christine Foxon, with whom he had cofounded the independent nurses' group “One Voice, Our Voice” received anonymous calls warning her to “back off” her opposition to the union. According to the NLRB, during the fourth and final call, Foxon was told that the caller “knew that Foxon had two young daughters and that she need to ‘think about [her] family and [her] girls and back off.’”

After one of the threatening calls she received, Foxon dialed “*69” and reached CNA headquarters. The NLRB judge assumed that union agents made all the anonymous threats against Barnes and Foxon, and CNA bosses did not even try to challenge this assumption.

After reviewing the evidence of vicious intimidation by union agents, news of which directly reached dozens of nurses and was also “widely discussed” at Cedars-Sinai, the NLRB decided this summer to overturn the December 2002 election in which the CNA hierarchy was awarded monopoly-bargaining privileges over nurses. The vote had been a narrow 695-627. The NLRB ordered that a new election be held.

Now comes the really extraordinary part of the story. Instead of apologizing for the outrageous actions of its agents, investigating to find out exactly who was culpable, and dismissing anyone who had threatened a Cedars-Sinai employee, the CNA brass launched a new PR campaign. Union officials enlisted the help of prominent Big Labor puppet politicians in California to write letters to Cedars-Sinai nurses attacking the NLRB for ordering a new election!

Union-boss lickspittle Bill Lockyer, California’s attorney general, laughably mischaracterized the detailed testimony of Scott Barnes and Christine Foxon, which was uncontested by union bosses, as the “anonymous and uncorroborated account of one individual.” Lockyer, a likely Democratic candidate for governor in 2006, obviously never so much as cast a glance at the NLRB decision he publicly denounced at CNA union bosses’ behest.

Big Labor Democratic Assemblyman Paul Koretz’s bombastic letter denouncing the decision as “founded on alleged [sic] . . . claims of one individual” was similarly inaccurate.

Unfortunately for the CNA brass, their summer propaganda campaign backfired with nurses at Cedars-Sinai. Employee Teresa Schmitt apparently spoke for many others when she wrote on the “One Voice, Our Voice” web site in September: “After the way the union misrepresented Cedars . . . , I would be embarrassed to be associated with people who would make up such lies.”

In mid-October, CNA bosses finally announced they were giving up their scheme to obtain monopoly-bargaining power over Cedars-Sinai nurses and withdrew from the second election.

Principled and persistent employees at a Los Angeles hospital won this battle. Unfortunately, the people of California remain under the misrule of cynical union-label politicians like Bill Lockyer and Paul Koretz, whose disregard for the facts in labor disputes is outweighed only by their contempt for workers’ personal freedom.

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