

Forced-Unionism Abuses Exposed

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

National Right to Work Committee • 8001 Braddock Road • Springfield, Va. 22160
www.nrtwc.org • (703) 321-9820 • (703) 321-7143 (fax)

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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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Union Boss Clearly Still Believes Workers Shouldn't Get to Vote on Unionization Because 'They Don't Understand Democracy'

More than three decades ago, union boss Dolores Huerta, then the second-ranking officer for Cesar Chavez' United Farm Workers (UFW) union, openly expressed her contempt for the workers she purported to "represent" in explaining to California legislators why the UFW opposed secret-ballot votes on unionization:

"They [farm workers] don't understand what an election is. They don't understand democracy," said Ms. Huerta in 1971.

Mr. Chavez and Ms. Huerta vehemently opposed farm workers' right to vote over whether the UFW brass would wield "exclusive" (monopoly) bargaining power to negotiate their terms of employment, and for good reason.

After spending a decade and millions of the AFL-CIO's forced-dues dollars on a so-called "organizing" drive, at the end of the 1960's, the UFW brass had convinced fewer than 1000 of the then-140,000 California grape workers to join the union.

As journalist Ralph de Toledano pointed out in 1972: "It took the blackmail of an illegal grape boycott [in which Mr. Chavez' sympathizers would harass supermarket clerks by checking out big grocery orders, then refusing to buy anything from a store selling "scab" grapes] to force the growers, facing bankruptcy, to sign [a forced-unionism] contract with him."

Since the early seventies, as she has striven with mixed success to foist union monopoly bargaining on countless other groups of employees, Ms. Huerta has discovered, time and again, that it isn't just farm workers who "don't understand democracy" and, therefore, can't be trusted to cast a secret-ballot vote correctly.

Ms. Huerta's latest targets are the employees of two casinos in Coachella Valley, Calif., that are owned by the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians.

To bolster their efforts to obtain monopoly-bargaining privileges over the casinos' employees, Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE) union officials have set up a front group, the so-called "Coachella Valley Commission on Workplace Fairness." And Ms. Huerta is a high-profile member of this group.

Together with other union front groups, Ms. Huerta's Coachella Valley outfit is demanding that the tribe abandon resistance to signing a forced-unionism contract, without even giving employees an opportunity to express their own opinions out from under the eyes of both managers and union organizers.

Instead, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, HERE union organizers are allegedly repeatedly phoning employees, trailing them home, and knocking at their doors at all hours in order to wear them down until they sign so-called "union authorization cards." Such cards, they claim, render any secret-ballot election unnecessary.

California HERE official Jack Gribbon admits that the union's efforts to browbeat a majority of the roughly 500 employees at the two casinos into signing "authorization cards" is a "war of attrition" that may "go on for years."

Big Labor bosses' near-monolithic opposition to secret-ballot elections over unionization is breathtakingly hypocritical.

While Right to Work proponents believe that union affiliation is a personal, not a collective, decision, and thus that the individual's freedom to support or refuse to support a union cannot be nullified by his coworkers' votes, Big Labor bosses do not agree. Union propaganda repeatedly invokes "majority rule" as a pretext for firing employees who refuse to join or pay dues to a union.

Of course, forced-unionism apologists' application of "majority rule" is highly selective. Not surprisingly, they do not believe it's okay to fire a worker who chooses to join and pay dues to a union simply because a majority of his fellow workers wish to remain union-free!

Furthermore, as the Coachella Valley dispute illustrates, union bosses' preferred method of ascertaining whether a "majority" of workers favor unionization is totally alien to standard democratic practices in other areas of American life.

No one seriously claims that "authorization cards" collected only by partisans of one candidate, with no secret ballot, would be a fair way of electing a private club officer or a school board member. Yet this is Big Labor's favored method of nullifying nonunion employees' freedom of association.

Instead of ridiculously claiming that "authorization cards" are the most "fair" way of holding an election, perhaps today's Big Labor bosses should just follow Ms. Huerta's 1971 line: Workers "don't understand democracy." That would at least have the virtue of being a candid expression of the union hierarchy's opinion.