

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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‘The Only Way We Can Break the Mob Is to Stop Letting Them Get Away With Murder’

The *New York Times* reported June 30 that federal authorities are poised to file a “sweeping civil racketeering lawsuit against the International Longshoremen’s Association [ILA].”

According to federal prosecutors in Brooklyn, ILA President John Bowers, Secretary-Treasurer Robert Gleason, Executive Vice President Albert Cernadas, and two other ILA officials conspired with Gambino and Genovese Crime Family mobsters to rig the union’s 2000 elections. Top union officials’ alleged goal was to ensure that a longtime Genovese associate would capture the ILA presidency upon Bowers’ retirement.

Prosecutors also charge that Bowers, Gleason, Cernadas, ILA Assistant General Organizer Harold Daggett, and ILA Vice President Arthur Coffey conspired with Gambino and Genovese members and associates “to award union welfare and pension benefit fund contracts to the mob.”

Cernadas, Daggett, and Coffey already face a federal racketeering trial for allegedly diverting hundreds of thousands of dollars from workers’ health and welfare funds into Genovese treasuries between 1996 and 2004. Daggett and Coffey also stand to be tried on charges that they extorted millions of dollars from workers over whom they wielded monopoly-bargaining privileges and from waterfront businesses in New York, New Jersey, and Florida.

Of course, when cargo workers and companies are forced to make payoffs and funnel kickbacks to ILA officials and their mob buddies in order to do business on the waterfront, the companies eventually pass on the illicit costs in the form of higher prices.

The costs passed on to consumers are substantial. Back in 1989, Florida law-enforcement officials estimated that at least 12.5% of shippers’ freight revenue was diverted into Organized Crime coffers, most often by union bagmen.

Given that published reports of mob control over ILA union locals go back at least six decades, and that dozens of ILA officers have been indicted in recent years on racketeering-related charges, and that ILA corruption is deeply detrimental to the interests of workers, businesses, and the public, why is it allowed to continue?

A lucid answer to this question was furnished more than half-a-century ago by Father Barry, a fictional character closely based on a real Jesuit priest who in the 1940's took up the cause of the dock workers victimized by the ILA brass and the mob.

In the 1954 Academy Award-winning picture *On the Waterfront*, Father Barry, as played by actor Karl Malden, tells the longshoremen: "The only way we can break the mob is to stop letting them get away with murder."

The immediate context of this famous line relates to workers' personal responsibility not to give into fear or allow themselves to be compromised by evildoers.

But it clearly also applies to the U.S. Congress, which since the 1930's has aided and abetted mob infiltration of the ILA and a number of other unions by promoting Big Labor monopoly control over employment.

Federal labor law authorizes so-called "exclusive" representation, empowering union bosses to speak for all workers in a "bargaining unit," regardless of the workers' personal desires. It also authorizes and promotes compulsory-unionism schemes under which workers are forced to pay union dues or fees, or be fired.

Government-imposed union monopoly bargaining and forced union dues make it very difficult for honest employees to combat corruption. In the ILA, corruption includes not only the many infamous cases in which union bosses have acted as mob partners, but also more prosaic rip-offs like the alleged scheme in the port of Boston that is now being investigated by Massachusetts Attorney General Thomas Reilly.

Reilly's office believes that ILA bigwigs in Massachusetts have for years padded payrolls with their own children and with those of favored workers. Investigators contend that children as young as two-and-a-half-years-old have begun accumulating bogus seniority in order to qualify for higher pay once they are old enough to join the union!

It's time for Congress to stop letting the ILA/Gambino/Genovese syndicate get away with murder. To launch an effective, albeit belated, clean-up of ILA boss-controlled ports, Congress should pass the National Right to Work Act (S. 370/H.R. 500), which would repeal all federally-imposed compulsory union dues and fees.

This bill would empower honest workers in the maritime and other industries to punish corruption by refusing to join the union in the first place or quitting the union and cutting off their financial support. And workers who are so empowered could actually begin to "break the mob" that has for decades undermined liberty and the rule of law in many American port cities.

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