

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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'Change to Win' Bosses Linked to 'Reds,' Racketeers, and Forced-Dues Rip Offs

Officials of five international unions who had pulled their assets and forced dues-paying members out of the AFL-CIO union conglomerate formally launched a rival outfit, known as "Change to Win" (CTW), at a raucous inaugural convention in St. Louis September 27. Joining them were officials of two other unions who remain, at least for now, within the AFL-CIO fold.

Convention speeches were a mix of self-congratulation, with union officials unblushingly depicting themselves as the sole source of hope for "working men and women," and angry invective. Laborers union kingpin Terry O'Sullivan blasted employers who resist the forced unionization of their employees as "robber barons" and vowed: "We are going to get our hands on their ankles and then up to their throats"

CTW officials and their apologists predict that, through aggressive exploitation of union organizers' privileges under federal and state labor laws, they will add millions of workers to Organized Labor's ranks. Perhaps they will. But, so far, CTW has yet to explain convincingly what it has to offer workers that the AFL-CIO doesn't have.

A review of the backgrounds of the three top CTW officials doesn't inspire confidence. Arguably, they are representative of the worst of the AFL-CIO hierarchy.

Start with CTW's third-in-command, Executive Director Greg Tarpinian. Tarpinian is the longtime head of the Labor Research Association (LRA), and has held an executive position with this organization at least since the mid-eighties. New York teacher union activist Leo Casey has described the LRA as a "primary front group of the Communist Party [U.S.A.] with regard to its labor movement work." Tarpinian himself is believed to be a former Party member.

As recently as 1989, LRA sponsored an awards dinner for "leaders in the labor movement." Among the "labor leaders" who attended were Yuri Antipov, then first secretary of the Soviet Mission to the UN and a suspected KGB agent, and Maria Delgado Ramirez, first secretary of the Cuban Mission to the UN. The dinner was endorsed, reported journalist Arnold Beichman, by the "100 percent Moscow-controlled World Federation of Unions."

CTW's number-two man, Secretary-Treasurer Edgar Romney, is a top boss of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees, which merged last year with the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees to form UNITE HERE.

Unlike Tarpinian, Romney is not known for his "Red" connections. But he is, unfortunately, linked to New York City racketeers.

In the 1990's, Romney was secretary-treasurer of UNITE Local 23-25, based in mid-town Manhattan. In April 1997, FBI agents raided Local 23-25, and federal authorities accused UNITE officials of colluding with Lucchese family mobsters who controlled the New York garment industry through "extortion, murder, torture and arson," as the Washington, D.C.-based National Legal and Policy Center recently recalled.

The Labor Department prepared an affidavit charging that Romney directed "Local 23-25 business agents and organizers to put pressure on companies with the threat of unionization or strike and thereafter [withdraw] the threat when an agreement with an organized crime family is made." Romney allegedly thereby facilitated "organized crime control of Garment Center companies."

Luckily for Romney and other Local 23-25 officials, the feds never intercepted his phone conversations with Lucchese lawyer Irwin Schlacter. In 1998, Schlacter and several mobsters were indicted in connection with the scheme, but UNITE officials got off the hook. Of course, Romney is innocent until proven guilty, but he hardly seems suitable for the role of Organized Labor's knight in shining armor.

Heading the CTW is Anna Burger, second-in-command of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). In 2004, she played a central role in the SEIU hierarchy's admitted expenditure of \$65 million, mostly union dues and fees that employees are forced to pay as a condition of employment, on partisan politics. At the Democratic National Convention in Boston last summer, Burger bluntly stated that the "SEIU is working every day to make sure that John Kerry is our next president."

Well aware that the vast majority of workers don't want to fork over forced dues for politics, CTW spokesmen are now claiming their federation won't be as intensely political or as partisan as the AFL-CIO. With Anna Burger in charge, that's hard to believe.

As they find out about who's running the CTW, many workers will undoubtedly conclude they don't need to be protected by the bosses of the federation and its affiliated unions as much as they need protection from Burger, Romney, Tarpinian and their cohorts. The emergence of the CTW demonstrates once again, the growing need for national Right to Work legislation that bars the firing of employees for refusal to join or pay dues or fees to an unwanted union.

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