

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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Guess Who Wins Big as New Jersey Taxes Spiral?

This spring many Garden Staters are brandishing metaphorical pitchforks and spades at Big Labor politician Jon Corzine, their new governor. They accuse Mr. Corzine of lying to them.

Last year, Mr. Corzine successfully campaigned as a tax cutter. A *Wall Street Journal* editorial recently recalled that, in October 2005, Mr. Corzine publicly vowed: "I'm not considering raising taxes. It's not on my agenda. We have a very high-rate tax structure. I'm not considering it."

But in late March, the Big Labor-backed governor unveiled a budget that jacks up state spending by 9%, or \$2.8 billion, even though spending already increased by \$6 billion in the past four years. To pay for this bloated budget, Mr. Corzine proposes a hefty 16% hike in the state sales tax rate, already tied for 10th highest in the U.S., and taxing services as well as goods. He also would impose new corporate and commercial property taxes and hike taxes on cigarettes, alcohol and some cars.

In a March 30 newspaper article, South Jersey writer Kristen Coppock observed that "no column of mine has ever generated more responses than the one I wrote last week about Gov. Corzine's proposed state budget." She quoted several outraged letters, featuring comments like the following: "The state is sucking the life out of us . . ." "How sad that our governor promised he wouldn't do everything he now will be doing." "That state [N.J.] is ridiculous. It just doesn't make any sense. I have to be a full-blown welfare recipient [to get help]." "When will living in New Jersey get easier? That's why I moved to North Carolina. What a relief."

But even as ordinary citizens vent their frustration and many contemplate leaving the state, New Jersey's so-called "Fairness Alliance" is applauding the governor. "The Corzine budget makes a good start . . ." said a spokesman for the "Alliance." This group's only complaint is that Mr. Corzine's tax hike isn't steep enough! It recently recommended that he push for a \$2.3 billion tax hike instead of a \$1.5 billion one.

Just what is this “Fairness Alliance,” and why does it like taxes so much?

A visit to the group’s web site shows that it consists largely of top bosses of New Jersey councils of the AFL-CIO and New Jersey affiliates of the National Education Association (NEA), the Communications Workers of America (CWA), the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the Teamsters, the United Steel Workers (USWA), and a host of other unions.

Union officials have a far greater interest in increasing taxation and expanding the size of government than any other constituency. New Jersey’s experience is typical of many states.

Between 1999 and 2004, according to the Bureau of National Affairs, the number of private-sector Garden State employees who are forced by law to accept union representation and pay union dues or fees as a job condition fell by 11%, from 451,000 to 401,000. At the same time, the number of government employees across the state who are corralled into unions increased by 16%, from 356,000 to 412,000.

In short, the higher the share of New Jersey employment that consists of government employees, the greater the flow of compulsory dues and fees (roughly \$850 per full-time employee) into Big Labor’s coffers.

Since union officials now wield monopoly-bargaining control over 65% of the public employees in New Jersey, government union lobbyists already represent a formidable army at the New Jersey Capitol in Trenton. (Some of the most intimidating troops come from nominally “private-sector” unions like the CWA and the Teamsters.) Therefore, the New Jersey Legislature is very likely within the next few months to pass a tax increase at least as great as the one proposed by Mr. Corzine, despite his scheme’s evident unpopularity with the public.

To stop the destructive trend of New Jersey’s taxes spiraling upward and its private economy spiraling downward, the state needs to revoke Big Labor’s monopoly-bargaining power over government employees and its forced-dues power over all employees.

This would mark a dramatic shift in direction. And for the moment it may seem impossible. But more and more New Jersey citizens know their state is in serious trouble. Between 1994 and 2004, its 25-34 year-old population fell by a shocking 13.4%! At some point in the not-too-distant future, people who are fed up with the dismal status quo may topple the forced-unionism empire that now rules over the Garden State.

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