

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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‘There Will Be No Other Bids: This Is My Union Hall’

During the six years he ruled the largest Teamster union local in Houston, Texas, Charles Crawley was known to union staff and the union rank-and-file as “King Kong Chuck.” The nickname was not affectionate. The high-handed Mr. Crawley was reviled by union staff members for secretly listening in on their phone calls and expecting them to clear away the tobacco spittle-filled Styrofoam cups he was known to leave all over the headquarters of Local 988.

But it turns out that snoopiness and poor tobacco-chewing etiquette were the least of Mr. Crawley’s offenses. Last month, a federal jury convicted him on four counts alleging that he had rigged a union election and successfully solicited a kickback from a union vendor.

As the *Houston Chronicle* reported December 12, the jury had heard testimony that, in 2002, when Mr. Crawley was taking bids for work on a new \$1.7 million union hall, he told a union vendor seeking to install the telephone system “that he would have the winning bid in return for a \$20,000 kickback.” The prosecution charged that Mr. Crawley had assured the vendor: “There will be no other bids: This is my union hall.” Subsequently, the jury found Mr. Crawley guilty of arranging the kickback and of falsifying the voucher for the telephone installation.

Prosecutors also charged Mr. Crawley with rigging his re-election campaign for Local 988 president in the fall of 2002 by “mailing 362 phony absentee ballots in the names of union members he believed would not vote,” according to the *Chronicle*.

Unfortunately for him, 36 did vote, and thus uncovered evidence of fraud that he couldn’t conceal or explain away. An FBI lab found Mr. Crawley’s “prints on one of the phony ballots,” and another union official testified that he had helped Mr. Crawley “stuff the phony ballots into envelopes.”

Federal prosecutor Vincent Falvo told the jury in closing arguments that, by convicting Mr. Crawley, it would send a clear message that Local 988 “is the members’ union,” not Mr.

Crawley's or any other union official's. But history casts doubt on Mr. Falvo's optimism. The last Local 988 president before Mr. Crawley, Richard Hammond, was ousted from office and sentenced to four years in prison for embezzling union funds.

Moreover, when Mr. Crawley took over, he was widely hailed as a "reformer" who would clean up the union.

The sad fact is that federal labor law, which empowers union officials like Mr. Crawley to act as the "exclusive" (monopoly) bargaining agent over all the employees in a government-delineated "bargaining unit," including union members and nonmembers alike, is not conducive to membership control of unions or honest union governance.

Texas's Right to Work law bars the firing of workers for refusal to pay dues or fees to an unwanted union. But federally-imposed monopoly bargaining authorizes union officials to represent the only "employee" perspective in contract negotiations.

The vast majority of employees, including the over 4000 long-haul truckers as well as UPS, Yellow Freight, Roadway, bakery and car-hauling local cargo truckers in Local 988, are thus understandably reluctant to oppose or even question the union. Crooked Big Labor bosses like "King Kong Chuck" take advantage of that.

As law professor (and one-time unpaid union organizer) Sylvester Petro once explained, government-granted privileges like monopoly bargaining "draw *to* unions the worst kinds of men, and they drive *from* unions the best kinds of men."

That's why the National Right to Work Committee is leading efforts nationwide to stop the spread of state-level monopoly-bargaining laws, which restrict the freedom of state and local government employees.

And that's also why the Committee has long fought for repeal of the monopoly-bargaining provisions in the National Labor Relations Act and the Railway Labor Act, which together authorize and promote union monopoly bargaining over private-sector employees in all 50 states.

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