

# 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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## **Top Union Bosses Survey Michigan Devastation, Declare: 'Forced Unionism Didn't Do It'**

On Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., union lobbyists and union-label politicians who are pushing for enactment of legislation that would make it even easier for union officials to acquire "exclusive" bargaining power over employees often claim that increasing the share of employees under Big Labor control is a tonic for the entire economy.

Forced-unionism propagandists insist that both nonunion and union employees benefit when the percentage of employees who are unionized goes up.

No wonder, then, that economically distressed Michigan, where Organized Labor wields "exclusive" (monopoly) power to bargain with employers over the pay, benefits, and working conditions of a higher share of private-sector employees than in all but one other state in the continental U.S., is such an uncomfortable subject for union bosses.

From 2001 to 2006, even as private-sector employment across the U.S. increased by roughly 3.5 million jobs, private-sector jobs fell by more than a fraction of a percent only in Hurricane Katrina-ravaged Louisiana and a handful of heavily unionized states: Massachusetts, Illinois, Ohio and Michigan. Michigan's 5.3% private-sector job loss was by far the worst of any state's.

In late May, the international presidents of two large unions, Jim Hoffa of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) and Ron Gettelfinger of the United Autoworkers (UAW), publicly acknowledged that Michigan's economy is in the tank. As Mr. Hoffa told Detroit radio news anchor Jayne Bower, "There's plants everywhere closed down."

Neither Mr. Hoffa nor Mr. Gettelfinger was brazen enough to claim that, if Big Labor weren't so powerful in Michigan, the economy would be even worse.

Instead, sounding rather like Bart "I didn't do it" Simpson, Mr. Hoffa and Mr. Gettelfinger sought to put the blame on everyone but themselves. Mr. Hoffa churlishly told Ms. Bower:

“Everybody knows it’s ridiculous” to say that forced unionism is responsible for Michigan’s plight.

“Who left Michigan? Who caused the unemployment?” he asked rhetorically. Mr. Hoffa’s convenient answer was that “business,” acting with ill-defined nefarious motives, did so. He never stopped to consider whether business managers might have a moral obligation to their shareholders and, ultimately, their employees to earn a good return on their capital, and base their decisions to remain or not in Big Labor-controlled Michigan with this obligation in mind.

Speaking at the Detroit Regional Chamber’s Mackinac Policy Conference (where Mr. Hoffa also spoke), Mr. Gettelfinger caustically referred to managers of the bankrupt, Troy, Mich.-based Delphi corporation, where tens of thousands of UAW-“represented” workers’ jobs are now on the line in union-management talks, as “swine dining at the trough.”

And like Mr. Hoffa, Mr. Gettelfinger suggested, without evidence, that Michigan’s failure to attract and retain private-sector jobs is largely a result of the fact that the health-care system in the U.S. is not yet completely socialized. Neither Mr. Hoffa nor Mr. Gettelfinger offered any explanation why, if that’s so, that all the large European countries with full-fledged socialized medicine have far worse records in private-sector job creation than the U.S. as a whole does.

It’s a positive step that even Mr. Hoffa and Mr. Gettelfinger accept that the second most heavily unionized (in the private sector) of the 49 continental states is also now (in Mr. Hoffa’s words) “one of the worst states” economically. But real progress depends on recognition by elected officials that the strong, long-term negative correlation across the nation between union monopoly bargaining and economic growth is no coincidence.

By granting union officials the special privilege of offering the only “employee” perspective in negotiations over a firm’s pay and benefit package and work rules, the monopoly-bargaining system promotes adversarial labor management relations. And the resulting strife undermines productivity and innovation.

Bob King, the UAW union vice president for organizing, acknowledged this in April 2006: “We [the UAW hierarchy] believe adversarial relationships drive manufacturing jobs out of the country.” Furthermore, in non-Right to Work states like Michigan, where forced union dues are legal, union bosses use a large chunk of the money they rake in to bankroll tax-and-spend, regulation-happy politicians at the state and local levels as well as the federal level. Fewer jobs that pay well and offer good benefits are created as a consequence.

That’s why enactment of a Michigan Right to Work law is the first key step to getting Michigan back on track. And repeal of the federal authorization for union monopoly bargaining is the ultimate remedy for the Wolverine State’s woes.

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