

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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Big Labor U.S. Representatives Move To Protect Crooked Union Bosses

"If you are against labor racketeers, then you are against the working man."

The celebrated newspaperman H.L. Mencken coined this "syllogism" many years ago to mock the loony logic corrupt union officials use to divert attention from their misdeeds. However, judging by their recent move to cut by roughly 20% the White House's proposed Fiscal Year 2008 budget for the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Labor Management Standards (OLMS), a clear majority of congressmen and women see no irony in Mencken's "syllogism."

In fact, the 237 U.S. House members who voted July 17 to kill an amendment that, while appropriating funds well below the White House request, would at least have kept the OLMS at its current level apparently would extend the "syllogism" to cover union embezzlement and fraud as well as racketeering!

The OLMS's current budget of \$47.7 million is quite modest for an agency that bears sole responsibility for overseeing the financial integrity of unions with combined annual receipts of more than \$20 billion. And the OLMS budget constitutes just 0.4% of all Labor Department discretionary spending.

Nevertheless, as soon as GOP Congressman John Kline of Minnesota offered an amendment to the FY 2008 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Bill (H.R. 3043) to restore funding for the OLMS to its FY 2007 level, Congressman Dave Obey, the Democrat who chairs the Appropriations Committee, launched into a preposterous song and dance about the OLMS's current "rich" funding. The OLMS, claimed Obey, had to be stopped from "starving" the Labor Department's other programs, which after all now take in a mere \$11.65 billion of the department's \$11.7 billion discretionary budget!

Subsequently, Rhode Island Democrat Pat Kennedy, son of Ted and zealous follower of the family tradition of carrying water for Big Labor, basically repeated Mencken's mock "syllogism," except the congressman was dead serious.

House members who want to increase or even merely maintain funding for the OLMS are "going after . . . people who are trying to earn a living," blustered Kennedy. And all but 8 of the 229 House Democrats who voted on the Kline amendment, plus 16 Big Labor-appeasing Republicans, expressed their agreement with Kennedy by voting to cut the OLMS budget.

If the OLMS cut in H.R. 3043 is also approved by the Senate and signed into law by President Bush, it will hinder the agency's ability to investigate and assist in Justice Department prosecutions of union officials who, as Pat Kennedy sees it, "try to earn a living" by embezzling union dues and fees that workers are forced under federal law to fork over as a condition of employment.

Even at its current funding level, there's no reasonable doubt that the OLMS is unable to detect a major share of Big Labor embezzlement and fraud due to a lack of resources and staff.

Over the past six years, the OLMS's audit program has helped the Justice Department obtain nearly 800 convictions of crooked union bosses and their cohorts. Yet in 2006, the OLMS had the staff to audit only 4.6% of the unions that are required to file federal disclosure forms.

While the OLMS deserves plaudits for investigating major union scandals like the Washington Teacher Union \$5 million embezzlement case, which ended in multiple convictions, one can't help but wonder how many other rogue union bosses are still getting away with theft and living the high life at forced dues-paying workers' expense because the OLMS has never gotten around to auditing their unions.

Clearly, the late U.S. Sen. John McClellan's (D-Ark.) dictum that compulsory unionism "and corruption go hand in hand" is just as true today as it was half-a-century ago when McClellan chaired a special Capitol Hill committee dedicated to investigating the crimes of shady union bosses and other miscreants who similarly preyed on honest workers.

And, as the recent House vote on OLMS funding illustrates, compulsory unionism corrupts not just labor-management relations, but also politicians who rely on massive, forced dues-funded "in-kind" campaign support from Big Labor to get elected in the first place and to remain in power.

That's why repealing the federal authorization for forced union dues, as the National Right to Work Committee has long advocated, would strike formidable blows both against union corruption itself and against Big Labor corruption of the political process.

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