

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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Union Bosses' 'Treaty of Tordesillas' Divvies Up Grand Haul of Colorado State Employees

Back in 1494, under intense pressure from Pope Alexander VI not to fight with one another, Portugal, then the world's preeminent naval power, and upstart Spain signed the Treaty of Tordesillas.

The Treaty of Tordesillas, as the useful web site *World History at KMLA* tells us, "divided the world outside Christian Europe into a Portuguese hemisphere, which included the west coast of Africa, already surveyed by Bartolomeo Diaz and others, and a Spanish hemisphere including the Caribbean islands discovered by Columbus." Of course, Spain and Portugal never consulted with the inhabitants of Africa or the Americas about which part of the duopoly, if either, they preferred to have as their ruler.

Early last month, top bosses of the mammoth Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and American Federation of Teachers (AFT) unions signed their own "Treaty of Tordesillas." But instead of divvying up the world, SEIU, AFSCME and AFT kingpins divvied up more than 30,000 state government employees in Colorado.

National union officials signed the legally complicated "partnership agreement," which runs to 14 pages, plus a number of attachments, on November 6, just four days after Big Labor Gov. Bill Ritter had issued an executive order foisting union "exclusive," that is, monopoly, bargaining on Colorado's government employees. The deal sets up a new union conglomerate, known as "Colorado WINS," whose main purposes are to exploit the Ritter order to secure monopoly-bargaining power for itself and lobby for legislation to make the order permanent law.

Under monopoly bargaining, employees lose the individual right to bargain for themselves over their wages, benefits, and work rules, and must allow the agent of a particular union to negotiate in their stead, like it or not.

Moreover, the “Colorado WINS” deal makes it plain that, contrary to the disingenuous claims of the Ritter Administration, union bosses intend to wield their monopoly-bargaining privileges to force state employees who refuse to join a union to fork over forced union “agency” fees in order to keep their jobs.

“Colorado WINS shall establish a dues trust fund and shall make arrangements to have employer-withheld membership dues and agency fees (if applicable) deposited directly into the trust account.” The document also indicates that 50% of the forced dues and fees will go to the SEIU hierarchy, while AFSCME and AFT bosses will get 25% apiece.

Public-sector monopoly bargaining and forced dues give Big Labor both the incentive and the means to lobby for ever-expanding government payrolls, which translate into more forced dues-paying workers. Of course, this leads to ever heavier burdens on taxpayers from all walks of life.

For example, according to data from the nonpartisan, Washington, D.C.-based Tax Foundation, this year the aggregate “Tax Freedom Day” of the seven western states that authorize public-sector forced dues didn’t come until May 5. That’s a full week later than in Colorado and eight days later than the aggregate Tax Freedom Day for the six western states that do not authorize or flat-out prohibit public-sector forced dues.

As the Tax Foundation has explained, Tax Freedom Day is the day when the citizens of a state or country “finally have earned enough money to pay off their total [federal, state and local] tax burden for the year.”

Just as other emerging colonial powers like England, France, and the Dutch Republic opposed the Treaty of Tordesillas, not out of principle but because Portugal and Spain had left them out of the deal, bosses of other unions that have aspirations to get monopoly-bargaining power over Colorado state employees, especially the Colorado Federation of Public Employees and the United Food and Commercial Workers unions, are none too pleased with the “Colorado WINS” deal.

Right to Work proponents in the Centennial State hope that the disagreements among union officials over who will reap the monopoly-bargaining windfall will make it possible for them to forge a coalition in the union-label Colorado Legislature to get the Ritter executive order overturned.

As powerful as the union political machine is, it can’t make ordinary Coloradans support forced unionism. And the cynical lack of concern of the union officials who forged the “Colorado WINS” deal regarding the views of the employees over whom they are seeking power will ultimately help mobilize public support for passage of a state Right to Work law prohibiting all forced union dues and fees.

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