

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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Colorado Union Bosses Make Case For State Right to Work Law

Even as they prepare to spend, together with the national Big Labor political machine, tens of millions of dollars from forced dues-funded union treasuries to defeat a fall ballot initiative that would add a Right to Work amendment to the Colorado Constitution, union officials in Colorado have recently made the strongest possible case for passage of this measure.

The Right to Work proposal, known as Amendment 47, would grant Colorado employees the right to choose whether or not to join or financially support a labor union by stripping union bosses of their government-granted privilege to force employees to pay dues to their union monopoly-bargaining agent as a condition of employment.

So far 22 states have Right to Work laws on the books.

Last month, Ernest Duran, president of Local 7 of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) union, which wields monopoly-bargaining power over more than 23,000 employees in Colorado and Wyoming, effectively admitted in writing that a Right to Work law would spell big trouble for union bosses because it would give more say to the workers they claim to represent.

In a letter to Local 7 members quoted by the *Denver Post's* Al Lewis in his May 23 column, Mr. Duran blurted out: "If this amendment [47] passes, . . . [i]n my opinion, we will enter [all future negotiations] with less than 50 percent of the workers as union members."

Mr. Duran also conceded that in Wyoming, which already has a Right to Work law, fewer than 40% of the workers under UFCW monopoly control are current, dues-paying union members.

Why, when given a choice, do 50% or more of unionized grocery workers choose not to join the union that supposedly "represents" them? There are undoubtedly many reasons.

But clearly many grocery workers agree with the UFCW union dissidents who argue -- on the web site www.ufcwreform.org -- that UFCW bosses' "bargaining tactics have actually reduced the compensation received by rank and file members." Meanwhile, hundreds of UFCW officers and staff members rake-in six figure salaries, derived overwhelmingly from the forced union dues and fees of grocery workers who are barely scraping by.

If half or more of the Local 7-"represented" employees in Colorado don't think union membership is worth the dues it costs, why should Ernest Duran get to collect forced dues and fees from them anyway? The short answer is he shouldn't have that special privilege, and all a Colorado Right to Work law would do is eliminate it -- for him and for other union bosses.

Top bosses of another major Colorado union, the 3200-member Denver Classroom Teachers Association (DCTA/NEA), actually openly tout the fact that they support smaller pay increases for many teachers than the teachers could obtain if they were union-free.

Last month, the Denver Public Schools (DPS) system announced a proposal to hike classroom teacher base salaries by, in the words of the *Rocky Mountain News*, "a jaw-dropping 18 percent" in just one year.

But incredibly, DCTA President Kim Ursetta and her lieutenants have flatly rejected the DPS proposal because a portion of the increase would go, according to the *News*, into "incentive-based pay, such as for those who teach difficult subjects in hard-to-staff schools" and for "teachers who are early in their careers." The DCTA hierarchy is instead insisting on a contract that "funnels less money into incentives."

In short, DCTA bosses are unapologetic about the fact that they are wielding their monopoly-bargaining power to procure substantially lower pay increases for teachers of difficult subjects like math and science, teachers in hard-to-staff schools, and teachers without much seniority than DPS officials want to give them.

Now the question is: How can DCTA and other union officials brazenly continue to claim, without blushing, that "all" employees under union monopoly bargaining "benefit" from such bargaining and should be forced to pay for it?

Experience indicates that Big Labor doesn't embarrass easily, so Coloradans can expect union propagandists to continue repeating, over the next five months, far-fetched claims that don't even jibe with what union officials like Ernest Duran and Kim Ursetta have admitted in public.

But there's no plausible reason for the people of Colorado to give such Big Labor propagandists the time of day.

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