

Forced-Unionism Abuses Exposed

The facts Big Labor bosses would rather you didn't hear about.

National Right to Work Committee® • 8001 Braddock Road • Springfield, Va. 22160
www.nrtwc.org • (703) 321-9820 • (703) 321-7143 (fax)

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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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Andy Stern and Other Service Employees Union Bosses Drop Their Masks

Three years ago this summer, union kingpin Andy Stern engineered the breakaway of his own massive Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and several other large unions from the AFL-CIO union conglomerate.

At that time, the media savvy Mr. Stern exploited public distaste, of which he was clearly well aware, for Big Labor's ongoing massive abuse of workers' forced union dues and fees for politics and lobbying as a means of putting the white hat on himself and the black hat on AFL-CIO chief John Sweeney. Despite the fact that he was at least as guilty of such abuses as the boss of any other AFL-CIO union, Mr. Stern cynically blasted the AFL-CIO for being "too political."

And until relatively recently, reporters for establishment newspapers and TV and radio news shows swallowed Mr. Stern's PR, hook, line and sinker. For example, an April 2006 article appearing in a respected national business publication about "Change to Win (CTW)," Mr. Stern's breakaway union conglomerate, contended that it differs from the AFL-CIO in its "commitment" to "shifting resources from electoral politics"

Of course, union officials' diversion into electioneering efforts of over a billion dollars in union treasury funds, consisting mostly of dues and fees that workers are forced to pay as a condition of employment, every even-numbered year is hardly the only reason the public mistrusts them.

But Mr. Stern and other bosses of CTW-affiliated unions clearly have recognized up to now that their reputation as being "less political" than their AFL-CIO counterparts is very useful for their efforts to seize monopoly-bargaining power over more and more employees. Even as they collectively dumped countless millions of mostly forced-dues dollars into the 2006 federal elections, CTW bosses tried to maintain that illusion.

This year, however, Mr. Stern and company have evidently decided it is time to drop their masks. A June 24 SEIU press release proudly declared that the union hierarchy has budgeted \$85 million from forced dues-laden union treasuries for the 2008 elections. That represents a whopping 31% increase over SEIU officials' reported political war chest in 2004, when the union was still part of the "too political" AFL-CIO.

Moreover, the SEIU brass's political program is unabashedly partisan. Its two principal goals are to "elect Barack Obama" and to elect a Congress that will rubber-stamp union power grabs like "card-check" forced-unionism legislation and also advance the far-left agenda favored by Mr. Stern and his friends on foreign-policy and other issues that have nothing to do with unions.

But SEIU bosses' most dumbfounding admission is their boast, at the SEIU convention in Puerto Rico early last month, that in the future at least "50 percent of the union's organizing budget and 50 percent of its non-organizing staff at the national and local levels will be devoted to" politics and lobbying, gussied up as Mr. Stern's new "Accountability Project."

As the union hierarchy admits, the aims of the "Accountability Project" are simply to elect politicians that SEIU kingpins are confident are "friendly" to the agenda of Andy Stern and his lieutenants, and then to keep up the pressure to ensure those politicians stay "friendly" once they're elected.

What about the hundreds of thousands of SEIU-"represented" workers who couldn't care less about Andy Stern's grandiose plan to, as one Stern groupie puts it, "improve the lives of everyone, union members or not"? If they happen to have a problem with their employer or some other issue that must, under federal or state law, be handled through their union monopoly-bargaining agent, they may well be out of luck.

In order to free up more forced dues-funded union staff time for politics and lobbying, Mr. Stern bade the SEIU delegates at last month's convention in Puerto Rico to institute "call centers" for dealing with union members' questions and concerns. The delegates quickly acquiesced.

SEIU officials apparently calculate that union members who know that they will have to clear the notorious hurdles of a call center in order to have any hope of having their complaint addressed, rather than be able to speak with a union shop steward they know personally, will be far less likely to trouble any SEIU staff with their problems. And that will make it easier for Mr. Stern to realize his political dreams!

Regardless of whether they've been corralled into the AFL-CIO or the CTW empire, workers clearly need the prerogative to quit the union and cease bankrolling it altogether in order to stop union officials from taking advantage of them. And only a national Right to Work law can ensure that private-sector employees in all 50 states have this critical prerogative.

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