

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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In the 'Real World,' Forced-Unionism Abuses Still a Bummer For Philadelphia's Economy

Philadelphia electricians union czar John Dougherty publicly rejoiced March 23, when he and other union officials closed a deal with the producers of *The Real World* to bring this MTV "reality show" back to the City of Brotherly Love for the filming of its 15th season. Just one week earlier, the show had bolted.

"I'm happy that *The Real World* is going to shine a spotlight on Philadelphia, one of the best-kept secrets in America," gushed Mr. Dougherty.

His exuberance was ironic, considering that earlier that month, electricians, carpenters, and other construction union toughs, carrying signs and a giant inflatable rat, had for more than a week picketed the building where the show was to be filmed. Show staffers were allegedly pushed, shoved, and shouted at through bullhorns.

Union militants were enraged because *The Real World's* production company, Bunim/Murray, had hired a nonunion carpentry firm to renovate the building they had picked as the show's set. While it was carpenters union goons who allegedly roughed up Bunim/Murray employees, they clearly enjoyed the support of Philadelphia Building Trades Council (PBTC) bosses.

The picketing demonstrated "why Philadelphia is a great town," said PBTC Business Manager Pat Gillespie. "Protect the proletariat," added the latter-day Vladimir Lenin.

Ugly tactics and bullying are also nothing new for Mr. Dougherty and his union, Local 98 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

According to a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) administrative law judge whose ruling was later upheld by the entire board, in 1997 three thugs surrounded a van belonging to a

nonunion telecommunications contracting firm, punctured the tires with an ice pick, and smashed the windows. All this occurred as a terrified 19-year-old employee sat inside.

Subsequently, the NLRB found, Local 98 board member Edward Coppinger "smashed his finger" into the chest of the firm's owner, and "pushed him through the [building] doorway, stating, 'You son of a bitch, I told you you can't work in this city. This is my building.'"

To cite just one more example, in 2002 Mr. Dougherty filed a lawsuit in Commonwealth Court to force the Philadelphia School District to pay \$45 per hour in labor costs for the 1998 installation of telecommunications equipment in school classrooms.

Even as he filed the suit, Mr. Dougherty admitted to charging private-sector contractors only between \$22 and \$33 an hour for telecommunications-related labor. But he claimed that "state policy" required that the taxpayers who finance school construction be gouged for up to 105% more than for-profit businesses!

School district official Robert Westwall estimated that taxpayers would have to fork over \$6 to \$7 million if Mr. Dougherty won his suit. It was ultimately settled out of court.

While Mr. Dougherty and his agents have thus done a great deal to tar Philadelphia as an unfriendly place for small business owners and employees and taxpayers, he now purports to be concerned about that reputation.

That's why he helped broker the deal in which carpenters and other construction union bosses agreed to keep their menacing pickets off *The Real World's* set in exchange for a share in the 30% of the renovation work that remained to be done as of March 23.

But the fact that so much energy was expended in keeping an MTV program in Philadelphia -- even former mayor and current Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell (D) got heavily involved -- bears witness to how desperate the city has become.

The city's construction union monopoly has through featherbedding and productivity-quashing work rules driven costs so high that midrange construction, including larger houses and smaller office buildings, has virtually ceased.

And this monopoly is propped up by the federal labor-law provisions that authorize union officials to force employees to accept union "representation" and pay union dues as a job condition -- even employees who have no personal interest in joining a union.

To break up such harmful union monopolies, the National Right to Work Committee is fighting in Congress to pass the National Right to Work Act (H.R. 391/S. 1765). It would protect all private-sector employees' freedom to earn a living without being forced to join or pay dues to a union.

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