

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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'Teacher' Union Czarina Sandra Feldman Fights Freedom With More Coercion

In order to finance costly propaganda and electioneering campaigns to defeat a number of ongoing efforts to pass state Right to Work measures, Sandra Feldman, president of the misleadingly named American Federation of Teachers (AFT) union, has just hiked the dues that AFT-"represented" employees must pay, or be fired, by nearly \$20 million over the next two years.

Speaking before AFT officials' biannual convention in Las Vegas July 15, Ms. Feldman boasted that she and her lieutenants would spend the forced-dues hike primarily to maintain the AFT union's forced-dues privileges, granted by legislatures or judges in 20 states where a majority of American public-school employees work.

The AFT brass are fighting the forces of freedom the only way they know how -- by intensifying their coercion of workers.

Despite what its name implies, only slightly more than half of the AFT's 1.3 million reported members are active K-12 teachers, according to estimates by well-informed union observers. (The AFT itself keeps the relative composition of its membership a closely guarded secret.)

Hundreds of thousands of AFT members are noneducation public employees such as meat inspectors and drivers license examiners, or nurses, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, janitors, graduate students, or retirees. For that reason alone, the AFT's claim to be a "teachers" union is spurious.

The only factor that unites the overwhelming majority of the employees in the AFT empire is that they are forced to pay union dues or "fees" to Sandra Feldman and some of her underlings as a job condition.

Therefore, it is not surprising that in her convention address Ms. Feldman singled out as a particularly deplorable setback the September 2001 enactment by Oklahoma of the nation's 22nd state Right to Work law.

State Right to Work laws protect employees of all kinds from being forced to pay union dues or "fees" in order to keep their jobs. They also bar employers from firing workers for joining or financially supporting a union. Yet Ms. Feldman shrieked that she was jacking up the union rank-and-file's forced dues in order to stop the spread of such "anti-worker" laws.

However, neutrally worded polls have shown for decades that the majority of union household members nationwide who have an opinion not only don't agree with Ms. Feldman's laughable mischaracterization of Right to Work laws, they actually support them.

Surveys taken in the 1970's, the 1980's, and the 1990's by the Roper Organization, the Opinion Research Group, and the Marketing Research Institute all found that either a plurality or an out-and-out majority of union household members support Right to Work laws. And support has grown stronger over time.

Furthermore, according to a lengthy open letter by a United Autoworkers (UAW) local union official, of which the National Right to Work Committee has obtained a copy, union field operatives for last year's Oklahoma campaign considered schoolteachers who oppose forced unionism to be "a particular problem."

Members of the 2040-strong Association of Professional Oklahoma Educators, a nonunion group that supports freedom of choice for teachers and other employees, stuffed envelopes, manned phone banks, and spoke out publicly for Right to Work.

And several other grass-roots teacher groups in the Sooner State also lent support to the Right to Work campaign.

Since she was admittedly heavily involved in AFL-CIO kingpins' thwarted blitz against the Oklahoma Right to Work Amendment, for which they raked in an estimated \$18 million in reported and unreported contributions, Ms. Feldman undoubtedly knows that a majority of union household members support the Right to Work principle, and that many teachers are active and effective proponents.

Therefore, she can't help but see that her forced-dues hike to stop Right to Work is like ordering employees to pay for the rope they're about to be hanged with.

But freedom-loving teachers and other employees in the AFT union empire won't take this insult lying down. As the Feldman dues hike is imposed, more and more will enlist in the National Right to Work Committee's campaign to roll back forced unionism in the states.

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