

# Monopoly Unionism Kills North Carolina Jobs

## *Will Union-Label Tarheel Politicians Now Help Intensify the Harm?*

In May 2003, high-ranking officials of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE/AFL-CIO) held a celebratory press conference in North Carolina.

UNITE bosses, including union President Bruce Raynor, gleefully announced that a potential sale of the moribund Pillowtex Co. to Springs Industries, America's largest manufacturer of home fashions, had been put on hold.

"We think the prospect of a national battle with . . . UNITE was something that Springs management does not want to contemplate," Mr. Raynor later bragged to the *Southern Textile News*.

Why did Mr. Raynor and his cohorts, who had won recognition as Pillowtex employees' "exclusive" bargaining agent in contract negotiations in 1999 after a bitter, decades-long battle, oppose Springs' potentially job-saving offer?

The UNITE bosses scuttled the deal because it entailed the shutdown of several Pillowtex plants in Kannapolis, N.C., and the loss of roughly 4300 jobs. However, as many as 1200 jobs in other North Carolina towns, as well as up to 1000 jobs in other states and in Canada, were slated to be saved.

Mr. Raynor claimed that other buyers would step forward after the UNITE hierarchy pushed Springs aside. But none did.

On July 30, 2003, Pillowtex announced that it would close 16 plants in the U.S. and Canada as it entered Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Well over 6000 workers, including 5500 in North Carolina alone, lost their jobs.

### **'They Really Shot Their Workers in the Foot'**

"They [UNITE bosses] really shot their workers in the foot," according to Scott McNeil, a North Carolina investment advisor who specializes in working with troubled companies.

Pillowtex made towels, sheets, rugs, blankets, pillows, and other home textiles and marketed its products under several prestigious brand names, including Cannon, Fieldcrest, Royal Velvet and Charisma.

As most National Right to Work Committee members already know, the U.S. textile industry is especially

vulnerable to overseas competition and has been losing jobs for decades.

However, Big Labor bosses' irresponsible actions clearly have made matters worse. UNITE bosses' torpedoing of the Springs purchase of Pillowtex -- which could have salvaged a third of the failed firm's North American jobs -- is but one example.

And the reason union officials wield so much power to dictate the fate of textile and other workers is the monopoly-bargaining provisions in federal labor law.

Even in Right to Work states like North Carolina, federal law authorizes union bosses to seek and obtain the power to bargain over the wages, benefits, and working conditions for all the production employees in a business, including union members and nonmembers alike.

Without monopoly-bargaining power, UNITE bosses could never have blocked Springs' attempted purchase of Pillowtex.

### **John Edwards Wants to Make It Easier For Big Labor To Acquire Monopoly Power**

John Edwards, the union-label senior U.S. senator from North Carolina and Democratic nominee for vice president, publicly poses as a protector of Tarheel State textile jobs and often bemoans the demise of Pillowtex.

However, Mr. Edwards is also a


cosponsor of the Card-Check Forced Unionism Bill (S.1925/H.R.3619), authored by Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Congressman George Miller (D-Calif.), which is openly designed to help Big Labor gain monopoly-bargaining power over millions of additional workers.

And former Clinton White House official Erskine Bowles, the Democratic nominee to replace Mr. Edwards and another self-declared textile-job defender, refuses to say how he will vote on the Card-Check Forced Unionism Bill if he wins in November.

If S.1925/H.R.3619 becomes law, the only employee views that will count during union organizing drives will be those they express while being monitored by union officials. Secret-ballot votes over unionization will be effectively banned.

"John Edwards says he's all broken up over the loss of Pillowtex jobs, but the fact is he wants to give irresponsible union bosses like Bruce Raynor even more monopoly power," noted Right to Work President Mark Mix.

"That would put millions of other jobs at risk. I urge North Carolinians and other Americans to call Sen. Edwards at 202-224-3154 and ask him to withdraw his support for the Kennedy/Miller Bill.

"Concerned North Carolinians should also call the Erskine Bowles campaign at 919-834-7080 and request that he pledge to oppose this bill." 



**Despite union bosses' record of wielding their monopoly power to destroy Tarheel jobs, Sen. John**

**Edwards thinks they need more of it. Does Senate candidate Erskine Bowles (inset) agree?**

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