Union Trainee Admits Right to Work Is Right

'Dirty Little Secret': Unions 'Better' in Right to Work States

A surprising source has publicly confirmed key facts about compulsory unionism: facts that National Right to Work Committee members have known to be true for years.

In a recently posted academic paper, Michael Oswalt, who is set to graduate from the Law and Divinity Schools at North Carolina's Duke University next spring, advocates enactment of a national Right to Work law as part of an overall package of revisions in federal labor law.

By conventional thinking, the young Mr. Oswalt seems an unlikely Right to Work supporter.

In 2005, he interned at the AFL-CIO Law Student Summer Program in Washington, D.C.

More recently, he was one of two students who spearheaded the successful, AFL-CIO-backed "living wage" campaign at Duke.

However, in his paper ("The Grand Bargain: Revitalizing Labor Through NLRA Reform and Radical Workplace Relations"), Mr. Oswalt rejects the standard anti-Right to Work claims of AFL-CIO and other union bosses and boldly observes:

"[S]imple logic suggests that when dues are guaranteed, attentive member servicing may not be . . . ."

'They're More Responsive To Their Members Because They Have to Be'

Mr. Oswalt urges his fellow union partisans to consider how labor laws that authorize the firing of employees for refusal to pay dues or fees to an unwanted union foster "detached" union officials who are "out of touch with the membership."

In contrast, Right to Work laws barring all forced union dues and fees, now on the books in 22 states, give union officials a clear incentive to pay attention to the individual as well as the group concerns of their members.

To drive this point home, Mr. Oswalt quotes a "union-side labor attorney" from a Right to Work state in the South, who "wished to remain anonymous":

"'There's a dirty little secret about unions in right-to-work states -- they're better. They're more responsive to their members because they have to be.'"

National Right to Work Committee President Mark Mix cautioned that while Mr. Oswalt's conclusions regarding forced union dues and fees are on target, the law and divinity student has not yet grasped how union monopoly bargaining itself is typically detrimental to workers' interests.

"Right to Work members naturally won't go along with Michael Oswalt's proposals in his paper to expand Big Labor's monopoly-bargaining privileges," Mr. Mix commented.

"But what's really interesting is that anyone who would make such proposals would also recognize that imposing forced union dues and fees is bad labor policy.

"This shows yet again that union bosses' insistence on collecting tribute from workers who don't want to join a union is Big Labor's Achilles heel, and why Right to Work members must relentlessly attack this special privilege."

Right to Work advocates have long observed that forced union dues breed union-boss contempt for the needs and wants of rank-and-file workers. A new paper by former AFL-CIO intern Michael Oswalt concurs.