

# Charlton Heston: Right to Work's 'Epic Hero'

## *Former Union Leader Defied Big Labor, Opposed Force Unionism*

"I've played men like Tom Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, Lincoln -- all of them heroes defending American freedom. There are Americans still carrying on that fight in Idaho, where citizens want the Right to Work without being forced to join a union.

"Now, as a former union president, I believe Americans should be free to choose. We're all watching, Idaho. Strike a blow for freedom. Vote yes on Referendum One."

With these words, which he not only spoke, but also coauthored, in the spring of 1986, Hollywood icon Charlton Heston became a public champion of the Right to Work cause.

Mr. Heston taped his first TV advertisement opposing Big Labor's multimillion-dollar attempt that year to overturn, in a statewide fall referendum, Idaho's then-fledgling Right to Work law while standing in front of a camera crew outside his Beverly Hills home.

Mr. Heston's pro-Right to Work TV and radio ads aired extensively in Idaho starting in June 1986, and he also signed a nationwide fundraising letter for the Idaho effort.

Because the Academy Award-

winning star of *The Ten Commandments*, *Ben Hur*, and *Evil Under the Sun* had already earned a reputation as a straight shooter, his visible support was very effective in refuting Big Labor's vicious anti-Right to Work campaign.

In November 1986, Idaho voters upheld their Right to Work law by a solid 54% to 46% margin.

### **Union Zealots Denounced Mr. Heston's 'Despicable' Pro-Right to Work Efforts**

Anti-Right to Work zealots in the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) union, which Mr. Heston had previously served, as board member and president, for a decade, were infuriated by what one labeled as his "despicable" and "renegade" efforts for Idaho.

The union hierarchy officially censured Mr. Heston, and even threatened to remove his lifetime SAG membership and sue him, for daring to speak out against compulsory unionism.

But Mr. Heston was not deterred in the least from speaking out for the cause he passionately supported.

Over the course of the next decade, until he became head of an unrelated single-issue lobbying group and could therefore no longer be an effective public spokesman for any other cause, Mr. Heston went to bat for Right to Work supporters, again and again.

In 1991, for example, Mr. Heston joined with then-National Right to Work Committee President Reed Larson at a Washington, D.C., press conference to oppose the George H.W. Bush Administration's nomination of Big Labor stooge Mary Cracraft for a second term on the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

Thanks largely to Mr. Heston, Ms. Cracraft's reappointment was subsequently blocked in the Senate.

In 1993, Mr. Heston cut a series of 27 targeted TV and radio ads to help the Committee stop the Ted Kennedy Pushbutton Strike Bill, which would have forced workers to strike and, ultimately, to pay union dues.

And in late 1995, Mr. Heston cut yet another ad that helped the Committee convince then-U.S. Senate Majority Leader and GOP presidential primary candidate Bob Dole (Kan.) to pledge to hold a hearing and a recorded, roll-call floor vote on national Right to Work legislation.

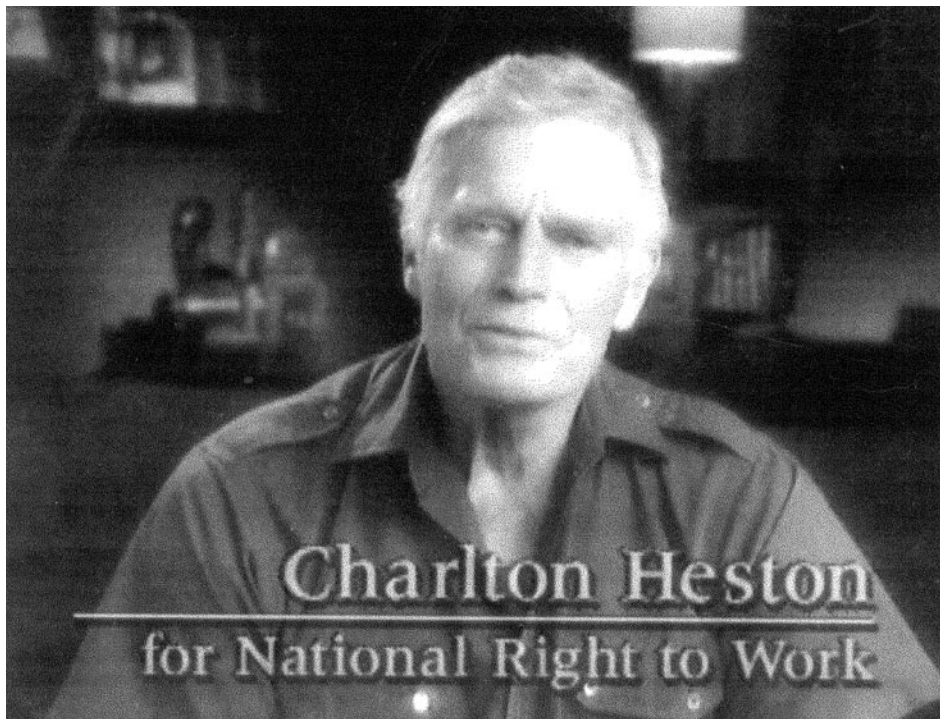
### **Mark Mix: Freedom-Loving Americans Have Lost a 'True Friend'**

Early last month, Mr. Heston died at his Beverly Hills home. Although a cause was not given, he had publicly announced in 2002 that he was suffering from symptoms of Alzheimer's.

"Committee members and supporters will always be grateful to Charlton Heston, the Right to Work movement's epic hero," said Committee President Mark Mix.

"Among his many contributions, his roles in the Idaho referendum victory in 1986, the defeat of the Pushbutton Strike Bill in 1994, and the historic securing of a recorded Senate vote on national Right to Work legislation in 1996 will especially be remembered.

"Not just Right to Work members, but all freedom-loving Americans, have lost a true friend in Charlton Heston." 📖



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