

# Compulsory Unionism Batters Bricklayers

## 'Depleted' Union Till, Not Disappearing Jobs, Worries Union Chief

A former forced dues-paying member of the Denver-based Local 7 of the International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers (BAC/AFL-CIO) recently shared with the National Right to Work Committee disturbing news about how the union hierarchy is hurting rank-and-file workers.

In an internal union memo dated April 28, which the former member forwarded to the Committee after obtaining a copy, BAC General President John Flynn admits that Local 7 "has lost several large contractors in the past few years."

Mr. Flynn is concerned because these lost contracts have "all but depleted . . . the union treasury," but of course the building trades workers who rely on the Local 7 hiring hall to obtain jobs for them have a far more serious financial problem.

Emblematic of the difficulties faced by Local 7-"represented" workers is the union hierarchy's loss of a "major tile contractor" early this spring.

### 'Nonunion Companies Started To Take Over the Work'

Commenting on the BAC memo that he had forwarded, the Committee's correspondent observed:

"The tile contractor . . . happen[s] to be the one that I worked for for 30 years as a union member.

"They were the largest tile and terrazzo company in Colorado at one time, and you could only be union in order to work for them . . ."

But as times changed, the company became increasingly uncompetitive and "nonunion companies started to take over the work." Yet managers were unable "to hire nonunion workers to compete with the influx of nonunion shops."

Two years ago, the Committee's correspondent quit the still-unionized tile company to form his own union-free shop, now the largest such terrazzo company in Colorado.

In brick and tile laying just as in many other kinds of employment, workers under the control of a union monopoly-bargaining agent frequently have difficulty competing with union-free workers.

One key reason why is that union boss-negotiated contracts normally require rigid job classifications that



In Right to Work states, the individual employee is never forced to pay a union monopoly-bargaining agent dues or fees

for "services" that turn out to be detrimental to the worker's interests or contrary to his values.

waste time and money, ultimately to the detriment of workers' job security.

The failure of Big Labor-controlled construction businesses to compete in the marketplace can be plainly seen in the construction-industry employment data for the boom years of 2002 to 2007 compiled by prominent labor economists Barry Hirsch and David Macpherson for the Bureau of National Affairs.

The Hirsch-Macpherson data show that, while the number of union-free construction jobs skyrocketed by 32%, or 1.8 million, over this five-year period, the number of unionized construction jobs increased by less than 1%!

Of course, now that construction is contracting across the country, unionized building-trades firms will inevitably suffer job losses way out of proportion to the roughly 15% of industry jobs they now provide.

### Forced Union Dues Add Insult to Injury

It's bad enough that Big Labor-impeded construction workers have far less employment security than their union-free counterparts.

But in Colorado and 27 other states, unionized construction workers, along with the vast majority of other unionized private-sector employees, have the additional burden of being forced to pay union dues or fees in order to keep their jobs, for as long as they have them.

"BAC czar John Flynn may worry about how the massive employment losses endured by BAC Local 7-'represented' workers in recent years 'jeopardize' the financial interests of BAC and its other subsidiaries," commented National Right to Work Committee President Mark Mix.

"But Mr. Flynn and his lieutenants know all the same that, under federal law, they can keep collecting forced dues and 'agency' fees from the union rank and file who still have their jobs.

"That's just wrong. To force workers to pay dues for the 'benefit' of having a wrecking machine like Local 7 as their monopoly-bargaining agent adds insult to injury.

"In fact, the sad saga of BAC Local 7 shows clearly why we need a national Right to Work law barring all forced union dues and fees." 📞