

Laborers Union Bigwigs Are 'Shocked, Shocked' Workers' Forced Dues Allegedly Paid For 'Meetings' at Strip Clubs

Just like *Casablanca's* Captain Renault, upon learning about the gambling at Rick's nightclub, Laborers International Union of North America (LIUNA) bigwigs in Washington, D.C., have been "shocked, shocked" at the news emanating from LIUNA Local 500 in Toledo, Ohio, over the past two years.

In March 2006, the *Toledo Blade* reported that the U.S. Labor Department was investigating alleged abuse of Local 500 treasury funds, which consist primarily of dues and fees that union boss-"represented" workers are forced to pay as a condition of employment.

Subsequent *Blade* reports confirmed that Local 500 business manager Steven Thomas and recording secretary Thomas Leonard had spent more than \$21,000 in forced-dues treasury funds at Ohio strip clubs.

Mr. Thomas alone "charged the union \$17,414 for 96 separate visits" in 2004 to Scarlett's in Toledo and Kahoots Gentleman's Club in Columbus, according to a July 2, 2007 story by *Blade* political writer Joshua Boak.

In May 2007, international Laborers union bosses removed Mr. Thomas from his post as business manager and barred Mr. Leonard from holding office for life, thus supposedly conveying their disapproval of how the two spent

workers' forced-dues money.

But now it seems clear that international LIUNA officials were well aware all along that Mr. Thomas and Mr. Leonard were living "in the lap of strip club luxury," as Mr. Boak has put it, at forced dues-paying workers' expense, and never expressed any disapproval until the Labor Department probe became public.

Furthermore, international LIUNA bosses recently demonstrated through their actions that they still do not want the whole truth to get out about the Toledo scandal.

There Was No Union Policy 'Prohibiting Business Meetings at Strip Clubs'

Last month, Hearing Officer Nadine Pettiford of the Ohio Unemployment Compensation Review Commission ruled that Mr. Thomas had not been fired "with just cause" from his position as Local 500 business manager and reinstated his unemployment benefits.

According to a February 5 *Blade* account, Ms. Pettiford found that Mr. Thomas's "questionable" spending on strip clubs and alleged personal entertainment was "approved" by other Local 500 union bosses.

Ms. Pettiford also noted that international

Laborers union bosses had refused to allow her to review receipts of alleged improper transactions on Mr. Thomas's credit card.

Top union bigwigs' failure to share this information in court suggests that Thomas attorney Richard Mitchell is telling the truth when he charges that LIUNA bosses actually pressured his client to take them to strip clubs whenever they came to town.

"International representatives were also the beneficiaries of these niceties and expected to be wined, dined, and otherwise entertained whenever they were present," commented Mr. Mitchell after Ms. Pettiford had issued her ruling.

"No one can suggest shock or surprise that union funds were used when the bigwigs from out of town were lavishly entertained."

Union Bosses Can't Be Trusted to Police Themselves


"Big Labor apologists insist, naively or cynically, that bosses of big, well-heeled unions like LIUNA can be trusted to police their fellow union officers," observed National Right to Work Committee President Mark Mix.

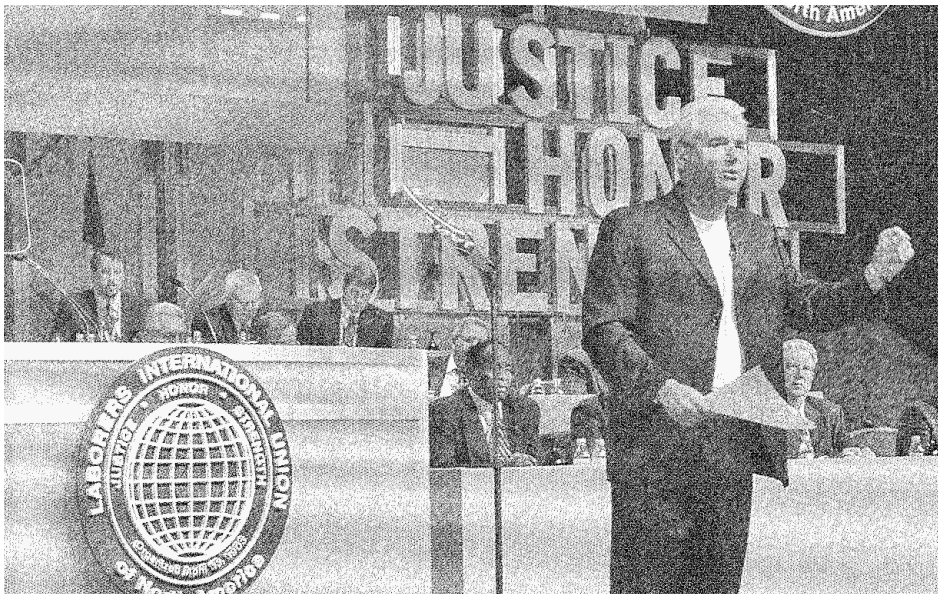
"For example, a recent report issued by the forced dues-funded 'Center for American Progress' in Washington, D.C., vociferously made this claim.

"But union insiders know this is nonsense. As the example of LIUNA Local 500 illustrates, both local and international union bosses rarely take any action against their corrupt cohorts until a criminal investigation is already underway.

"Long experience shows union bosses can't be trusted to police themselves. But Congress and state legislatures could strike formidable blows against union corruption by passing a national Right to Work law and more state Right to Work laws.

"National and state Right to Work legislation empowers employees to cut off their financial support for a union as soon as they see their money being misspent by a corrupt union boss.

"And that would really give LIUNA and other union bosses a motive to get more serious about policing corruption within their ranks." 



CREDIT: THE LABORERS

International officers of the Laborers union, headed by Terry O'Sullivan, allegedly expected until recently to be

entertained at strip clubs at forced dues-paying workers' expense whenever they visited Toledo.