

# Forced-Unionism Abuses Exposed

The facts Big Labor bosses would rather you didn't hear about.

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Vol. 2, No. 3 – March 2003

*Compulsory unionism breeds corruption. In each issue of "Exposed," the National Right to Work Committee will highlight yet another example of union-boss abuse spawned and perpetuated by Big Labor's government-granted privilege to force workers to pay union dues, or be fired.*

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## **'Who Are You Gonna' Believe, Me, or Some Videotape?' Illinois Cabinet Nominee Disavows 1998 Guilty Plea to Tire-Slapping**

Back in the 1970s, Democratic Illinois Gov. Dan Walker appointed Laborers Union kingpin John Serpico to the board of the Illinois International Port District.

Although Mr. Serpico admitted in 1985 testimony before the President's Commission on Organized Crime to maintaining "friendships" with notorious Chicago mobsters like Joseph Aiuppa, Joseph Ferriola and Ernesto "Rocco" Infelice, and was suspended from his Laborers union offices in 1995 as a result of pressure from the U.S. Justice Department, he remained on the Port District board during the administrations of GOP Govs. Jim Thompson, Jim Edgar and George Ryan.

In fact, Mr. Serpico was still serving as chairman of the board when he was indicted for the crimes for which he is currently imprisoned.

In 2001, Mr. Serpico was finally consigned to a federal penitentiary, where he remains today, for schemes such as the diversion of \$6.5 million from union treasuries into a troubled hotel project, in exchange for which Mr. Serpico and his coconspirator received \$330,000 in kickbacks from investors.

Two months ago, newly-installed Democrat Gov. Rod Blagojevich apparently decided he would maintain the bipartisan tradition among Illinois governors of keeping at least one union boss with a well-documented reputation for thuggery in an influential state government position. The Illinois Senate is now considering the governor's nomination of local International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) union boss Michael Fenger as director of the state's Department of Labor.

In 1998, Mr. Fenger, who hails from Rockford, pleaded guilty to plunging an awl into the tires of a Ford pickup truck owned by a nonunion firm during a 1997 protest rally outside a Wal-Mart construction site in downstate Illinois.

When a union mob assembled outside the Wal-Mart Supercenter in Sterling, Ill., a non-union worker tried to drive away, but a crowd of union organizers surrounded the truck and stopped it, according to a police report. Two local police officers reported that they saw Mr. Fenger puncture all four tires on the worker's pickup and secretly videotaped him while he was doing it.

After pleading guilty to criminal damage of property and reckless conduct, Mr. Fenger was fined \$1500 and given a year of court supervision.

But now he says he's innocent, that the police filed a false report against him, and that everyone should forget about the videotape, because, had the case gone to trial, he would have "produced several witnesses [i.e., his fellow union zealots] to back up his story," according to a February 13 news story in the *Chicago Tribune*.

When interviewed by the *Tribune*, Blagojevich spokesman Billy Weinberg concurred that Mr. Fenger had been "wrongly accused" by police. However, when the National Right to Work Committee contacted Mr. Weinberg on February 28, he admitted that neither he nor anyone else in the governor's office had ever asked to review the videotape that Sterling police affirm records Mr. Fenger puncturing a tire.

How were highly questionable characters like John Serpico and Michael Fenger able to be chosen by governors to serve as powerful officers of the state of Illinois, even after they had admitted, respectively, to close ties with mobsters and to criminal destruction of property?

The answer is union officials' federally-granted power to force workers to pay union dues, or be fired.

Thanks to their forced-dues privileges, union officials, including criminals like John Serpico and Michael Fenger, are able to amass huge political war chests that pay for phone banks, get-out-the-vote drives, leaflets, "volunteer" staff, and much more every election year. And all of this forced dues-funded electioneering is designed to benefit Big Labor politicians like ex-Gov. George Ryan and current Gov. Rod Blagojevich.

Meanwhile, union officials wield monopoly-bargaining power over nearly 21% of Illinois employees, putting the Prairie State in a tie with New Jersey for the fifth highest level of forced unionization in the U.S. In 1991-to-2001 nonfarm job growth, Illinois and New Jersey were also tied, for sixth lowest in the nation. All of the then-21 Right to Work states had faster job growth than Illinois during this period.

With its culture of union political corruption and its chronically slow economic growth, forced-unionism Illinois is a case study in the need for state Right to Work laws barring the collection of forced union dues as a job condition.