

Forced-Unionism Abuses Exposed

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

National Right to Work Committee® • 8001 Braddock Road • Springfield, Va. 22160
www.nrtwc.org • (703) 321-9820 • (703) 321-7143 (fax)

Vol. 8, No. 2 – February 2009

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.

* * *

Will Union Kingpin Andy Stern Be Hoist by His Own Petard?

This year, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) chief Andy Stern and his lieutenants are openly planning to spend \$50 million, mostly extracted from union dues and fees workers are forced to pay, or be fired from their jobs, to pressure Congress to rubber-stamp the cynically mislabeled "Employee Free Choice Act." Altogether, Big Labor has already spent hundreds of millions of dollars on politics and lobbying to get this scheme passed.

The best-known provision in the "Employee Free Choice Act" would rewrite federal labor law so that union officials could, without the employer's acquiescence, secure monopoly-bargaining power over all the front-line employees at a business solely through the acquisition of signed "union authorization cards."

Over the years, labor-law scholars, federal courts, and even union organizing manuals have all recognized the fact that many employees who sign such cards do not actually want a union as their monopoly-bargaining agent. They sign for a host of other reasons: to get union organizers off their backs, to expedite an election so the union organizing campaign will end soon, or even because they have been threatened.

That's why union officials like Mr. Stern are so eager to mandate "card checks": so that workers who oppose unionization, but sign "authorization cards" for one reason or another, never get a chance to vote "No" in a secret-ballot election.

But in their PR campaign in support of their card-check power grab, Andy Stern and his paid propagandists pour contempt on anyone who would dare to doubt that an employee's signature means he wants a particular union to have monopoly power to negotiate his and his fellow employees' wages, benefits, and work rules.

Except, perhaps, when the doubter is Andy Stern himself!

This month, Mr. Stern is likely to be presented with tens of thousands of workers' signatures on petitions indicating they want out of the SEIU monopoly-bargaining empire and desire instead to affiliate with the newly formed National Union of Healthcare Workers (NUHW), a union headed by former SEIU local official Sal Rosselli.

International union officers led by Mr. Stern recently fired Mr. Rosselli and several of his fellow local officers from their posts in a giant, 150,000-member SEIU health-care local in California. Mr. Stern accused Mr. Rosselli of financial improprieties, although, unlike several former California SEIU local bosses who were handpicked by Mr. Stern, Mr. Rosselli has not been charged with breaking any federal, state, or local law.

Refusing to give up control of the union, Mr. Rosselli and his allies quickly set up the NUHW and as of early this month were circulating "64 petitions at hospitals, nursing homes, and other facilities," according to the San Francisco *Weekly*. Mr. Rosselli predicts his agents will soon have collected signatures from majorities of employees in all of the bargaining units of his former local.

If this prediction comes true, Mr. Stern will have two basic choices. He, along with the rest of the SEIU hierarchy, will have to say good-bye to 150,000 health-care workers and the forced union dues and fees that the overwhelming majority of them have to fork over to keep their jobs. Or he can refuse to acknowledge the legitimacy of petitions signed by workers while they were being monitored by NUHW organizers.

Mr. Stern will likely be able to point to real instances of coercion and other abuses in the NUHW petition drive. But he is very unlikely to be able to produce any evidence that this drive involves more or worse abuses than the typical Big Labor card-check organizing campaign. Therefore, if he rejects the NUHW petitions, he will be destroying any pretext for enactment of card-check forced-unionism legislation.

Right to Work supporters can fairly take some satisfaction at the prospect of seeing Andy Stern hoist by his own petard this winter. But the primary victims of card checks are independent workers who do not want a union as their monopoly-bargaining agent, and they have done nothing to deserve their fate.

Genuine reform would simply remove the provisions in federal labor that empower union bosses to bargain over the wages, benefits, and work rules of employees who don't want to join a union as well as those who do. And as long as those monopoly-bargaining provisions remain on the books, Congress certainly shouldn't make it even easier for union bosses to exercise such illegitimate power.

###