

Forced-Unionism Abuses Exposed

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

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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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White House Deference to Big Labor Impedes Gulf Oil Spill Cleanup Efforts

Roughly three months after BP's Deepwater Horizon oil platform exploded, killing 11 workers and instigating the biggest offshore oil spill ever to occur during peacetime, the Obama Administration faces mounting charges that, in order to avoid offending politically powerful union officials, it has obstructed operations to clean up the spill.

A wide range of critics are focusing on the White House's refusal, in the days after oil began spewing into the Gulf of Mexico from the sunken rig, to suspend the 90-year-old Jones Act. The Jones Act requires all shipping between U.S. ports or in U.S. coastal waters to be carried in U.S.-flagged ships that are owned and crewed by U.S. citizens.

But presidential administrations can grant blanket waivers of the Jones Act during national emergencies. In recent years, the George W. Bush Administration temporarily suspended the Jones Act to assist recovery efforts after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

However, top bosses of the AFL-CIO-affiliated Seafarers International Union (SIU), with the backing of the entire AFL-CIO hierarchy, oppose a blanket waiver. Rather than cross Big Labor, and thus potentially risk losing some of its massive, forced dues-funded political support, the Obama Administration has required all foreign vessels that wish to participate in the cleanup and believe they may need a waiver to apply for one individually.

In practice, this typically means that applicants wait for weeks and weeks without being granted or denied a waiver. Meanwhile, oil continues to spread in the gulf.

Excessive White House deference to Big Labor is largely responsible for the scandalous situation reported by the AP's Tom Breen July 2: "The Coast Guard said there have been 107 offers of help from 44 nations, ranging from technical advice to skimmer boats and booms. But many of these offers are weeks old, and only a small number have been accepted. The vast majority are still under review, according to a list kept by the State Department."

The White House is obviously well aware of the fact that, by allowing the union bosses who spent vast sums of workers' forced-dues money in 2008 to elect Barack Obama President to shape a critical part of his Administration's response to the gulf oil spill, it is treading on dangerous ground with the American public as a whole.

Whatever they think of the Jones Act in general, the overwhelming majority of citizens would certainly support allowing qualified foreign ships and crews to participate in the gulf-spill cleanup, and be fairly compensated for their efforts, without first having to jump through bureaucratic hoops.

That's why the White House and its apologists recently launched a major propaganda offensive shrilly claiming that the Jones Act hasn't affected the cleanup. Obama Press Secretary Robert Gibbs and his ilk have engaged in a clever bit of misdirection by noting, correctly, that the Jones Act does not prohibit a foreign vessel from cleaning up oil at sea.

However, as Maine "sea blogger" Bob Bernstein points out in rebuttal, the Jones Act does prohibit a foreign-flagged vessel "from entering U.S. ports once its hold is full." Mr. Bernstein concludes ironically: "So, yeah, the vessels can clean up oil, as long as they do it just once and head back to their home ports. And as long as they don't expect to get paid."

The Obama Administration's refusal to grant a blanket waiver of the Jones Act in the immediate wake of the gulf oil spill, despite compelling evidence that a suspension would have greatly accelerated and improved cleanup efforts, is but the latest illustration of the poisonous impact of compulsory unionism on American politics.

Federal and state labor laws empower union bosses to extract billions of dollars in compulsory union dues and fees from millions of American workers every year. Big Labor then funnels a large share of these forced dues and fees into the campaigns of U.S. House and Senate and presidential candidates, as well as the campaigns of state and local politicians.

Politicians who are beholden to the forced dues-fueled union political machine, from Barack Obama on down, routinely pay back Big Labor with policies that are both unpopular and detrimental to the national interest.

The Obama Administration's otherwise bizarre handling of the Jones Act since the gulf oil spill makes perfect sense in light of the inordinate political power government-imposed forced unionism gives Big Labor. And it underscores the desperate need to curtail union bosses' sway over politicians like Barack Obama through passage of federal and state Right to Work legislation prohibiting all forced union dues and fees.

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