

Why Does SEIU Lobby For More Foreign Workers While Its U.S. Members Are So Damaged By The Competition?

Charles' blog raises even more questions about why the SEIU is fighting so hard for illegal foreign workers while its current union members find it so hard to keep their jobs in the face of foreign labor competition. The SEIU led the way last week in sponsoring the pro-amnesty march in Washington and in attacking NumbersUSA's freedom of speech and mobility.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Charles' account below raises even more questions about why the SEIU is fighting so hard for illegal foreign workers while its current union members find it so hard to keep their jobs in the face of foreign labor competition.)

(Both the SEIU and LiUNA unions mentioned by Charles were prominent at last week's pro-amnesty march in Washington. And it was the SEIU leaders who coordinated the attacks on NumbersUSA's freedom of speech and mobility at the event.)

(But the Americans in these unions are being severely harmed by the presence of all these foreign workers.)

Unions such as the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), and the Laborers' International Union of North America (LiUNA) are pushing for comprehensive immigration reform that includes an amnesty for illegal workers. I've been trying to figure out why these unions would subject their members to competition from workers that shouldn't even be in the country.

My investigation began when I went to a union rally back on September 3, 2009. Pictures and video are below. The event was in New York City, about 2 blocks from the World Trade Center Site. A building at 67 Liberty Street was getting remodeled, with the addition of 15 floors. The contractor was using non-union labor. The president of New Yorkers for Immigration Enforcement and Control (NY ICE) was given a flyer and talked to an organizer when she was in the area the week before, and she notified me. The organizer had told her that he suspected a lot of the non-union workers were illegally present in this country.

You can see in the video that they've got the two giant rats set up. They are saying the construction company is a rat - an employer of non-union labor. They had members of several different unions at this rally. I met carpenters, laborers, and painters.

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At 6:00 in the first video, the male union organizer says, in response to my question, "What are they getting paid? "A job like this, they should be paid at least \$18 an hour - a laborer, because there are different trades - I can only speak of the laborer. [\$18/hour] that's the apprentice. That's not including benefits and pension." The organizer thought the non-union workers were getting paid \$8-9 per hour. I spoke to a union painter off-camera. He works for the city and said he gets paid \$42 an hour. He said illegal workers in his field get paid as low as \$10 per hour. The union wages may seem high. But please remember, this is New York City, where it takes an income of \$100,000 per year for a family to be considered middle class.

At 2:20 in the first video, the organizer says...

It's a disgrace to us as Americans." He is talking about hiring non-union labor. At 2:42, the union organizer refers to WTC: "It's un-American. We have already lost a lot of Americans right from this neighborhood. We have lost lives here.

People need to build themselves back. People need to take care of their families. He's fighting us. he's fighting the middle class. ... This is about putting a roof over your head, getting your kids a decent education, putting food on your tables. That's what this is about. Giving yourself a pension, and giving yourself a living wage.

At 3:18...

O.K. stop exploiting workers. They are not paying health care. They won't have a pension - that's a disgrace.

In the second video, another Union Organizer says at :40...

I have a site, 2 Cooper Square, which is East 4th and Bowery. I was protesting there. They are almost done with the concrete. It's a 50-story residential. But the workers that are doing the concrete, they are all Brazilians. They pick them up in vans in [New] Jersey, and bring them, and they pack them in, drop them off. At the end of the day, they put 'em in, and bring them back. And I'm sure they don't have a green card.

And then starting at 2:11 in the second video, we have an out of work, fully trained, 100% American, Latino construction worker. He's been out of work for 7 months (as of September 2009). He is a union carpenter. His wage is \$45 an hour when he works. He is fully certified by OSHA to report workplace safety violations. He holds multiple certifications that required additional training.



Union Members



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Some of the Non-Union workers (More are in the videos)

Analysis

You can see why cheap labor employers wouldn't want to hire union labor. They've got to pay them a living wage (\$45 in New York City), they have to obey workplace safety standards. They would rather hire \$10 per hour workers, probably illegal aliens, who are willing to work in unsafe conditions without complaining. It's just like NumbersUSA has been saying all along: among the biggest victims of illegal immigration are American citizens and those legally authorized to work, including American workers who happen to be Hispanic. The unemployment rate for Hispanic workers is currently 12.7%; that is much higher than the national level of 10% (figures from December 2009).

The Pew Hispanic Center reported in April, 2009 that there are about 11.9 million illegal aliens in the United States, and 8.3 million of them are in the workforce. [See pages 22 and 24 of that report.] And the report continued that of that 8.3 million, "21% are construction workers." That is 1.7 million workers. According to the president of a union also in April 2009, "Nearly 2 million construction workers are out of work." 1.7 million illegal alien construction workers, 2 million construction workers out of work. That's a pretty interesting comparison.

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Source URL (retrieved on 04/02/2010 - 9:17pm):

<http://www.numbersusa.com/content/nusablog/cbreiter2/january-12-2010/unions-and-american-workers-part-i.html>

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