

Ex-Union Member Tells How Employers Are Being "Trained" To Bust Unions

The letter below, reprinted from "Your Voice", a publication of Communications Workers of America (CWA) Local 3122, describes how employers are adopting a more "business like" approach to union busting.

Dear former brother and sister union members:

I am writing to you to hopefully warn you to avoid what has happened to me and other union members in this plant.

We were once members of an international union with usual gripes about union dues, slow grievance procedures, seniority disputes, incentives, overtime arguments, etc.

We thought of our stewards and union officials as freeloaders with jobs that commanded no respect and that the company would treat us just as good with or without them, and were in agreement when someone said, "The union is selling us out." Never the company. Well, we voted to decertify from the international union. We are now non-union and pay no more dues!

We no longer have seniority disputes, because we are placed by ability, which means whoever is the bosses pet. The same goes for overtime. Our grievance procedures are no longer slow, they are nonexistent.

We don't have absentee problems, if you miss one day you must have a doctor's slip, so most absentee problems were fired long ago with nobody to represent them. Our incentives are now, "Do more work or you will be disciplined for refusal to work."

Our ex-stewards and union officers are no longer a problem, most of them have been discharged or set up for a discharge situation.

How did this happen? Well, one night at a local tavern a supervisor I know got drunk and was bragging to a friend about how they got rid of the union.

The supervisor said the company hired a union-busting firm out of Chicago at several hundred dollars an hour to train their supervisors and foremen in the skill of union-busting, with the threat that any foreman disclosing this fact would be fired.

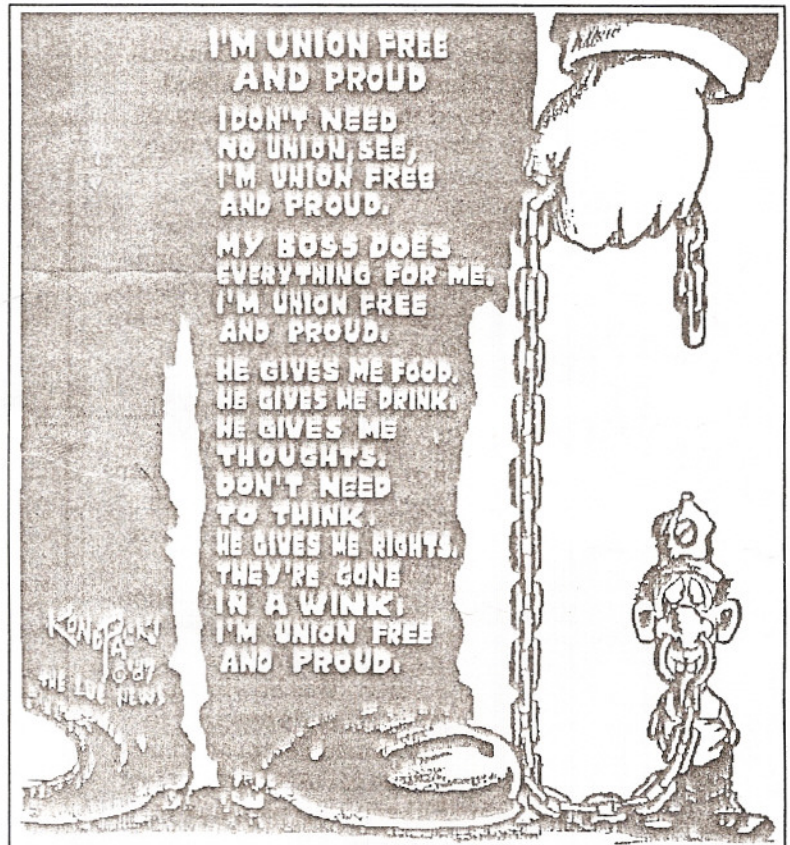
He said they held a lot of management classes and were taught the following rules:

- (1) Try to confuse the seniority system for layoffs, move ups and overtime to get employees jealous of one another. Then, when the employees complain, send them to the union, thereby shifting the blame, even if you have to use racial or sexual disputes. Most important, create fear and mistrust;
- (2) Drag out grievances as long as possible;
- (3) Threaten workers if they file grievances or safety complaints;
- (4) Increase discipline for even minor offenses to cause an overload for the union, slowing down their effectiveness.
- (5) Make sure all employees get benefit books, letters on insurance benefits, pensions, etc., saying the company provides them, not that they are union negotiated.
- (6) Increase management trainees or substitute foremen.
- (7) Get your stool pigeons to criticize union officials and union dues.
- (8) Hold department meetings with employees to convince them that you agree with their problems, but that the union has to do something (deliberately scheduling improperly is a very good example to use in this step.)
- (9) Convince them that you are on their side about a job class increase or incentive, but that your hands are tied and it's up to the union.
- (10) Last, but not least, the company must become the big brother, the good guy, and the union becomes the enemy by distorting the truth about the agreement. By the time the truth is known, they won't trust the union anyway.

When I heard this I realized they followed the game plan perfectly. All of these things happened to us, and they were laughing at us the whole time. I felt I had to write this letter to warn you how easily we were led down the road to disaster.

I hope in some way this will help you avoid what happened to us. Don't go back 40 years in time like we have. Are any of these things going on in your company? They may be training our management now. Beware!

I cannot sign this letter for fear of my job and my family. Hope that some day I will be back among you without fear. It's a terrible lesson to learn.



Respectfully,

AN EX-UNION BROTHER