

## **We Don't Need No Stinkin' Secret Ballots**

If there is one thing that most people would agree is an American tradition, it's the secret ballot. When the "leader" of some third-rate country wins re-election with something like 95 per cent of the vote, it's a bit difficult not to assume there has been some skullduggery. One would think even American liberals would be outraged, considering how much they fought to insure that every "hanging chad" would be counted in Florida in 2000. They even went so far as to demand the counting of totally blank ballots as Gore votes, arguing that the "intent" of those illiterate voters must clearly have been to support the candidate who most appeals to non-thinkers. So at least on the surface, Democrats appear to support some form of democracy.

But while the average American watched the first Iraqi elections after the fall of Saddam Hussein with a lump in his throat at the image of smiling citizens proudly displaying ink-stained fingers to prove they had voted, high-level Democrats were no doubt hoping that particular method of vote-verification wouldn't spread to the United States. You've got to bet Howard Dean immediately dispatched hordes of underlings to local hardware stores to identify solvents that could quickly eradicate any evidence of purple ink. After all, you can get illegal aliens to vote for your candidate as quickly as you can issue them phony drivers licenses, but they've only got one right-hand index finger each.

Back in 1960, the Chicago political machine was able to take Illinois away from Nixon and give it to Kennedy with the help of the votes of innumerable dead people, but no ward bosses had to dig up corpses and amputate fingers. Nixon lost because of vote fraud in Illinois, but was the better man for refusing to put up a stink – despite the pleading of many on his campaign staff who knew he had been done an injustice. Nixon may have been a lot of bad things, but he loved his country and didn't want to send it on the tortured road of recounts and lawsuits into uncharted Constitutional territories. He set a fine example of a principled gentleman - for Al Gore not to follow 40 years later.

There are instances of vote fraud on both sides no doubt, but most Americans assume they likely cancel themselves out. Sure, a few dead Democrats keep voting in Chicago, but the Republicans always pray for rain on Election Day to keep poor people who have to walk to the polls from showing up. So we all hope for landslides where the discovery of a little bit of fraud here and there proves inconsequential.

But here we are in 2008, and we learn of a nifty piece of liberal legislation called the "Employee Free Choice Act." Gee, who could be against that? Doesn't everyone support employees and free choice? Even if you have no clue what the legislation is about, it certainly *sounds* like a good thing, so "mark me down as being in favor of it." And Obama is for it? Oh, then that's just more evidence that he is the thoughtful, fair, and wonderful guy he and the media keep telling us he is.

But politicians in general and liberals in particular being what they are (egotistical, egomaniacal, lying whores feeding voraciously at the public trough while doing their utmost to ignore the wishes of the average hard-working taxpayer), legislation sometimes

is given a name that is not quite accurate. (Okay, the name can be deliberately deceptive.) In the case of the “Employee Free Choice Act,” the name is a complete misnomer, meant to trick everyone into believing that the law is something it is not. But the name serves its purpose for its sponsors, who figure the average voter will assume Obama is good because he favors the legislation and McCain must be bad because he opposes it.

The “Employee Free Choice Act” *removes the guarantee of secret ballots in union organizing elections.* (One can understand why its sponsors didn’t want to name it the “Eliminate the Secret Ballot Act.”) Presently, union organizing campaigns work like this: a union targets a particular employer, and contacts employees with information explaining why organizing, joining the union, and bargaining collectively would be a good idea. Under what is known as a “card-check” system, if enough employees (30 per cent or more) sign a card indicating they’d like to have an election, the process proceeds. The National Labor Relations Board (a federal agency established by 1947’s National Labor Relations Act, or “Taft-Hartley Act”) then oversees the election. Although the signed cards are not secret, they are used only to determine if there is enough employee interest to hold an election. The actual election is held with secret ballots.

To the average person this process seems fair. The union makes its case, and the employer makes its case. You and your co-workers discuss the pros and cons of joining the union and, after a vote by secret ballot, the majority rules. If the union wins, its collective bargaining power can be used to get the employer to improve wages, benefits, working conditions, and safety rules. On the other hand, the union can go overboard with its demands, forcing the employer into bankruptcy because it can’t compete with non-union or foreign competitors. (Some would argue – and I wouldn’t disagree - that the current woes of General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler are a direct result of their having been forced to – or were foolish enough to - give too much in wages and benefits to their employees, to the point where they simply can no longer compete effectively.)

Over the past few decades union membership has fallen dramatically, and the unions are looking for a way to regain their former strength. Enter liberal Democrats, Obama, and the “Employee Free Choice Act.” This astounding legislation eliminates the secret ballots – and even the election itself - by requiring that the employer recognize the union as soon as it gathers signatures from a majority of the workers. A show of hands, please: would your vote be swayed by the fact that you must mark your choice on a card, sign it, and then hand it over to a team of burly union employees who hold gold medals in lumberjack competitions?

Even with the use of secret ballots, employees have frequently been subject to threats and intimidation, pressure and harassment. Still, with a secret ballot you can vote “no” and tell the union bullies that you voted “yes” (or let your boss think you voted “no” when you voted “yes”), just as you can tell a pollster you’re a big fan of Obama even though you have no intention of voting a Marxist ticket. But take away the secret ballot, and all bets are off. That, of course, is the point of the legislation.

If you believe union power won't grow by unrestricted leaps and bounds if this legislation is signed by a President Obama, you'll believe Ann Coulter and Rosie O'Donnell can be best friends. Union membership will of course increase, and the consequences will be dramatic. The same arrogance that prompted Air Traffic Controllers to strike in 1981, and the same wage and benefits demands that have made Detroit look like Dresden in the waning days of World War II, will create an economic disaster for America. "We demand more and we demand it now" will necessarily mean higher wage and benefits costs, and more impossible-to-fire employees. This is not what America needs at a time when it must be more cost-effective and efficient in facing global competition.

At the very least, increased unionization will mean higher prices for products and services, because businesses must ultimately pass on their increased labor costs to their customers. At the worst, increased unionization will mean more companies going out of business. Senator McCain has received criticism for (truthfully) telling audiences that some of America's lost jobs "are not coming back." He should have added, "...and if Barack Obama is given the chance to sign this atrocious legislation, you'll be saying good-bye to a lot more jobs."

When Barack Obama talks about "change," this is regrettably one of the changes he has in mind. Perhaps he believes that secret ballots will no longer be necessary in an America that has a President as enlightened as him, but anyone who follows Obama's money trail might have a suspicion that generous union campaign contributions have something to do with his support of the "Employee Free Choice Act" (which even lifelong liberal George McGovern – certainly no enemy of organized labor - has publicly condemned). Barack Obama, the self-proclaimed "new kind of politician" is nothing more than the worst old kind of politician in a different wrapper.

President Reagan, weighing airline safety against union support, sided with the safety of American citizens in firing the air traffic controllers who engaged in their illegal strike. Barack Obama, weighing the right to a secret ballot against union support, is siding with the unions and their campaign contributions. To add insult to injury (and if ever there was an appropriate place for that phrase it is here), the legislation has been disguised with a phony name to mislead the public into thinking the law is something other than what it is: an attempt to empower unions at the expense of the American economy. This is arrogance at its worst, with Democrat legislators and Obama mocking the American voter, sounding very much like the Mexican bandit who tormented Humphrey Bogart in "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre." Paste a moustache on Obama and imagine him saying, "Secret ballots? We don't need no stinkin' secret ballots!"

Please keep that image in your mind as you enter the voting booth in November. And don't forget to close the curtain behind you... *while it's still there.*

*Don Fredrick*  
*August 21, 2008*