The Problem Is Government Unions

by Phyllis Schlafly February 19, 2010

The Senate's decisive defeat of confirmation of radical labor lawyer Craig Becker is the first tangible result of the Massachusetts Miracle, which made Scott Brown the 41st Republican in the U.S. Senate. Two red-state Democrats also voted not to proceed toward a vote on President Obama's nomination of Becker to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

Becker is a top lawyer for the Service Employees International Union, which spent $60 million to elect Obama. SEIU's boss, Andy Stern, was the most frequent visitor to Obama's White House last year.

The NLRB is supposed to be a neutral arbiter of labor disputes. Becker had other plans for the NLRB; he was expected to try to implement what is called "Card Check" even though Congress has declined to pass it.

Card Check is a bill to eliminate the secret ballot by which employees have the right to vote yea or nay on authorizing a union as their bargaining agent. Card Check would replace the secret ballot with allowing union officials to intimidate employees into just signing a card.

The left-wing magazine In These Times wrote that Becker "helped lay the intellectual foundation" for Card Check. He wrote a law review article to propose using the NLRB's regulatory power to achieve the goals of Card Check without action by Congress.

While working for the SEIU, Becker also helped write three pro-labor executive orders that Obama signed just a week after taking office.

Older Americans may fondly remember bygone days when some unions played a positive role in our free economy. In the 1950s, many unions expelled Communist agitators.

Today's unions, by contrast, promote big-government solutions to every problem. That's because of the dramatic change in the membership of powerful unions.

An important milestone was reached last year when, for the first time, the majority of union members (51.4 percent) were federal or state government employees. The political power of government workers unions is a major reason why government spending is now out of control.

The average pay of federal workers is over $71,000 (in Washington, D.C., it's $94,047), whereas the average pay in the private sector (if you have a job) is $50,028. Annual raises are a matter of course, and government employees enjoy close to lifetime job security and benefits including retirement.

Rising star Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-UT) commented, "I about fell off my chair when I saw that the number of federal employees making more than $150,000 have more than doubled in the last 18 months."

Another Washington labor lawyer, Joseph Sandler, who is described as a "renowned expert on election law," has created a crow's nest of front groups whose goal is to undermine the Tea Party movement. These groups have funneled vast amounts of union dues money, including $10 million from the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), into fronts with innocuous names such as "Patriot Majority" and "Citizens for Progress."

To defeat Proposition 8, the California ballot initiative to protect traditional marriage, the SEIU spent $500,000 and the California teachers union spent

$1,250,000. After the voters approved Prop 8, over 50 unions (including the national AFL-CIO) signed a brief asking the courts to overturn the will of the people.

SEIU plays rough. It was a bunch of SEIU thugs, clearly identified by their purple shirts emblazoned with "SEIU," who attended a Rep. Russ Carnahan (D-MO) Town Hall Meeting and beat up Kenneth Gladney, a black man passing out flags that read "Don't Tread On Me."

The day after the Senate rejected Becker, Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) introduced a measure to abolish the Senate filibuster, and thereby nullify the value of Scott Brown becoming the 41st Republican. That bill isn't going to pass because it would take 67 votes, which Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) can't round up.

Some namby-pamby Republicans think that the President is entitled to get confirmation of all his judicial nominees despite the Senate's constitutional power to accept or reject them. The defeat of Craig Becker should give all Republicans the backbone to use the filibuster to reject any court nominee who believes in a "living" Constitution.

The prospective nominees who are reputed to be on Obama's short list for the next Supreme Court vacancy are weirdos of various flavors. One says it's OK for the Indiana Legislature to open with an invocation honoring Allah but not Jesus; another calls himself a transnationalist and wants to integrate foreign law into U.S. domestic law; and another wants dogs to have lawyers, and says the government owns the organs of any person who may soon die, and can remove the organs without any consent.

Now that Republicans have 41 Senators, our republic can be saved from such nonsense by a filibuster. So, go to it, Republicans.