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FACT SHEET

Incoming AFL-CIO President

Richard Trumka: An Ugly History of Violence and Corruption

Richard Trumka, former United Mine Workers (UMW) union president and current secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO, is expected to be elected this week as president of the nation's largest union coalition. Trumka's record of militancy, disregard for the rule of law, and condoning of violence by union goons during strikes suggests that his presidency of the AFL-CIO could usher in a new era of forced-unionism extremism.

Trumka's reign (1982-1995) as president of United Mine Workers (UMW) union was marked by militancy, strikes, and union violence

- Trumka's fiery rhetoric often appeared to condone militancy and violence, especially against workers who dared to continue to provide for their families by working during a strike
 - "UMWA President Richard Trumka...urged union members to...**'kick the (expletive) out of every last one of 'em.'**"¹
 - "**You'd have to be very naïve to believe that if management brought in scabs, there won't be something somewhere.**"²
 - "**I'm saying if you strike a match and you put your finger in it, you're likely to get burned.** That doesn't mean I'm threatening to burn you. That just means if you strike the match, and you put your finger in it, common sense will tell you it'll burn your finger."³

- That's exactly what happened during three violent UMW strikes during Trumka's presidency
 - 1993 UMW strike against Peabody Coal -- Eddie York, a 39 year old non-union worker, "was **shot in the back of the head** and killed" leaving a job in Logan County, West Virginia. "Guards told police the truck careened across the road and went into a ditch. **When guards rushed over to check on York, they continued to be pelted with rocks,** guards told police."⁴
 - In a detailed account of the York murder and subsequent investigation, *Reader's Digest* noted that "**UMW President Richard Trumka did not publicly discipline or reprimand a single striker present when York was killed.** In fact, all eight were helped out financially by the local."⁵
 - Eventually, the union agreed to let the company "dismiss the eight original defendants if they were convicted," but when the company "issued letters of dismissal to the seven pickets who pleaded guilty," the union filed a grievance on their behalf.⁶
 - Trumka and other UMW officials were charged in a \$27 million wrongful death suit by Eddie York's widow. After fighting the suit intensely for four years, UMW lawyers settled suddenly in 1997⁷ -- just two days after the judge in the case ruled evidence in the criminal trial would be admitted.⁸
 - 1985 UMW strike against A.T. Massey Coal -- "At the Sprouse Creek Processing Co., Buddy McCoy was a union man who crossed the picket line to become a foreman. 'I had a family to care for,' says McCoy, who received a **three-stitch gash in the head from marauding strikers after his defection.**"⁹
 - 1989 UMW strike against Pittston Coal -- Virginia Circuit Court Judge Donald McGlothlin Jr. declared that "the evidence shows beyond any shadow of a doubt that **violent activities are being organized, orchestrated and encouraged by the leadership of this union.**"¹⁰
 - Unanimous Virginia Supreme Court reinforced Judge McGlothlin's findings: "**Union officials took active roles in these unlawful activities.** Notwithstanding the large fines, the Union never represented to the court that it regretted or intended to cease its lawless actions. To the contrary, **the utter defiance of the rule of law** continued unabated."¹¹

Trumka's tenure as Secretary-Treasurer of AFL-CIO raises serious questions about how he fulfilled his fiduciary duty

- In 1999, Teamsters political director William Hamilton was convicted of embezzlement for his part in an illegal fundraising scheme to benefit Teamsters president Ron Carey's re-election. "Testimony in the trial implicated that Trumka personally turned over AFL-CIO funds to the Teamsters and may have been involved from the start."¹²
- Trumka refused to testify, pleading the Fifth Amendment to both a Congressional committee and the court-appointed election monitor.¹³
- Trumka also refused to talk with AFL-CIO President John Sweeney about the charges and dismissively told a reporter "Look, that's history. History. Total friggin' history."¹⁴
- Sweeney refused to follow the AFL-CIO's policy adopted in 1957, which read "If a trade union official decides to invoke the Fifth Amendment for his personal protection and to avoid scrutiny...he has no right to continue to hold office in his union."¹⁵
- But Sweeney "has since adopted a two-signature requirement for cash outlays" because he didn't know about the \$150,000 of AFL-CIO funds Trumka used until months later.¹⁶
- The AFL-CIO also enacted a new "Ethical Practices Code" amending the Fifth Amendment policy to only expel those union officials "convicted of a felony."¹⁷
- U.S. Rep. Pete Hoekstra (R-MI), who chaired the subcommittee investigating the charges, said that "It is especially troubling that Mr. Trumka remains a key official of the AFL-CIO."¹⁸
- Even the *New York Times* editorial board found Trumka's behavior "disturbing" and called on him to resign.¹⁹
- Charles LaBella, former head prosecutor for the Justice Department's campaign finance task force, told ABC News just before the 2000 Democratic Convention, "If I were advising a candidate, I would advise him or her very strongly that [Richard Trumka is] not someone you want to embrace."²⁰
- Tom Buffenbarger, president of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers union, accused the AFL-CIO in 2009 of using "creative accounting" to hide its deficit from its members.²¹

Trumka has been at the forefront of Big Labor's power grab strategy

- At least by 1994, Trumka was on the record advocating what would become Big Labor's central legislative advocacy a decade later in the so-called Employee Free Choice Act (better known as the Card Check Forced Unionism Bill). In a speech at a teacher union convention, Trumka called for mandatory binding arbitration for first contracts and laws requiring recognition of unions via card check.²²
- At an AFL-CIO of Virginia convention in 1989, "Trumka told the union he will stop at nothing short of a complete overhaul of U.S. labor laws and abolition of the [Right to Work] laws that operate in Virginia and other states."²³

¹ "Sabotage Attempt Foiled at Peabody Coal Beltline." *Nashville News* [Nashville, IL] 8 Sept. 1993.

² Sands, David R. "Striking miners: Big Coal not serious." *Washington Times* 3 Sept. 1993.

³ McClain, John D. "Violence possible UMW chief says." *Virginian-Pilot* [Hampton Roads, VA] 3 Sept. 1993.

⁴ Sanders, Pat. "Trumka calls for peace as probe continues." *Charleston Daily Mail* 24 July 1993.

⁵ Fitzgerald, Randy. "Murder in Logan County." *Reader's Digest* Feb. 1995.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Messina, Lawrence. "Widow settles with UMW." *Charleston Daily Mail* 26 June 1997.

⁸ Hutchison, Ron. "Widow to get trial evidence." *Charleston Daily Mail* 24 June 1997.

⁹ Trippett, Frank. "Violence in the Coalfields." *Time*. 21 June 2005. Web.

<<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1074735,00.html>>.

¹⁰ Feder, Don. "Senate takes a walk on issue of labor unrest." *Boston Herald* 29 Apr. 1990.

¹¹ Miller, Steven. "Louts and Rat World." *Nevada Journal* July 1998. Nevada Policy Research Institute. Web. <<http://nj.npri.org/nj98/07/power&privilege.htm>>.

¹² Novak, Robert. "Trumka Resurfaces, But Will He See a Shadow?" *Chicago Sun-Times* 13 Jan. 2000. Reprinted at *Laborers.org*. <http://www.laborers.org/sun-times_Trumka_1-13-00.html>.

¹³ "The Trumka Card." *Wall Street Journal* [New York] 12 Oct. 1999.

¹⁴ Sulon, Bill. "'No interest' in political office, Trumka declares." *Harrisburg Patriot-News* 7 Mar. 1999.

¹⁵ Greenhouse, Steven. "A.F.L.-C.I.O. Chief Tells Panel of Faith in Deputy." *New York Times* 1 May 1998.

¹⁶ Seper, Jerry. "Grand jury probes Trumka money-laundering charges." *Washington Times* 26 Sept. 2000.

¹⁷ Boehm, Ken. "AFL-CIO bosses looking out for one of their own." *Los Angeles Daily News* 11 Mar. 1998.

¹⁸ Galvin, Kevin. "Sweeney Gives Teamsters' Views." *Associated Press* 30 Apr. 1998. Reprinted at *Laborers.org*. <http://www.laborers.org/AP_Team_4-30-98.html>.

¹⁹ "Growing Troubles for Labor." *New York Times* 28 Nov. 1997.

²⁰ Ross, Brian. "Labor Official Investigated For Fundraising Activities." *ABCNEWS.com*. 15 Aug. 2000. <<http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=96142&page=1>>.

²¹ Rosenkrantz, Holly. "Trumka Has Detractors, Not Opponents, in AFL-CIO Bid." *Bloomberg.com*. 8 June 2009. <<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?sid=aXDR8281bQ1w&pid=20601109>>.

²² "Mine Workers President Calls for Repeal of Section 8 of NLRA." *Daily Labor Report*. 20 July 1994.

²³ "Union Calls for Solidarity." *Washington Post*. 20 Aug. 1989.