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Vampires in America

Workers Solidarity Alliance

1993

Part of the old Eastern European legend says that a vampire must be willingly invited into the house of its victim, and once invited in has its victim in its power. Members of the Teamsters Union (America's largest general trade union) might well ponder this legend.

The Teamsters invited government intervention in the 1980s to help ensure free elections and oust corrupt Mafia controlled officials who had held power for decades. In 1989 a "mutual consent decree" was put in place creating an Independent Review Board to facilitate the democratisation process. The Board was made up of one union representative, one government representative and one 'impartial' outside person, who was to be agreed by both sides. The Board was to be disbanded once free elections took place inside the Teamsters.

On August 20th 1992 Federal Judge David Edelstein ruled in favour of a government request to extend the power of the Board to make decision that "shall be final and binding" and ordered the acceptance of William Webster, former Director of the FBI and CIA, as the 'impartial' third member.

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Retrieved on 10th October 2021 from struggle.ws
Published in *Workers Solidarity* No. 38 – Spring 1993.

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This came after the corrupt officials had been ousted by reform candidates and, significantly, after a string of successful strikes by the reinvigorated Teamsters. Webster, as well as being the former head of the state's secret police agencies, also sits on the boards of the anti-union Pinkerton Security Agency and Anheuser Busch — whose workers are members of the Teamsters Union.

To add insult to overt attack the judge also ordered the union to pay all the expenses of the IRB, including unlimited compensation to Webster who gets \$365 per hour. Union members, who sought to stop corrupt officials stealing from their union, have already been forced to pay over \$30 million for the 'services' of the IRB.

Do we need any more evidence of the need for unions to be independent of the state?