



## Our HISTORY

# The Real Face of Right-to-Work

**M**asquerading in Ohio as "Workplace Freedom", this is just the latest disguise for the 75-year old ideology known as "right-to-work". And its sole purpose is to destroy unions.

By 1930, much like today, labor unions were considered a relic of the past. The Great Depression changed all that, in part because unlike today, Americans had no food stamps, no unemployment insurance, no Social Security, no child labor laws, and no 40-hour week — all the things the labor movement achieved.

The term right-to-work (RTW) was the brainchild of Vance Muse, a white supremacist, anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic, political operative in Texas who rose to national power in the 1920s. In addition to being virulently anti-union, he lobbied against women's suffrage, against the child-labor amendment, against

the 8-hour day, and against the civil rights movement.

Operating from a base in Houston in the early 1940s, Muse set up the Christian American Association, a sort of fundamentalist Ku Klux Klan Lite that was ginned up to undermine President Roosevelt's "New Deal" which empowered workers through collective bargaining rights.

Muse and the Christian American Association had their first big RTW success in 1945, when they succeeded in pushing an anti-union law through the Texas Legislature thanks to a brilliant smear campaign.

Muse arranged for a woman claiming to be the head of the "Texas Communist Party" to testify against RTW before the Texas legislature. Thanks to that testimony, Muse was able to label any pro-union Texas lawmaker a Communist. Immediately flyers were widely distributed warning Texans about "Communists in the Legislature," and listing their names.

The transition to our time has been seamless with the same wealthy families holding the purse strings. Today it's the Koch brothers, Charles

and David, bankrolling RTW. In the 1950s it was their father, Fred Koch, who made his name in right-wing politics and co-founded the John Birch Society.

Among other things, the John Birch Society taught that union members were all Communists and that the Civil Rights movement was a Communist conspiracy with Martin Luther King taking his orders directly from Moscow.

From its beginning RTW was a poison soup of bigotry, Klan racism, and Birch Society paranoia, all intertwined with America's wealthiest industrialists all to keep workers down.

These forces were, and are, committed to turning back the clock — back to when workers worked in company towns, lived in a company house, were paid in company script, only good at the company store.

It's easy to connect the dots and see a picture of the sordid history of Right-to-Work. This is the real face of so-called "Workplace Freedom". It's our generation's turn to take up this fight, and the battlefield is here in Ohio.