



Written by [John F. McManus](#) on August 23, 2017

Leftist Labor Unions Losing Clout

During August 4-5, voting for or against unionization was heavy at the Nissan plant in Canton, Mississippi. After lengthy campaigns waged by both sides that attracted national attention, the verdict rendered by [Nissan's](#) 3,500 employees showed that more than 60 percent wanted nothing to do with the bid of the United Auto Workers (UAW) to be their bargaining agent. As expected, UAW president Dennis Williams accused the company of "intense scare tactics, misinformation and intimidation." Company officials promptly denied each charge. Union organizers don't like to lose. But losing has become their frequent fate, most prominently in the southeastern portion of the United States.



Earlier this year in a 3-to-1 vote, workers at a Boeing plant in South Carolina rejected a bid by the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers to unionize that facility. In 2014, the UAW narrowly lost out in its drive to represent workers at a Tennessee Volkswagen plant. Unionization did triumph in a few smaller plants but, generally, it has failed to capture the lucrative larger prizes.

Only days before the recent Nissan vote, opponents of unionization publicized the case of a Fiat-Chrysler official who was accused of pocketing millions taken from a union training facility for himself and a past UAW colleague. That bombshell has been credited with swaying some Nissan fence sitters to vote against the union.

However, most of the Nissan workers had already sung the praises of the company. Paint technician Marvin Cooke previously held a position at a restaurant where he wasn't able to "have a 401(k) and only have one week of vacation." Hired by Nissan 14 years ago, he said, "Now I have four weeks of vacation. I'm off on every holiday. Nissan has provided a great living for me." Working at the Nissan plant has been a joy for many other area residents.

Nationally, the UAW and labor unions in general have seen membership decline precipitously over the past 50 years — down from one-third of workers in the manufacturing sector to 10 percent of workers in all fields. Many automobile and heavy manufacturing companies have chosen to build plants in Southern states where "right to work" legislation has been enacted. These laws bar compulsory union membership in any facility where a majority of workers may have already chosen unionization.

Where [labor unions](#) originally won acceptance at manufacturing plants, today's union membership includes government employees (e.g. postal workers) and many employed in service industries (e.g. hotel and restaurant workers). But gains for the unions in those fields haven't been enough to overcome losses in manufacturing, the former citadel of labor power.

One consequence of declining labor union membership is the loss of financial and voting power for the Democrat Party. Big Labor, not just the UAW, could always be counted on to swing leftward



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presidential and congressional elections and even state races. The days of UAW Founder Walter Reuther's prominence as a Democratic Party kingpin using UAW to push hard for admittedly socialist goals are over. In 1958, Senator Barry Goldwater publicly characterized Reuther as a "more dangerous menace than anything Soviet Russia might do to America."

Reuther died in a plane crash in 1970, and the parade of his successors as UAW leader and Democratic Party mogul has been just as leftist leaning. So the declining membership and waning political clout of unions is good for America.

John F. McManus is president emeritus of [The John Birch Society](#). This column appeared originally at the [insideJBS](#) blog and is reprinted here with permission.



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