

The Dallas Morning News

*The News, oldest business institution in Texas,
was established in 1842 while Texas was a Republic*

Editorial Page

Dick West, Editorial Director

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1975

Magna Carta:

Right to Work

(After scores of requests, The News is reprinting the editorial below which appeared on Labor Day of 1941. It was written by Editor William B. Ruggles, now retired, and is credited with originating the right-to-work principle in labor relations.)

Twenty-Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States: No person shall be denied employment because of membership in or affiliation with a labor union; nor shall any corporation or individual sign a contract to exclude from employment members of a labor union or persons who refuse to join a union; nor shall any person against his will be compelled to pay dues to any labor organization.

The passage of the Wagner Act was hailed by William Green and John L. Lewis and by others as the arrival of the Magna Carta of labor. Regardless of subsequent changes in thinking by any of the speakers their initial statements were obviously grossly in error. They did not mean the Wagner Act to be or wish it to be the Magna Carta of labor, but of organized labor. Beyond question, the act has been largely enforced as the weapon of organized labor only, frequently by frank individuals who as government officials have asserted that the purpose of the act is to compel organization.

Now this country may wish that it should become

a vast network of union labor. If so, it is within the rights of a democracy to so decide. But the greatest crisis that confronts the nation today is the domestic issue of the right to work as a member of a labor union, if the individual so elects. It is a greater crisis than the international situation, for on its solution may depend our ability to face the dark international future.

Why not then determine the real attitude of the United States? At the head of this editorial appears a suggested Twenty-Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States guaranteeing the right of the individual to work with or without membership in an organized union. If submitted and adopted, that amendment would indeed be the Magna Carta of labor, all labor, not a particular division of labor. It would, if you please, guarantee the open shop as that American institution should be, a shop in which the union man has his organization and bargains with it as he pleases. And in which the non-union man has his rights, free of coercion to join an organization that he does not want.

If the country does not want it, let us say so. If we do want it, adopt it and maintain forever the right to work of every American. To the Seventy-Seventh Congress it is urgently suggested that this amendment should be approved and submitted to the states for ratification.

Compliments of AIECA of Texas