

# 'Shame On' Protests Tear Down Business

By **BILL SMITH**

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Driving around town you may notice some demonstrations in the form of a banner in front of a business with two, maybe three people holding it up. Typically the banner will say "Shame on" the business and "Labor Dispute."

Once in a while you may see a group of people holding similar signs, walking back and forth, chanting, spitting and shouting obscenities.

This type of public display is something that is rather new to our community. At least in the nearly 20 years I have been in New Mexico, it has been rare.

I want to offer some information and set the record straight as to what this is about, since it can be misleading to the average passer-by.

I am the chairman this year of Associated Builders and Contractors of New Mexico (ABC), which is celebrating our 30th anniversary in 2010. ABC and its members are advocates for free enterprise, open competition, ethical business practices, fair labor practices, safety in the workplace and advancement based on merit. Making my living in the construction industry for more than 25 years, I am honored to work with the people and members of ABC, which represents the same ideals that made our country the great beacon of freedom and opportunity that it is.

Unfortunately some of ABC's reputable contractor members have come under attack by organizers from the Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters Union. This union is attempting to damage these businesses with unfounded claims of unfair labor practices.

Yet the targeted contractors offer highly competitive wages and benefits as well as excellent working conditions. Otherwise they would not be allowed as members of ABC.

In fact, the Carpenters Union itself is unfairly spreading false information and attempting to damage good businesses that hire these contractors by blocking access and intimidating customers, all the while not being specific about their complaints.

The union "demonstrations" frequently do not even indicate just who is complaining. Often you will not find "Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters" on their banners.

Just as often the "demonstrators" aren't even carpenters and don't receive benefits from the union, yet the Carpenters Union has hired them to stand in front of businesses with generic "Shame on," "Labor Dispute" signs.

The public should be aware that there is no truthful basis for these attacks. The Carpenters Union is simply fearful that it continues to lose market share to businesses that offer better jobs.

It is an interesting fact that 92 percent of the construction workers in New Mexico are what is known as "merit shop" workers, which means they choose not to belong to a labor union. These workers choose who their employers are and feel they don't need union representation.

The workers employed by the companies under attack are the same way.

It should also be made clear that members of other union organizations have expressed disappointment in the behavior of the Carpenters Union. Not all unions condone this type of negative campaign. In fact, the construction industry in New Mexico enjoys cooperation between merit shop workers and union workers on the same projects. This cooperative spirit should continue.

The intimidation and smear tactics that are being employed by the Carpenters Union are worn out and, frankly, insulting to the public. People want to choose who they work for, who represents them, how they run their lawful businesses and what businesses they patronize, without intimidation.

Isn't that what America is about?

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