

NWA strike, what really happened.....

Previously posted by Boomer with some additions.

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http://works.bepress.com/peter_rachleff/

Comments from Peter Rachleff on the NWA AMFA Strike:

http://www.kclabor.org/strike_at_northwest_airlines.htm

The IAM has excoriated AMFA as “raiders” and “elitists,” and they have, so far, convinced the AFL-CIO to withhold its support and to encourage its affiliates to do the same.

Interestingly, in the midst of this process, the IAM used its influence with the National Mediation Board (this was during the Clinton administration) to get the bargaining unit redrawn to include the custodians and cleaners in AMFA’s jurisdiction. They were hoping that these workers, who had not been courted by AMFA’s advocates, would vote to stay with the IAM and thereby defeat the reaffiliation. But AMFA won the 1999 representation election hands down and went on to negotiate a contract that brought substantial (20% and more) wage increases to workers whose wages had stagnated for more than a decade.

When 10,000 mechanics, cleaners, and custodians elected AMFA to represent their interests and 14,000 flight attendants elected PFAA, NWA refused to give them seats on the board. They continued to treat the IAM and the Teamsters as if they still represented the very workers who had voted them out, and they still sit there.

The IAM and the AFL-CIO have been overtly hostile. The IAM not only ordered its members to cross AMFA’s picket lines (they threatened to replace the president of Local 1833 and trustee the local if he did not cross).

Rick Banks, director of the AFL-CIO's "Collective Bargaining Department,"

privately ordered all state labor federations, city central labor bodies, and affiliates to deny AMFA strikers food, money, or other forms of material support, or advocating a boycott of NWA. Leaders of central labor bodies in the Twin Cities moved quickly to discourage affiliated unions from offering support, speaking at rallies, or welcoming AMFA speakers at their meetings.

AMFA had inherited a contract negotiated by the IAM which included no language limiting "farming out." In their first contract, they reached a "compromise" figure of 38%, which NWA wanted to raise to 53% in their current proposal. (can we put this bed finally, it was not AMFA)

Unity of action has been effectively blocked for decades, despite legal access to the right to sympathy strike. Unions have been pitted against each other at the bargaining table, even more so in the concessionary environment of the past decade.

The larger labor "movement" has not provided effective mechanisms (e.g. the AFL-CIO's "Transportation Trades Department") to bring unions together. Unions have been largely left on their own for better or, more often, for worse (AMFA has always strived for one union/one voice)

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When the mechanics, cleaners, custodians, baggage handlers, ticket agents and white collar office workers said "No," their union, the International Association of Machinists District 143, insisted that they vote, revote and re-revote (what is "democracy" the third time over?) on the same package. As voter turnout plummeted, the concessionary contract was finally ratified. (sound familiar to TWU?)

AMFA also instituted internal union practices which cemented the members' allegiance. Its locals have no bureaucracy, no full-time officers; AMFA officers wear the same overalls and work the same jobs as the women and men they represent.

AMFA's practice of collective bargaining also allows for an open door to rank-and-file observers. Despite fierce protests from corporate management, any member who wishes to watch a bargaining session is welcome to attend

Shortly after the NWA mechanics defected to AMFA, frustrated flight attendants launched their own campaign to withdraw from the Teamsters and start their own independent union, modeled after AMFA, called the Professional Flight Attendants Association. **When Hoffa responded by placing Local 2000 under trusteeship he pretty much guaranteed that the Teamsters would lose the election, which they did.**

<http://www.fightbacknews.org/2005/04/afscmeamfa.htm>

They hate AMFA because AMFA is independent and has grown by 'raiding' AFL-CIO unions, particularly units represented by the International Association of Machinists (IAM). The Northwest mechanics used to be IAM members but voted in 2000 to switch to AMFA. The IAM officials have bitterly attacked them ever since. It's true that AMFA made their appeal to the mechanics on a narrow craft basis tinged with elitism. But it's also true that the workers had good reasons to throw the former IAM leadership out.

<http://www.icl-fi.org/english/wv/853/amfa.html>

AMFA members don't lack determination, **but they can't win alone!** What's needed first of all is for AMFA to call on the International Association of Machinists (IAM), the Airline Pilots Association (ALPA) and the Professional Flight Attendants Association (PFAA) to **stop scabbing and join the picket lines**. There are already individuals fighting within those unions to do the right thing. Addressing a strike support rally in Minneapolis on August 27, Peggy Lubinski, who was fired for honoring AMFA picket lines, told her fellow flight attendants: "You need to walk!" An IAM baggage handler walking the picket line in Detroit told WV that he had been fighting for his union to stop scabbing.

Today the union tops are brazen in their backstabbing. IAM general vice president Robert Roach responded to AMFA's request for solidarity from IAM ramp workers and customer service agents: "IAM members will not be duped into standing with AMFA." The IAM local president in Detroit tried to put a spin on the scabbing by claiming it was better for his union to do the scab work than have an outside contractor do it!

Trying to justify such strikebreaking, the national AFL-CIO organizing director labeled AMFA a "renegade, raiding organization that is creating havoc in the airline industry," adding, "It's not in the house of labor." It was the IAM misleaders' pattern of agreeing to concession after concession that convinced mechanics at a number of carriers to leave the IAM for AMFA.

<http://oreaddaily.blogspot.com/2005/09/amfa-strike.html>

Questioned about AMFA's requests for support, AFL-CIO Organizing Director Stewart Acuff attacked the union shortly before the strike as a "renegade, raiding organization" and said AMFA and its more than 10,000 members are "not in the house of labor."

The Machinists union, which represents gate agents and other ground crew workers at Northwest, holds a grudge against AMFA, which has gained most of its members by decertifying IAM units. Northwest mechanics and cleaners left the IAM for AMFA in 1997.

IAM Vice President Robert Roach has said, "IAM members will not be duped into standing with AMFA."

Some IAM members have not only been crossing the lines, but also taking on

AMFA members' work. "To cross a picket line is bad enough," said Yubian, "but crossing a picket line to do struck work—you shouldn't even be in a union."

<http://libcom.org/library/the-2005-northwest-airlines-strike>

AFL-CIO Treachery

AMFA is not affiliated to the AFL-CIO. Apparently still smarting from the workers exodus from the IAM, the federation did all it could to undermine AMFA during the strike. The AFL actually sent a letter to every metro labor council in the country ordering the unions to refuse any support to AMFA. This had a very chilling effect on solidarity efforts. In concrete terms it meant that even raising simple motions for a donation at your local union's meeting would be opposed by most union officials. It meant that no wider mobilizations of official labor solidarity would be possible. It created a huge obstacle to reaching the constituency that would be most naturally supportive of AMFA's struggle.

<http://www.socialistaction.org/pollack5.htm>

Northwest exploits divisions in labor

From the beginning of the strike, officials of other unions—from the International Association of Machinists (IAM) and Air Line Pilots' Association (ALPA) at Northwest, to the heads of the AFL-CIO—have denied AMFA support, claiming it was a breakaway union that had raided IAM locals.

It's not surprising that IAM officials showed no support for AMFA strikers. Unfortunately, they tried to cover their backstabbing with misrepresentations of AMFA's bargaining approach, claiming—incorrectly—that AMFA was trying to shift portions of the billions in cuts the bosses wanted onto other unions on the property. **But in fact, AMFA repeatedly pointed out how all unions were in the fight together**, and AMFA negotiator Jeff Mathews warned that "some groups, including the IAM, may be asked to shoulder a disproportionately larger share of the new target amount."

<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2005/aug2005/nwa-a23.shtml>

Northwest owes whatever "success" it has achieved largely to the betrayal carried out by the trade union bureaucracy. The airline has been able to continue its operations only because of decisions by the Air Line Pilots Association and the International Association of Machinists, both member unions of the AFL-CIO, to cross picket lines. The Professional Flight Attendants Association (PFAA), which like the AMFA is an independent union, has also decided to continue work.

<http://www.mltranslations.org/Us/ROL/ROLaflcio.htm>

No Labor Solidarity for Northwest Airline Mechanics

Those who claim to want to rebuild the labor movement within the newly formed CTW coalition as well as those who remained in the AFL-CIO have flunked an early test.

On August 20th, less than one month after the AFL-CIO "split", 4,400 mechanics, represented by AMFA (Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association), went on strike against Northwest Airlines, refusing to accept massive concessions and job reductions as so many other airline unions have done. AMFA is an association built on the raiding of other unions, particularly the International Association of Machinists. For whatever reason, AMFA has followed through with a commitment to resist concessions. The AMFA airline mechanics at Northwest took a stand to stop the floodgates of massive concessions plaguing airline workers from mechanics to pilots, from flight attendants to reservationists.

Northwest Airlines has a well developed plan to break the union and the Bush Administration acceded to the request by Northwest not to invoke emergency provisions as is usually done (against the workers) in airline disputes. In an article from the Christian Science Monitor entitled "Why Big Labor hasn't aided striking machinists," staff writer Alexander Marks accurately surmises that, "If Northwest rides out the strike and succeeds in breaking the union, it could be a watershed in the history of the American labor movement, many analysts say -- a key event in a long string of setbacks that have weakened the role of organized workers as a political and social force in the country".

The article continues, "Some labor experts go so far as to infer that Northwest isn't alone in wanting to break AMFA, speculating that Big Labor, which has not come to AMFA's aid would not shed too many tears if it fell. As a result, they say, the strike was lost before it began. 'This is payback time for AMFA. That's the way the labor movement is looking at it, says Gary Chaison, a professor of industrial relations ... raiding is a sin, and AMFA raided and won [by] saying it would never accept concessions. It'll be much easier for other unions to tell members that they must accept concessions if AMFA was killed for not doing it'."

While such bourgeois analysts understand what is at stake for the workers, a shameless and clueless AFL-CIO representative is quoted in the same article as saying, "I don't think this will have wider implications because of the nature of this particular organization."

No sooner were these words spoken than the initial company victory in the Northwest strike opened the floodgates for an aggressive corporate drive against the US workers and their unions. ***(this is what scabbing AMFA's work, helping the company and not supporting the NWA strike got everyone)*** Northwest has gone after the rest of their workforce demanding massive concessions from flight attendants, ramp service workers, and pilots. Delphi, the largest automobile parts maker, declared bankruptcy. Holding up the example of the Northwest mechanics, Delphi's CEO warned the UAW workers not to strike. Delphi is demanding a wage cut from \$25.00 to \$9.00 per hour and a similar reduction in benefits. Now General Motors is wresting massive concessions from the UAW amounting to \$15 Billion in savings on health care costs. The pundits of Wall Street gleefully reported in a lead editorial ("Rip Van UAW") in the *Wall Street Journal* of October 18, 2005, "Two cheers for the United Auto Workers

Union ... this is a watershed concession by the American industrial workforce in the middle of a contract that doesn't expire until 2007..."

if other airline unions had honored the Northwest mechanics picket lines, the strike could have been won. Instead, the strike is essentially lost, and the US monopoly capitalist class was the victor. Unions in both the AFL-CIO and the CTW Coalition represent airline workers. Both consciously refused to stand in solidarity with the mechanics and both share responsibility for the labor setback that is occurring now. The PATCO history is repeated. Stern of the CTW motion is right that the labor movement must be rebuilt, but union solidarity is the best place to start. He and the CTW leadership as well as the AFL-CIO leaders miserably failed "Labor Solidarity 101".

<http://atwonline.com/operations-maintenance/news/northwest-moving-forward-strike-contingency-plans-0309>

"We are virtually the last airline to have fully licensed A&P mechanics driving pushback tractors and we're also virtually the last airline to have its own cleaners," Steenland said. Senior cleaners, including benefits and pensions, "cost the company approximately \$65,000 per year per employee."

The Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association is, like the PFAA, not affiliated with the AFL-CIO. Six years ago, the Northwest mechanics, who were then members of the IAM along with baggage handlers and other ground employees, left the IAM and formed their own unit of AMFA. Now the IAM has reportedly agreed to allow some of its members to perform tasks normally done by striking airplane cleaners who are members of AMFA.

AMFA 2013 and BEYOND.....

Stop listening to the twists and read for yourself

and then realize you were duped and lead to believe lies.

do you want more of this or a union with a goal to represent the airline class and craft from a position of strength one union/one voice!

Sign an AMFA Card and silence the lies.

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