Labor Unrest Spreads

anon.

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America moves closer to a labor crisis as other unions enter or poise for strikes throughout the country. Air travel has been seriously crippled by the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) walk-out in many major U.S. cities, and they have affected air travel throughout the world.

PATCO represents over half of the 14,000 air traffic controllers in the country and are the principal union responsible for the "sick-call" walkouts. Negotiations with them have not only not been material, but the Federal government has taken an active roll in trying to break the strike.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has condemned the strikers for endangering air travel, yet they are the agency responsible for air safety. Ironically, one of the issues around which the strikers walked out was the fact that the equipment they were forced to use on the job was unsafe and obsolete.

Further, the FAA has authorized terminals to use untrained controllers in an attempt to break the strike by continuing air service. The FAA has recently even resorted to direct sanctions against the workers.

In a statement released March 31, they stated that the strikers would face punishments, while those controllers who stayed on their jobs would receive bonuses and options for promotions.

In fact, individual workers have received 30-day notices of dismissals from the agency. Despite their actions, opposition and walkouts seem to be growing as the number of strikers has reached 25%.

Meanwhile, truck and rail unions are about to erupt into wildcat strikes also if negotiations don't produce acceptable terms quickly. The Teamsters Union rank and file rejected the first concrete offer to come out of two months of negotiations with the Trucking Employers, Inc. (TEI).

Spokesmen for the Teamsters scoffed at the offer, pointing to the fact that the TEI contract proposal didn't even contain any wage increase language at all. The current contract for the half-million member union expired March 31.

In the 45,000 member AFL-CIO railroad shopcraft union, 15 months of talks on wage increases have produced nothing. Union leaders expressed the warning that massive walkouts were going to happen any day despite a government statement from the Department of Labor forbidding strike action until after 11.

To add to the turmoil, the Labor Department recently released statistics concerning strikes and inflation. The report stated that there were more man-days lost through strikes in January 1970 than in any other single month since 1946. Almost one-quarter of a million workers were out on strike in January alone, representing nearly four million idle work days.

On the other side of the economic/depression cycle, the inflation news was not much better.

In fact, the report revealed that even those workers who struck and won their demands did not make much headway, because inflation ate up the gains. The workers who did not strike lost ground.

A comparison of the income of the average worker today, who has three dependants, with one a decade ago, shows that today's worker is worse off. His average take-home pay total for the last two years was only $77.78 per month -actually 13 cents below his 1957–59 totals.

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