PATCO STRIKE OF 1981: Students in Support of Curriculum

LESSON RESOURCE PACKAGE

LESSON ONE: PATCO Strike Correspondence
DESCRIPTION: A letter of support from the public. Supportive letters from the public were rare, especially from individuals not attached to a labor union. This particular letter also includes a contribution. Contributions to PATCO were returned to senders after PATCO’s bank accounts were seized, and were requested for PATCO’s Defense Fund instead.
Oquaga, N.Y.
August 4, 1931

Dear Mr. Poli,

I beg you to stop this illegal strike. When you take a vow not to strike, are you being a good citizen of America when you go back on your word?

We have a good president who wants to get our country back on its feet, why can't you cooperate and be a help instead of a hindrance.

Japan is becoming a successful country because its workers are not selfishly thinking of self, but of their nation is good.

Jews Chris  one yesterday, and to day, and for ever. —Hebrews 13:8
“Jesus Christ’s name yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”
—Hebrews 13:8

My personal belief that the communists are back after the strike in America. They are out to destroy our economy one way or the other. You are working with their plan.

We have the best nation on earth. Our workers get wonderful pay compared to other nations. So it need for the tax payers who work hard to make ends meet to see your reasoning.

We are retired, but our income is about $6,500 a month for my husband and Social Security plus 40% pension. It helps me How would you like to live on that? In $50?
...T we love each other, married almost 45 yrs. My husband a
matron for that length of time.
We love God, and our country,
our president and are thankful
to be living here instead of Russia.

Sincerely,
K. Payne
DESCRIPTION: Letter from a veteran to PATCO President Robert E. Poli, dated the first day of the strike. This letter includes comments on Communism and the political climate of the time, as well as other recipients.

3 Aug 1981

Mr. Poli,

You are a Communist and a traitor to the United States of America. Anyone who defies the order of the President of the United States, the laws of this country, and the oath they signed should be fired, or jailed. I am a retired Air Force Controller and I have written the President and asked for my service. I have contacted 12 other fellow servicemen, who also are ready to fill the slot of all you con-Americans.

Our Government is not taking harsh a cruel action against you people. You are wrong, Desk King, You who leave your jobs should be fired and should not be hired again ever in any Government job in this Country.

I feel all you un-American should be put on planes and flown to Russia. See if you can strike them. I know our Country can and will pull through this without you people.

A Retired Veteran
God Bless America.
DESCRIPTION: One of the more colorful examples of correspondence to PATCO during their 1981 strike.
8/6/81

Mr. Robert Polli, Pres.
Air Traffic Controllers Union
444 N. Capitol Street
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Sir:

In my opinion you are a traitor to this nation and you should be hanged near the statue of Liberty.

Maybe if the F.B.I. checked your past record they could deport you as a dangerous alien.

I shall ask GOD to take a reading on you and hit you where it hurts most.

Luther A. Smith

LAS/bls

cc: Senator Thad Cochran
    Senator John Stennis
    President Ronald Reagan
DESCRIPTION: Telegram to Robert E. Poli regarding inconveniences in air travel.
Dear Mr. Poli:

I sympathize with your plight, but abhor the unreasonable, greedy demands that brought you there. A small poll in my bailiwick parallels my feelings.

Enclosed is a copy of a letter I have sent to President Reagan. I hope it reaches him and precipitates some good.

A pyrrhic victory leads to eventual disaster. Don't lead to such a fate all those air traffic controllers under your aegis. In some way, get out a feeler to the President (he is a good, honest, compassionate man) stating that you will more or less accede to the government's last offer. Get your men their jobs back! Eating crow is better than eating nothing. Try it!

Copy to: Ronald Reagan, Pres. of the U.S.A.
James J. Vitiello
White House
Washington, D.C.
Ronald Reagan
President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

August 16, 1981

2 4 3 T r e m o n t A v e.
Orange, N. J. 07050

Dear Mr. President:

You were almost entirely right in your dealings with the Air Traffic Controllers' affair, because the latter were unfair with their too excessive demands. Kudos for your bravery, and bah humbug to the controllers' greediness.

However, your decision was very harsh and draconian. Remember, "The quality of mercy is not strained; it droppeth like a gentle rain from heaven." But out a feeler to PATCO that all will be forgiven if they "come home" and accept the government's last offer tendered to them.

In other words, rain some gentle drops, but a little bone as a sop so they may save face. Compassion is a weakness in communism, but a strength in democracy. Try it!

Copy to: Hubert H. Humphrey

PATCO
44 Capitol St.
Washington, D.C.

Respectfully,

James J. Vitello

James J. Vitello

Special Collections, Georgia State University Library
DESCRIPTION: A brief letter sent to PATCO during the strike.

THREE CHEERS FOR REAGAN FOR UPHOLDING THE LAW
DESCRIPTION: Letter calling Robert E. Poli an anarchist.
It is questionable if there is ever an opportune time to make the unconscionable demands on an employer which your organization attempted. This particular moment appears to be a poor time to suggest even a normal adjustment in pay. Additionally, you could not expect a strike against us (the taxpayers) to be tolerated in the present economic climate.

The foregoing constitutes three bad judgments, consequently there were three strikes against you before reaching the plate.

The statement “we are going to awaken the American people” has been attributed to you. In that you have certainly succeeded, and obviously you have disturbed a hornets nest. A little advanced research would have disclosed that the general public has a very low tolerance for striking public employees and certainly small appreciation for the sob stories of the controllers. In the past the taxpayers have resented and felt powerless to seek redress when civil service people went on strike, but are now encouraged with an administration with the courage to protect their interests.

The speed of your members has exceeded all limits; and the resultant irresponsible act of striking is jeopardizing the flying public and the economic health of the airline industry which generates their employment. There is no way you could have been successful.

A current general poll would reveal popular support for the Administration, the FAA and Secretary of Transportation Drew Lewis. The average
(2) The person who is informed on the subject is hopeful that they will be eminently successful in rebuilding the system. Any catastrophe in the interim will be attributed to the illegal strikers – correction – discharged air controllers.

It is perhaps apropos for you, in this difficult time, and your members too, to review the old quote – “Tyranny brings on repression”.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Former Civil Service and Pilot (AOPA 490266)
DESCRIPTION: A “pox” on Robert E. Poli and PATCO stress “bullshit.”

Dear Mr. Poli,

Hopefully you and other greedy malcontents like you will be looking for work soon. This country will prove that you and your air controllers are not indispensable. The country is tired of all this “stress” bullshit your group has tried to hide behind. A Pox on you.

J. S. Prone
DESCRIPTION: Typewritten card to Robert E. Poli, without spell check.

MR. POLI, AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS UNION LEADER. 08-05-81

Sir,

You may have 30,000 air controllers backing your illegal strike, but you are getting some 300,000,000 people angry at you for your blackmail tactics on the strike. YOU ALL took jobs as civil servants, knowing you cannot strike. If you keep up striking forever long, you will find travellers will use other methods of travel, cutting your members out of jobs.

I am a civil servant, and I resent your strong arm tactics. I hope we find methods of getting your work done without a single PATCO member.....

I agree with President’s Reagan's fire order, and hope the judges give you many years of hard labor.

Sincerely, Irvin Bennett Miller # 4194 Jason, Houston, TX 770
DESCRIPTION: Two telegrams from the same sender, sent within an hour of each other. These mailgrams are one of the rare examples in the PATCO correspondence where the sender does not have an absolute opinion of who is correct in the strike. However, there is still an emotional appeal.
Western Union Telegram

1981 AUG 16 RM 51 3

VFA222(0124)x(1-2003784228)PD 08/16/81 0124

0521 08-16 0218A EDT

4-0003856228 08/16/81

5154321124 ITH Syracuse NY 08-16 0106A EST

Mr. Robert Poli, President Professional Air Traffic Controllers

Organization Apt DLY MOM, DLR

Washington DC

Dear Mr. Poli,

I sent you a Telegram a half hour ago and wish to add the following:

I want you to know I'm not against your union and frankly not against

unions in general. I merely disagree with what your union did that
doesn't mean I'm right or I'm wrong it merely affects my opinion.

Please understand I'm merely trying to speak my mind and I honestly

hope you will have taken my advice as stated in my previous Telegram.

I wish you and your members the very best of luck and pray that

everyone comes to an equitable settlement.

Kenneth Borden

315 Schafer Ave.

Syracuse NY 13205

3106 EST

MNAN
DESCRIPTION: Russians behind PATCO strike.
DESCRIPTION: A four page telegram threatening a lawsuit against PATCO should their upcoming strike delay the return of thousands of Boy Scouts from the National Jamboree in Virginia. Note carbon copies.
There are 10's of thousands of such Boy Scouts who may be relying on long planned air service from the Jamboree and I will offer to allow all of them and their families to join this litigation if they choose to do so.

It is my understanding that each and every controller fully is aware of the strong possibility of the illegality of the threatened strike, walkout, sabotage or slowdown. Therefore, each such controller fully knows the possible effect of his personal action.

This will not be a union vs. management lawsuit. Each controller not fully furnishing his reasonably expected duties during the week of August 3-8 will be expected to pay all appropriate damages, including court approved punitive damages, out of his own personal funds.
WE LIVE IN GREELEY COLORADO. OUR 13 YEAR OLD SON IS IN VIRGINIA. HIS FLIGHT HOME HAS BEEN SCHEDULED FOR ALMOST A YEAR. PLACE YOURSELVES IN OUR POSITION AND UNDERSTAND THAT WE ARE SERIOUS IN THIS ADVICE TO YOU.

CC: PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN
SENATOR WILLIAM ARMSTRONG
SENATOR GARY HART
CONGRESSMAN HANK BROWN
NEWSDESK, CHANNEL 9 NEWS, DENVER, COLORADO
EDITOR, DENVER POST
LONSDALE COUNCIL, BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA, 2215 23RD AVE, GREELEY, CO 80631
Western Union

Telegram

GREELEY TRIBUNE, 714 S ST, GREELEY, CO. 80631

THOMAS J ARON JR, ATTORNEY AT LAW
GREELEY COLORADO
2066 40TH AVE
GREELEY CO 80634

0414 EST
NNNN
DESCRIPTION: PATCO President Robert E. Poli as devil.

NEW YORK  August 17, 1961

Poor Dear Mr. Poli

Now you are crying in your beer. You had your members thought you had a cinch, tie up the industry, wreck havoc and gain your impossible demands. It is people like you who are responsible for the lack of respect for law and order with the resulting crime. You set a wonderful example.

I do not believe that the President wants to break the union, but he should. Unionism has gone too far. Newspapers all over the U. S. are going out of business, a letter will cost 20 cents. Incredible. Now you want a $10,000 raise and a reduction of work week. How greedy can you get. I would give my name, only I do not want your goons to put a bullet in me.

Special Collections, Georgia State University Library
DESCRIPTION: Next three images are a decorative letter with envelope to Robert E. Poli.
LAUGH I'll Like Hell when U.S.A.

Ruts: All Unions & PATCO

Strikers out of business

"All" Unions should be abolished - I always write Congress to continue 
Pat & ramparts (bugging all unions stores)

Tell your local "lawbreaker" not to call me or visit

Because any "lawbreaker" breaking into my home will be put in a "military strain" and/or I'll gladly press charges & jail em'

Above is a promise believe me "Bobby" I'm a bad s.o.b.
"Bobby": Reagan Called Your Bluff!

Here's Sample of What Public Thinks of "Law-Breaking PATCO Strikers"

I'm 100% Real-American Who Resent Unions "Trying" to Hold U.S.A. Hostage Like That Crazy-Sick Khomeni

Iranian S.O.B. To Pray U.S. Abolishes "All" Unions & Jails Strikers. Also PATCO Had Better Not Intimidate Me ("Hazards to Law-Breakers"

Health!!!

Priscilla

1. Applaud President Reagan's decision to terminate the primitive of the air traffic control profession. The president's swift action should serve as a lesson to all government employees that the tail does not wag the dog.

2. The people, provide the money and through our representatives should and will provide the limits within which that money will be spent. Parastatals' overmanagement will not be tolerated either by greedy, egocentric bureaucrats or the fraud-minded segment of welfare professionals. Ronnie should keep up the good work. Uncle Sam is quickly becoming Uncle Sam at home and abroad.

—W.D. Thurman

El Paso
Dear Mr. Poli,

As president of PATCO, you are supposed to be a leader.

Now as a labor leader, how could you possibly have supported Ronald Reagan for presidency? It boggles my mind how any labor leader could even consider supporting a Republican - just name me one thing that a Republican has done for the labor movement.

I think you owe the entire labor union movement an apology for your support of Ronald Reagan.

I hope now you keep the pressure on the free and see that R. Reagan is a one term president!

Incidentally, I do not belong to a labor union as I work as a sole rep, but my sympathy lies with the unions.
All I can say is, I hope you and your
family have this fight.

Sincerely,

Leonard Berg
Box D
Plain, WI 53577
DESCRIPTION: Letter in support of the PATCO strike from Lisabeth Hush of the Institute for Career and Vocation Training who at the time of the letter is also a member of the Screen Actors Guild, the union which Ronald Reagan headed.
DESCRIPTION: Letter to Robert E. Poli from the International Typographical Union expressing their support of the PATCO, and the attached Resolution to Ronald Reagan to rehire the PATCO strikers, developed during the ITU 123rd Convention.

International TYPOGRAPHICAL Union
THOMAS W. KOPECK, Secretary-Treasurer • P. O. Box 2341, Colorado Springs, Colo. 80901 • Phone (303) 323-2460

October 2, 1981

President Robert E. Poli
Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization
444 North Capitol Street, Northwest
Washington, DC 20001

Dear President Poli:

The enclosed Resolution was adopted by the 123rd Convention of the International Typographical Union held in Montreal, Canada, August 24-28, 1981.

A copy of this Resolution has been sent to President Ronald Reagan.

With kind regards, I am

Fraternally yours,

Thomas W. Kopec
Secretary-Treasurer

Encl: Resolution No. 77
By the 123rd Convention of the International Typographical Union, a

Resolution

PROPOSITION NO. 77

Whereas, The strike by the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) has entered its fourth week with no efforts having been made by the U.S. Government, including President Ronald Reagan and Secretary of Transportation Drew Lewis, to address the problems leading to the dispute, and

Whereas, Members of PATCO have historically demonstrated they are a union of responsible, hard working, law abiding citizens who have performed in an admirable fashion a very important service to the people of the United States, and

Whereas, Members of PATCO are demonstrating in the only manner left open to them their feelings about the conditions under which they must work and the great need for improvement of those conditions, and

Whereas, The United States Government has decided to pursue positive measures rather than to negotiate a fair contract and has brought the full force and power of the government down on members of PATCO while continuing to ignore the serious grievances which caused PATCO members to withhold their services, and

Whereas, The United States Government was designed and should continue to stand as an example of freedom and justice for all people; where all people, including the workers, may have their grievances and opinions heard with a sense of hope that they will receive fair and equitable treatment in this free society; where the power of the government is never used to stifle dissent with shackles, chains, military might, jails and prisons, but with restraint, understanding and meaningful negotiations leading to equitable agreements, now therefore be it

Resolved, That the International Typographical Union in convention assembled in Montreal, Canada, August 24-28, 1981, expresses its sympathy to PATCO for the harsh and unjustified treatment they have received from the United States Government and our serious concern and support for all their members and the causes for which they are so courageously fighting, and be it further

Resolved, That the International Typographical Union urges in the name of human justice and decency that President Ronald Reagan immediately refer this matter to a fair and impartial panel of professional arbitrators to serve as a fact finding commission to carefully study the causes of the dispute and make recommendations for a quick and fair resolution to this serious problem facing our nation.

By Order of the Convention

[Signatures]

[Signature]

President

[Signature]

First Vice-President

[Signature]

Second Vice-President

[Signature]

Third Vice-President

[Signature]

Secretary-Treasurer

[Signature]
DESCRIPTION: Letter from the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers Airline Coordinator William L. Scheri to union member Betty Heckel, assuring her the IAMAW will support the PATCO strike in whatever capacity possible.

September 17, 1981

GOV-2 Patco

Subject: PATCO Strike

Ms Betty Heckel
290 Dolphin Way
Laguna Beach, California 92651

Dear Sister Heckel:

This will acknowledge receipt of your correspondence dated August 8, 1981, addressed to International President William W. Winpisinger, regarding the PATCO strike against the United States Government, which has been referred to my office for response.

Please be advised that the International Association of Machinists has been rendering PATCO financial assistance, use of our facilities throughout the country, and walking their picket lines.

We have been constantly studying the possibility of taking action against the government, or the carriers we represent, but have been unable to because of the question regarding the legality of the PATCO strike and the specific contract language in our agreements regarding strikes during the life of the contract.

Such an undertaking on our part would create a dispute much larger than PATCO’s involving court action and damage suits that the government and carriers would really appreciate having against us. We would be jeopardizing the jobs of our members and resources of our union. Any type of national shutdown in assistance to the Air Traffic Controllers would require the total labor movement which we have been unsuccessful in soliciting to date.

You can be assured that we will continue to explore all possible ways to render assistance to PATCO in their dispute with the government.

Fraternally yours,

William L. Scheri
Airline Coordinator

WLS: EAW
C: W.W.Winpisinger
J.F. Peterpaul

ORGANIZE

Special Collections, George State University Library
DESCRIPTION: Letter to Ed Gannon of PATCO Hawaii from Patrick Uchigakiuchi, President of Hawaii State Teachers Staff Organization, to express support and give a monetary contribution to the strike.

October 28, 1981

Mr. Ed Gannon
PATCO
Suite 606/745 Fort St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Mr. Gannon:

As an expression of support in your struggle against the Federal government, I have been authorized by the membership of our staff union to contribute a $100 toward your strike fund. I know that this will be put to good use, and with it go our deepest feelings for the predicament you are in and the courage you have shown.

We all have been closely following your strike, and are appalled at the actions which the President and the Federal Government have taken in their strike-busting activities and in their attempt to de-certify your union. With the strength that you have shown, we are confident that you will prevail.

Should there be anything that we can do, please let us know. Good luck, and hang in there!

Sincerely,

Patrick Uchigakiuchi
President
Hawaii State Teachers Staff Organization

Pu-ehek
Enclosure

RECEIVED

Nov 9 1981

PATCO EAST
ANS'D
DESCRIPTION: Resolution of the United Transportation Union Local 800 in solidarity with the PATCO strike.

October 13, 1981

To John Kubic, all PATCO members and their families:

At its meeting on September 8, 1981, United Transportation Union Local 800, representing railroad firefighters and engineers, passed the following resolution unanimously, in support of the PATCO strikers:

Whereas UTU Local 800 expresses our concern for and solidarity with the PATCO strikers who are currently fighting for their lives and their right to exist as a labor organization, and
Whereas all labor is under attack today, but none so brutally and viciously as the air traffic controllers, and
Whereas it is clear that if the government can get away with their union-busting attack against PATCO, then all of labor is in grave danger, and
Whereas as transportation workers, railroaders understand PATCO’s fight is our fight, and that we are all up against the attempt to bring non-union shops and companies into the transportation industry, and where that is not possible, to break the existing unions, with the threat of physical danger posed to the people we service,
Therefore be it resolved that UTU Local 800 stands shoulder to shoulder in solidarity with the PATCO strikers. Your fight is our fight. An injury to one is an injury to all.

In solidarity,

Harlan G. Stabler,
on behalf of Local 800
DESCRIPTION: Resolution of the AFL-CIO of Oakland, California in solidarity with the PATCO strike.

WHEREAS, the Air Controllers strike has now gone on for more than sixty days and
WHEREAS, the strike could have been won very early if the Air Line Pilots had exercised their rights under their own contract to refuse to fly when doing so is unsafe and
WHEREAS, Captain John J. O'Donnell, President of the Air Line Pilots Association has not only encouraged ALPA members to work behind PATCO lines but has gone on national television to parrot the Reagan administration's claim that the skies are safe and
WHEREAS, ALPA members, laid off because of the strike, are now scabbing on the Air Controllers.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that this Central Labor Council go on record respectfully requesting the Executive Council of the AF of L-CIO to recommend to the upcoming Convention that the Air Line Pilots Association be expelled from the AF of L-CIO (Article III Section B) for activities detrimental to the organization and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be sent to the California Labor Councils and the California Federation of Labor.

RECEIVED

[Signature]

[Date]
DESCRIPTION: Letter to Alex Bledsoe, Director of the Airline Pilots Association (ALPA), from John R. Hanson of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), Local 1837, expressing solidarity with PATCO and befuddlement that most pilots are unsupportive of their strike.

128 College Avenue
Orono, Maine  04471

September 21, 1981

Mr. Alex Bledsoe, Director
Airline Pilots Association
59 Temple Place, Suite 715
Boston, Massachusetts  02111

Dear Brother Bledsoe:

Thank you for your letter and material regarding the situation ALPA faces with New York Air. Please be assured I will not be flying New York Air for as long as this dispute continues.

I would like you to know however, I am presently not flying any airline. This is because, as a union member, I also support our brothers and sisters of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization who are, like ALPA members, struggling for fairness, justice and recognition.

I note from the brochure you provided that "ALPA's major concerns - air safety and union representation - are closely connected..." I couldn't agree more. It's also good to be assured that ALPA's motto is "Schedule With Safety."

With such apparent singularity of purpose, community of interest, and acknowledged need for unity I ponder why airline pilots are so indifferent, in fact even hostile to the plight of air controllers?

In solidarity,

[Signature]
John R. Hanson
IBEW 1837

SRR/ral

CC: Stephen Linsky
ALPA - New York
ALPA - Washington, D.C.
Charles O'Leary
Robert Poli

RECEIVED
SEP 25 1981
ANS'D

PATCO EAST
DESCRIPTION: Letter from the executives of the American Federation of Government Employees advising one of their union members to support the PATCO strikers, and their families, in accordance with the AFL-CIO.
DESCRIPTION: Three fliers supporting PATCO and announcing rallies.

"WORK OR JAIL" = SLAVERY

STOP REAGAN'S WAR AGAINST LABOR

13,000 air traffic controllers have been told "go to work or you're fired." And they have been fired. A Federal Court judge in Brooklyn has ordered the union to pay $100,000 an hour... $24 million a day! A federal judge in Washington, D.C. has fined the workers $1 million a day. The Justice Department filed 22 criminal complaints against union members.

WHAT IS THE AIR CONTROLLERS' CRIME?

They want a decent contract. They are willing to bargain. They want better working conditions. 90% never collect a full pension. Stress related diseases force them into early retirement. They want a work week of 32 hours (4 days). The U.S. is the only country in the world where air controllers must work a 40 hour week. The safety of the millions who use the airlines demands that there be a shorter work week.

REAGAN'S ALL-OUT WAR AGAINST ORGANIZED LABOR

Reagan wants to tame the union movement. Not satisfied with the $38 billion cuts in social services and in a fit of madness, he has decided to turn the clock back to the days when trade union organizing was illegal, when workers who demanded bargaining rights were put in jail. Reagan says the strike is illegal even though the overwhelming majority of air controllers voted to strike.

The controllers have the right to withhold their labor. The 13th amendment of the constitution abolished involuntary servitude. Congress has no right - nor does anyone have the authority - to deny what is guaranteed by the constitution. It is Congress and Reagan who should be held in contempt. They should be charged with conspiracy to break a union on behalf of their commitment to big business.

LABOR SOLIDARITY IS NEEDED

The attack on this small union of Professional Air Traffic Controllers must be answered by the powerful organized labor movement. A defeat of the air controllers will whet the appetite of the ruthless anti-human Reagan Administration. IT CAN BE STOPPED!

The controllers have responded courageously in the face of intimidation. They all know their cause is just. Their cause is the cause of all labor.

* * * * * AIR CONTROLLERS' CAUSE IS LABOR'S CAUSE * * * * *

Issued by EMERGENCY COMMITTEE FOR SOLIDARITY WITH LABOR - 547-6062
DEFEND THE AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS!

Three ways you can help:

1. Rally at the New York Central Labor Council
   Thursday, August 20  6PM
   Roosevelt Hall  100 E. 17th ST
   A rally to call for strong action by NY-area unions in defense of the striking air traffic controllers and their union will be held at 6 p.m. outside the regularly scheduled meeting of the New York City Central Labor Council.
   Sponsored by: Coalition to Defend the Air Traffic Controllers and Stop Reagan's Union Busting.

2. Mass Labor Rally to Support Striking PATCO Workers
   Wednesday, August 26  10:30 AM
   District Council 37-AFSCME  140 Park Place
   Sponsored by: Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO)
   For more information, contact: Coalition to Defend Air Traffic Controllers and Stop Reagan's Union Busting; (212) 695-6802.

3. Come to the next meeting of the Coalition to Defend the Air Traffic Controllers and Stop Reagan’s Union Busting
   Tuesday, August 18  7PM
   Washington Square Methodist Church  133 West 4th St.  Parlor
   The Coalition is an independent group of unionists and progressive organizations and individuals working together to build support for the striking air traffic controllers. Reagan's union busting effort is an attack on all people fighting back against the Reagan government's reactionary program. It is urgent that widespread support be built for the striking air traffic controllers. All groups and individuals are welcome to this meeting. For more information, call: (212) 695-6802

STOP REAGAN'S UNION BUSTING!
-labor donated-
Defense of the unions begins with defense of the air traffic controllers—It's time to draw the line!

RA Li Y 

A rally to call for strong action by New York-area unions in defense of the striking air traffic controllers and their union (PATCO) will be held from 5:30 PM to 7:00 PM outside the regularly scheduled meeting of the New York City Central Labor Council.

N.Y.C. Central Labor Council
Thursday, August 20 — 5:30 PM
Roosevelt Hall — 100 E. 17th St.

Sponsored by: Coalition to Defend the Air Traffic Controllers and to Stop Reagan’s Union Busting

Speakers at the rally will include rank and file members of District 37—AFSCME, National Association of Letter Carriers, Teamsters, United Auto Workers, Public Employees Federation, District 1199 and the Communication Workers of America.

Reagan's assault on the air traffic controllers and their union is the most serious union-busting effort the labor movement has faced in years. More is at stake here than one union. If Reagan is successful in smashing PATCO, he will be in a stronger position to destroy or cripple other unions. He will be in a stronger position to attack the right of all workers to strike. And to all those under attack by his reactionary policies he will have sent a short and simple message: "If you fight back, you will be crushed." Reagan's union-busting must be defeated. We must join together to defend the air traffic controllers and the entire labor movement.

Come to the next meeting of the Coalition to Defend the Air Traffic Controllers and to Stop Reagan’s Union Busting.

Monday, August 24 — 7 PM
Washington Square Methodist Church, 133 West 4th St., Parlor

For more information, call: (212) 695-6802

(labor donated)
August 17, 1981

Mr. Roone Arledge
President of News & Sports
ABC News
7 West 66th Street
New York, N.Y. 10023

Dear Mr. Arledge:

I am writing to express my concern about the current air traffic control deadlock, and its consequences. It seems to me that since the battle has had such a lopsided cheering section, many Americans are being lulled into a sense of security that everything will turn out all right and that firing ninety per cent of the expertise in the system was a feasible remedy. No one, including the media, has asked the proper hard questions about the price of this exercise. Those that have asked have not gotten very sensible answers. It is time to let the cheering subside, and to take a long look at what has been done. Objective analysis will disclose that the picture is far less pretty than has been heralded so far.

It is not my purpose to criticize the President for the action he took. It is important that those beyond our borders understand that he is a decisive, courageous, resourceful man who is determined to implement his policies and programs. I do question whether he should have been put in a position where an ultimatum is
necessary; no wise leader wishes for confrontation where it need not be. I believe the President's men have let him down, and the country with him.

Since the very mention of the name "PATCO" seems to evoke a vituperative emotionalism, it might be worth a moment to review just where this creature was born, and why.

In November, 1967, late in the month, I was standing at the bar in my home sipping a scotch and soda when my answering service informed me that a Mr. Rock from the FAA in New York wanted me to call him. Having flown over New York in my Lear Jet only an hour or so before I returned the call reluctantly, expecting some FAA enforcement zealot to inform me that I was being violated for flying more than a mile off the airway. When I reached Mr. Rock, he informed me that he was an air traffic controller, that he and his colleagues were in deep trouble, and that they were in need of a lawyer who was a current and qualified aviation expert, to do something immediately.

His initial description of the problems the controllers were facing was sufficiently coherent that I could not write him off as a nut. I went and looked, and what I saw was both frightening and bewildering. People controlling my airplane were so saturated on their radar scopes that every minute was frantic. Controllers working with "the picture" on a given scope were forced to eat soup and to urinate into tin cans, because they could not
LAW OFFICES

F. LEE BAILEY

Page 3

leave their positions. They drank like fish, and lived in daily fear of causing a mid-air collision. At a meeting of most New York Controllers held in January, 1968, there was much hope and an equal amount of scepticism. Attempts to organize them had failed two times in the past. They did not want to be a union, but a professional organization. They wanted more controllers, better equipment, and better working conditions. Pay was mentioned, but it had a low priority. They were then making about $11,000.00 per year. I noticed that the group as a whole was quite young. They told me that they didn't last very long due to the pressures, which caused an "early burn-out" syndrome.

PATCO began there and then. The controllers have probably the best communications net short of the Strategic Air Command. The word spread. Within six months, PATCO had as members the key controllers of the United States. At its first convention in Chicago in July, 1968, a Safety Committee was formed, headed by Mr. Verne Lawyer of Des Moines, a distinguished lawyer and pilot. Region after region reported that traffic was being moved only by breaking every rule in the book. It was decided that an experiment would be attempted. The rules governing minimum separation would be dusted off and enforced. There ensued, despite the good summer weather, a "slowdown" which snarled traffic at every major terminal in the northeast. The air traffic controller was then discovered by the press, and consequently by the public. The first reaction by the public was one of hatred for the
inconvenience caused, and that hatred, nurtured as it has too often been by the press, abounds today. It has isolated and turned inward the controller group in an extraordinary and unique way.

I talked with the government in those early days. General McKee, the outgoing FAA Administrator, took me aside and said: "Why the hell didn't you come along a year ago when I was still here? Together we could have gotten some money out of those skinflints on the Hill, and kept pace with the expansion of air traffic". The Deputy Administrator, David Thomas, admitted quite candidly that no new controllers had been hired in recent years because no money was available, despite a 20% annual increase in air traffic. He told me that their equipment was poor, and that they were badly overworked and understaffed. Nothing was being done about these very severe problems.

After a sincere and hopeful start, PATCO discovered that it was resented ferociously by FAA upper and middle management. It began to grow a thick skin, and think of survival. In thirteen years of egregious FAA mismanagement, that trend has exacerbated itself on an accelerating scale. The controller workforce, with its history of uprisings (none of which were very well orchestrated, but which were surely symptoms of a festering problem), has become more and more withdrawn into itself. It has historically had almost no support, and therefore believes it must act alone, and survive or die by its wits. It bumped the United States a few times
to try to get attention, but never dropped the whole hammer - until two weeks ago on August 3, 1981.

Just as the federal government provoked the controller "sick-out" of early 1970 by rejecting the recommendations of Federal Mediator Ken Moffett (Federal Judge George Hart ruled in 1970 that the controllers had caused a strike to occur, but that it was upon the "extreme provocation" of the FAA), I feel that objective analysis will disclose that the federal government at least triggered the present strike. Its chronology is revealing.

The controllers, coming up on the end of a contract, had been working hard to remedy their ills; but without demonstrable success. When candidate Reagan wrote them a letter in 1980 professing his concern and resolve to improve the controller situation, they believed him. No heat was applied during the winding down of the Carter Administration, although there were frequent reports of a PATCO plan to "go for broke" in March, 1981 unless certain dramatic improvements were made.

As negotiations with the new administration officials got under way early this year, PATCO President Robert Poli was no doubt advised that Reaganomics had little room for budget boosts except for things military, and that modest demands were required. (I say "no doubt" because I have discussed none of these matters with any PATCO member or official) Negotiations with PATCO's "new friends"
continued until finally Mr. Poli realized that the nice smiles on the other side of the table were in reality a dead end. He went well past the contract deadline (March, when a strike would have been immediately crippling) and finally on May 22 announced that if nothing changed – the parties were miles apart – there would be a strike on June 22. Subsequent negotiations made little progress. Agitation among the controller workforce increased. On June 21, PATCO began what has been known as "the count": What percentage of the talent of nationwide air traffic control would reject their oaths and join in an illegal strike? How badly would the critical points of the system be crippled by those who would join?

The count was insufficient, but not by much. Poli decided not to risk an abortive effort, and signed a contract which he knew was unacceptable. The Secretary of Transportation, Andrew Lewis, wearing two hats (as a negotiator, I will make my offer, and as judge, I will rule that the offer is fair and that you should – no, must – take it), knew that Poli was not accepting a compromise offer, and that he had acquiesced for lack of total support. Mr. Lewis nonetheless, in the wake of an illicit victory, expressed "surprise" at what then happened.

Mr. Poli is a much more thoughtful and intelligent man than the public has been made to understand. His solution to his own dilemma was nearly foolproof. He would tentatively accept the government’s token offer, feed it to those who had failed to support the strike, and
hope that they would gag and stand up. With a little help from Mr. Lewis, he would pick up the missing support.

The signals were everywhere. PATCO's Executive Board rejected the contract unanimously. Then 95.3% of the membership did likewise. Further negotiations were a sham. The administration was ready to bust PATCO once and for all, and Mr. Lewis and FAA Administrator Helms were feeling confident and belligerent. They were ready with a contingency plan that would make PATCO look like it had been hit with a neutron bomb: no real damage, just no people left.

PATCO had been left with the worst possible month of the year in which to wage its battle: August, the most benign of all months for the administration. Good weather, low travel pressure (flexible vacationers, not urgent businessmen), and Congress on vacation - with many of its members, at least the opposition members, weary and bruised by the President's thumping success in cutting taxes. President Reagan's prestige was enormous, and the game plan included him. Mr. Lewis knew that PATCO now had the juice for a long-term victory, and that a wise strategy would involve a swift, deadly wound to the vitals of the system, just as David slew Goliath. The President would step in at once (instead of waiting, as most leaders have, to let the dust settle a bit) and hit the morale of the controller workforce right in its gut: By reminding America that they were violators of a solemn oath, that most scurrilous of countrymen. In addition to this club,
F.A.A. had prepared the following to crush Poli and his crowd:

1. There are about 30,000 air traffic movements in the system on a given day. They are about evenly divided between airlines and private (mostly business) aircraft. A drastic reduction in this total number would be necessary. By reducing airline traffic by 50% and private traffic by much more than that (it turned out to be 80%) in-flight separation could be increased to a point where relatively few people could handle it. Toward that end private owners were quietly asked to stay on the ground if possible, or to fly VFR — which they did.

2. Every former controller (most of them supervisors) and would-be controller was pressed into emergency service to minimize the apparent effects of the strike. In this manner, according to the administration's game plan, the controllers would be demoralized, their unique essentiality to the country minimized, and their resolve eroded.

3. The Justice Department would hit hard. Obtain court orders, indict and jail the leaders, decertify the union, and fire everybody in sight. Certainly, the administration thought, this onslaught will cow sufficient numbers of controllers (presumably those who had waffled in June) to cause many strikers to come slinking back in disgrace to break the strike, or at least erode it sharply. The last to buckle, the leaders, would be fired forever, and good riddance.

The PATCO game plan was much simpler, and in the
circumstances more grim. Aware as the union was of all
the forces and groups arrayed against it - and almost
everybody was- it had as its strength one proven precept:
whenever a society loses 90% of the talent in a unique and
needed group of workers, it will consider the price too
high and renegotiate. If the union had little support, it
really didn't need any: it needed only its members.
Solidarity was the key - the Polish had proven that - and
solidarity was what PATCO was betting it had.

It is fair to assume that now, two weeks into the
strike, both sides are somewhat surprised at the
circumstances confronting them. Both had expected an
early victory. Both were wrong.

Benign weather, hordes of people deciding not to fly,
Reaganomic-loving businessmen who decided to keep their
planes on the ground, and artificial claims of success in
keeping airliners moving, coupled with an heroic effort by
older controllers and trainees moving the airplanes with
extreme courtesy, gave the government a broad cheering
section. It has prevailed to the point of overkill. The
frequent appearance of Secretary Lewis - a good warrior at
the very least - with his attractive appearance, blue
eyes, "straight teeth and a crooked smile," has mesmerized
much of the country into believing that "we really don't
need these guys, we'll replace them rather quickly, and
you'll feel minor pain, a filling, perhaps, not a root
 canal." A good show. Lots of buyers. Lots of suckers,
perhaps.
Mr. Poli's edge is much less dramatic. He and his men and women anticipated everything government would do. Not only had the PATCO leadership been educated by the government's tactics in the Spring of '70 but much of the government's plan had been publicly announced. He knows that there is only one issue: Will his people show "solidarity"? What works against the venality of the Russians ought to work against the more benign government of the United States, certainly. The people of the United States will ultimately come to realize that you don't snuff out 90% of anything important without paying an horrendous price. Then they will react. Late, as usual, but emphatically, for sure. Poli's gamble is profound.

Secretary Lewis and the administration appear to be the early winners. Public opinion is clearly in their favor. The controllers have received nothing but opprobrium for their actions, and continue to be isolated and without support. Which is exactly what they need to keep their resolve unwavering. They are heartened by several things.

First, they know that Secretary Lewis is emulating Pharaoh - he wins the battle but loses the war. The game plan has been great for media and public perception, but a failure in its vital objective: the fracture of the controller workforce. This must be difficult for him to contemplate, for it means that this game is going into extra innings, bad news for the hare and good news for the
tortoise - the controllers. His feet are in the fire. He advised President Reagan to fire them all on a bet that many would return to the womb and say "I'm sorry". That didn't work. Now the nation knows that at least one group doesn't tremble to the thundering of our country's leader. I wish that had not been demonstrated, for I believe that we need the benefits of President Reagan's thunder, and that it should not be used to prove up bad judgment.

Now we as a society must settle in for the long wait. The controllers have their weaponry laid bare. They know that first law was passed when two little guys told one big buy, "If you hit one of us, you've got to fight both of us." They also know, it would appear, of an old proverb usually attributed to the Italians: "When you have them by the cojones, their hearts and minds will follow." When you have no friends, that is often the only way.

I have heard the sanctimonious cries "They broke an Oath" enough to be impressed with the lack of historical sensitivity of the administration. This country was born by the breaking of an oath to the King of England. Its progress since then is so intertwined with civil disobedience as to boggle the mind, but the press and the public have short memories. Our cheers for the Polish are grounded in what we all believe to be an human truth: Breaking unjust laws is an American tradition, and a human right. Unless, of course, we don't approve of a particular group of humans. Martin Luther King and Gloria
Steinem would understand. We as a nation (slow to learn, hard to teach) now admit that we have neglected blacks and women for years, even discriminated against them. For that we now take the responsibility, but never the blame. Had it not been for the Nixon legacy, those two phenomena would still be joined at the hip. Somehow, we have learned to separate them.

It seems fair to assume for the moment that the controllers will stand firm. One for all, all for one, no contract - no work. The administration's several tactics to lure part of the workforce back have been wholly without success. It has put itself in a position where it has little room to back down. Still, things seem to be running fairly well in the circumstances. I suggest that the media owe the public a much more penetrating and objective look than has been published to date as to what this "rebuilding" plan will really cost.

First, who are the people who are now controlling the flights? We are given no hard data on the breakout between supervisors, recalled retirees, trainees and journeyman controllers. How many hours are they working, and how long can they reasonably be expected to keep up the pace?

Second, when will the replacements arrive and pick up part of the load? There is a facility at Oklahoma City which has been described to the public as a "Training Academy". Instructors who work there - there are
ninety-six of them – will tell you that what the facility really does during its seventeen week session is to screen out the applicants by seeing who can take the heat in the kitchen. Good intelligence, quick and accurate decisions, and stamina when adverse conditions obtain. The normal washout rate is 25%. Surely during a panic hiring period that rate is going to increase, unless – heaven forbid – standards are seriously compromised. My information is to the effect that the instructor force is very much opposed to the administration's go-for-broke "rebuilding" plan, and will be very tough indeed. The yield of those applicants who make it through the course will, I think, be much less than projected.

Even so, we cannot expect to see our first batch of trainees in the field until after the first of the year. Of what use will they really be to increase the flow of air traffic? I say little if any, but the reverse. All actual training is done in the field, under real working conditions, by the same controllers who are cast away now. Is it reasonable to expect that those on the job, harried as they will be as they try to move as much traffic as possible, will have much real time to train youngsters?

And if training could be accomplished at a normal pace, just how soon can we expect that a trainee will really be ready to assume a sensitive position in New York, Chicago, Atlanta or Los Angeles? These are the spots that have been most heavily cleaned out by the strike. No one has yet asked what experience level has
historically been required to train controllers for these sensitive and highly volatile positions. I suggest that the answer is five years. During that five year period what are we to do? Surely there will be some attrition among the patched-up work force on whom we now depend. Many of those men are simply too old to take the pounding for very long, particularly at the pace they are now keeping. This whole plan is fraught with horrendous problems that have been only superficially investigated and thought through not at all.

It would appear that in addition to throwing away the bulk of the controller workforce through its hard line and miscalculation of PATCO's resolve, the administration is also prepared to throw away most of general and business aviation. Half of the people transported by air each year do not take the bus - an airliner - but travel by private vehicle. Without the ability to fly on schedule and without respect to all but the worst weather, private aviation business machines will be worth very little. New ones will not be sold if the airliners soak up the capacity of the system on a regular basis. A huge general aviation support industry is going to be severely wounded, much of it fatally. No mention at all has been made of this problem. It is clear that all of the talk is about how many airliners may be able to fly, and that is all. The loss of a majority of the business airplane fleet will cost this economy billions of dollars, and hundreds of thousands of jobs. No one has examined this aspect of the problem at all. All of us who own business jets received
a letter from our manufacturer saying that Administrator Helms had asked each owner "to encourage a limitation on flying to only essential activity during the initial period of controller disruption... The FAA prefers voluntary action on the part of general aviation operators instead of mandatory limitations."

Mr. Helms has had his voluntary cooperation, and many of the higher profile airliners have been allowed to fly in this rather easy month. Is our restraint a five-year proposition?

I believe that honest and professional inquiry into this whole problem on much deeper level than has yet been attempted will at least highlight the realities of the situation, and give the public a clearer picture of what it faces and what it must pay for this awesome decision by the government - one which it never expected to be stuck with. There has been enough publication of the party line without journalistic challenge already. Hopefully, the major media can do better in bringing home what I predict will be the awful truth.

It is all very well for the parties to the dispute to play hardball, and to make public and truculent statements of their plans and ammunition. But air commerce is not a giant sandbox in which PATCO and the government ought to be playing war games. Exposure of the true facts will at least explain to the public why PATCO took the desperate steps it opted for two weeks ago, and why it can afford to
wait for the smoke to clear and the real pain to begin. It will also reveal that the administration is skating on much thinner ice than it admits.

There is little dishonor in reviewing the dispute at this point, and in re-examining its merits. The controllers have said simply, "We are being treated like prostitutes; you use us in our prime, and at 40, when most adults are beginning to flourish, we are discarded, hardly equipped to start over again. Slow down the burn-out rate with shorter hours, and pay us enough so that we have something left when we are done."

The President should appoint an outside panel to review this situation, and come up with recommendations. His own men are too personally and emotionally involved to handle the problem; at this point they have much to cover up. If this destruction of a unique and vital natural resource is the best that the administration can do, history will not treat its management deficiencies kindly. Hopefully the news media, by doing something more than clapping, can ward off such a disaster with good plain honest facts. They are overdue.

Very truly yours,

F. Lee Bailey

F. Lee Bailey
DESCRIPTION: Card and donation to PATCO strike from International Typographical Union (ITU) member.
PATS Members:

This is a "personal" Contribution in response to a call you help in the INTERNATIONAL Types/graphers ORYO

ITU Review 2/97 issue received today by me.

God bless you in your struggle for union survival. I hope we all respond in kind giving you a decent helping hand.

Your prayers are with you.

Do not hesitate to be STRONG!

-- Helen E. Paul

ITU Member Montgomery
Bay Area Local No. 651

6-6-81

issue another cry for help if needed.

I'll attend the Union meeting Sunday to see if we can get you some more.

In my heart a prayer "I fight with you" in your most just and courageous cause.

Such struggle is difficult.

You are NOT ALONE!!!
ADDITIONAL MATERIALS OF INTEREST


See also http://mccartin-collisioncourse.blogspot.com/2012/07/mike-rock-tells-story-of-patcos-origins.html

PATCO_01_19_08 page 33. PATCO defense fund seized, letter by Robert E. Poli.

PATCO_01_20_03 page 109. Letter from Regional Vice President Gary Eads explaining that most of the public doesn’t understand what an air traffic controller is.

PATCO_05_10_03. Reagan Letter to Robert Poli explaining his support for air traffic controllers and empathy for their struggles, and a letter to President Reagan from the President of the Maryland Committee on Occupational Safety and Health detailing dangers in the ATC profession.

PATCO_05_15_04 pages 42-43. Letter from ATC to Senator Harry F. Byrd about poor working conditions in air traffic and especially harassment from management.

PATCO_05_26_11 page 64. Transcript of a phone call detailing silencing inside ATC profession during strike.

PATCO_05_27_10 page 61-63. Letter explaining the sender had his dog, named R. E. Poli, castrated.

PATCO_06_71_02. One Letter [to Mr. Collingwood Harris] January 19, 1981 [audiocassette]

PATCO_06_71_03. Doyle's Questions # 1 [and White House phone call with Sheryl LaFryach] undated [audiocassette]

PATCO_06_71_13a. 2-Hour Live Radio Broadcast with Tom Collopy, PATCO 305; Ben Coons, PATCO 305; Bill Robertson, CATCA; 2nd John Galipault, ASI. Host Dick Pomerantz, KSTP 1500 AM, August 12, 1981 [audiocassette 1 of 2; part 1]

PATCO_06_71_13b. 2-Hour Live Radio Broadcast with Tom Collopy, PATCO 305; Ben Coons, PATCO 305; Bill Robertson, CATCA; 2nd John Galipault, ASI. Host Dick Pomerantz, KSTP 1500 AM, August 12, 1981 [audiocassette 1 of 2; part 2]

PATCO_06_71_14. 2-Hour Live Radio Broadcast with Tom Collopy, PATCO 305; Ben Coons, PATCO 305;
Bill Robertson, CATCA; 2nd John Galipault, ASI. Host Dick Pomerantz, KSTP 1500 AM, August 12, 1981 [audiocassette 2 of 2; part 3]