

It's that time of year so . . . here's a little

Inside Baseball

Why, during the course of an organizing drive, would a union go out of its way to raise the wages of the workers it seeks to represent? Wouldn't that be counterproductive and tend to cast the employer in a favorable light?

Under normal circumstances, perhaps. But, for service contract employees, things are a bit different.

In the service contract arena, minimum wages are set by the Federal government through the wage determination (WD), which, in the case of AFSS is a nationwide WD. At least, that's how Department of Labor (DoL), the IAM and Lockheed see it. The FAA is still challenging the new nationwide WD. The FAA doesn't like the DoL's methodology and believe your skill levels and the complexity of your jobs have decreased since you went contract. The IAM, of course, takes a more supportive position.

Anyway, a few weeks ago, the FAA – while maintaining their challenge to the new nationwide WD – agreed to reimburse Lockheed at the new wages rates starting the first week of October 2007. Fine, that's a bit inconsistent of the FAA and raises some concerns about their motivations but, it provides a much-deserved raise and the IAM supports that. However, the FAA and Lockheed failed to implement retroactive pay, which the IAM believes you are due.

Now, the DoL has issued a second nationwide WD based on new National Compensation Survey data which again raises wages. And again, the IAM supports the

increase and the DoL's position. However, the FAA has yet to agree to modify the service contract to the new 2007 rate. Also, the original 2006 retroactivity is still unresolved. The Administrative Review Board has asked the parties (DoL, IAM, FAA and Lockheed) to submit briefs on the challenge to the new WD by December 26, 2007.

So, back to the original question: Why would the IAM seek to raise your wages during an organizing drive? After all, isn't one of the union's big selling points that it can deliver better wages?

The simple answer is – “Home Base.” The IAM knows once the union is certified and bargaining begins, your current wages become Home Base from which negotiations advance. That's the way it works in the real world and if anybody tries to tell you differently . . . *They're throwing you a knuckleball!*



International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers