

Airline Reps Sharpen Skills at WWW Center



Transportation GVP Robert Roach, Jr., leads a discussion with participants in the District 143 Grievance Committee Conference held at the IAM William W. Winpisinger Education and Technology Center.

Airline managers, supervisors and senior executives regularly hold teleconferences to discuss labor relations. The IAM goes one better, giving its district and local representatives the opportunity to do the same thing, face to face.

More than 100 IAM representatives from District 143 and 20 local lodges attended the first District 143 Grievance Committee Conference at the William W. Winpisinger Education and Technology Center in Maryland.

"Nothing is more important or more valuable than face-to-face communication," said District 143 President Steve Gordon.

The stewards and grievance committeepersons received training in due-process rights, organizing, the Family

Medical Leave Act and membership communications. Airline-specific meetings were also held so local officials could receive updates from the District 143 staff.

Chance to Network

"My local is thousands of miles away from many other locals," said Kiana Peacock, a 13-year Customer Service Agent for Northwest Airlines and president of Local 601 in Anchorage, Alaska. "Conferences like this allow us to network directly with representatives from other locals and helps bring our worlds closer."

Transportation General Vice President Robert Roach, Jr., led a

group discussion on issues ranging from political activism to union dues. "Stewards and grievance representatives are on the front lines in the battle against corporate greed," declared Roach. "We will make sure our representatives have all the training, resources and support necessary to do their essential work."

The three-day conference included shop stewards from small stations with less than a year on the job and others who measured their experience in decades.

"We are done subsidizing bad management," said Gordon. "Our goal is the same no matter the size of the airline: respect for our members, respect for our contracts and an end to the management mistakes that have cost so many airline workers their careers."



Participants, such as Local 601 President Kiana Peacock from Anchorage, Alaska, came from across the country to attend the conference.



Presidential Emergency Board members, from left, Peter W. Tredick, Helen M. Witt and Ira F. Jaffe will make non-binding recommendations to resolve the Amtrak contract dispute.

Amtrak Talks Pick Up Steam

Eight years after their contracts became amendable, workers at Amtrak finally won a release from dead-end negotiations with rail management and entered a 30-day countdown on October 31, 2007.

The countdown, designed to compel serious negotiations and avert a nationwide strike, was cut short when President Bush suspended the countdown and called for a Presidential Emergency Board (PEB).

Once appointed, the PEB has 30 days to investigate the dispute and issue non-binding recommendations for settlement. Both sides would then have a 30-day cooling-off period to consider those recommendations. An agreement is possible at any time, but if none is reached, the parties will be free to engage in self-help at the end of the second

cooling-off period.

The IAM represents 500 members at Amtrak among the 10,000 rail workers in nine unions who have gone eight years without a general wage increase. Meanwhile, ridership on the national passenger rail service continues to climb. Nearly 69,000 people board Amtrak trains each day.

Increase Funding

“There should be no question of the importance of having a safe and reliable inter-city rail service,” said Transportation GVP Robert Roach, Jr. “Industrialized countries are measured by the quality of their passenger rail system, and this nation deserves better.”

Amtrak has strug-

gled to survive from its creation by Congress in 1971. The last decade has been particularly difficult.

When it isn't trying to privatize the carrier's most profitable routes, the Bush administration is slashing funding for Amtrak. The carrier received \$1.3 billion in 2006, the same as it received 25 years ago. In 2007, funding decreased to \$800 million.

Meanwhile, Amtrak workers continue to do their jobs under a contract that was negotiated when Bill Clinton was in office. “We all know this system rewards delay,” said Local 1284 member Glenn Johnston who recently spoke with sympathetic passengers at the Amtrak station in Wilmington, DE. “We just want to be treated fairly and we want the law to work the way it was designed to work.”



Members of IAM Local 1284, from left, Glenn Johnston, Pres. Pat McGrath, Kevin Byrd and Rick Anaya spoke with Amtrak passengers in Wilmington, DE, about their eight-year battle for a new contract.