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| 1. Particularly in big city airports where air traffic control was most crowded during peak hours controllers would guide as many as 10-20 planes at a time and had to use obsolete radar, balky computers, chronic understaffing, mandatory overtime, rotating shifts and bureaucratic inflexible management.
 |  | 1. In Europe and Canada, air traffic control was recognized as uniquely stressful. The work week was limited to from 32-38 hours. The FAA required 40 plus hours mandatory overtime.
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| 1. In August 1966 Chicago controllers conducted a slow-down – work-to-rule action waiting until planes had landed and turned before allowing the next to land. This caused a massive backup of flights. Such slowdowns infuriated the flying public as well as the government and the pilots)
 |  | 1. One work-to-rule campaign called Operation Air Safety in Los Angeles resulted in pay raises and better chairs
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| 1. The relationship between PATCO and the FAA was deteriorating in the late 1970s. There were many grievances.
 |  | 1. Most PATCO controllers were white and male. Many were racist and sexist, and they gave the few people of color and women a hard time.
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| 1. As frustration grew, so did militancy. In 1977 PATCO won raises at the busiest airports after threatening a strike at Thanksgiving or even Christmas. Smaller airport controllers blamed the PATCO leaders for selling them out. These threats angered the public.
 |  | 1. The union conducted a slowdown because the airlines refused to grant free international flights to controllers. A judge fined PATCO $100,000 for that.
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|  | 1. Carter administration FAA downplayed the stress issue and ended the early retirement program. They also removed legal immunity for crashes
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 | 10.Longtime PATCO President John Leyden was pushed by a young and angry rank and file group called the Fifth Column to take a harder line with the FAA. Leyden said he’d agree to a strike to take place 1981 if 80% of members voted yes. But before that could happen Leyden was challenged by Vice President Robert Poli in 1980. Leyden resigned. Poli became president.  |
| 1. PATCO leaders and members believed that Ronald Reagan would negotiate if they struck.
 |  | 1. PATCO members reasoned that if postal workers could strike. If sanitation workers and teachers could strike at the state and local level as many were doing, why not air traffic controllers?
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| 1. Inflation increased 65% from 1970-77 but federal worker wage only increased 47%.
 |  | 1. Reagan’s first move in office was to slash the OSHA budget. Next, he appointed a virulently anti-union nursing home CEO to head the NLRB.
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| 1. Given all the strike threats from PATCO, the FAA began preparations for a possible strike in 1978.
 |  | 1. AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland told Robert Poli that he couldn’t win a strike.
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| 1. The AFL-CIO publicly supported the strike but privately sent letters to affiliates banning them from any secondary strikes or radical actions. Kirkland said, “It is all very well to be a midnight gin militant to stand up and call for general strikes, but member unions will have to make their own decisions, I am not going to make the appraisal.”
 |  | 1. The International Brotherhood of Carpenters celebrated its centennial on September 3rd 1981, just one month into the PATCO strike. The featured speaker was Ronald Reagan who had been invited well before the strike. The Carpenters decided to go ahead with his speaking and Reagan directly attacked PATCO for breaking the law. No one booed.
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| 1. PATCO had little public support. They were seen as arrogant, demanding free international flights, and they alienated the public with the many slowdowns. Calls from the public to the White House ran ten to one in support of Reagan’s actions firing strikers. A Gallup poll conducted a few days after the firings showed that 59 percent of Americans approved of the way Reagan was handling the issue, compared to just 30 percent who disapproved. The Gallup poll also found that a whopping 68 percent of the public thought that air traffic controllers shouldn’t be allowed to strike.
 |  | 1. PATCO strategy was to ignore public opinion and focus on shutting down air traffic.
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| 1. The airlines lost $35 million per day, but they were steadfast in support of Reagan.
 |  | 1. After the strike began, 45,000 people applied for air traffic control jobs
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| 1. On August 5th Ronald Reagan fired 11,345 PATCO members and banned them for life from federal employment. In 1993 Bill Clinton rescinded the banning but only 800 returned to a federal job
 |  | 1. About 10% of the members returned to work on August 5th. Some others retired. 78 were arrested for defying the court order to stop the strike and return to work. The court ordered PATCO to pay the airlines $28.8 million for their losses.
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| 1. In October 1981 the Federal Labor Relations Authority decertified PATCO.
 |  | 1. PATCO believed that the strike would so impact flights that air traffic would be seriously interrupted and the government would be forced to come back to the table and negotiate. They did not see the offer that they voted down as the government’s final offer. However, Reagan and the FAA were under a lot of pressure from Republicans to make it the final offer.
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| 1. The strike failed to shut down air traffic. The FAA deployed 4,669non-striking controllers, 3,291 supervisors, 800 military controllers, and about 1,000 newly hired personnel to control air traffic. Automation also helped. These people worked six 10-hour workdays per week for many months. After a month they were supplemented by 1500 pilots, laid off because of the cutbacks in air traffic.
 |  | 1. Controllers who went back to work tended to be older and closer to retirement. Also blacks and women who had been activists against discrimination by fellow controllers. Also, there were a number who steadfastly disagreed about their right to strike.
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| 1. Drew Lewis offered 11.4% salary/benefit increase to those who helped break the strike. He changed the workweek to 37.5 hours meaning that there would be more overtime pay.
 |  | 1. Some said that Reagan’s strong stand sent a message to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev that Reagan would not back down with the Russians either.
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| 1. The first day 7,000 flights were cancelled. Nearly half of all flights were cancelled for about a week. Many had predicted an air disaster, but none occurred.
 |  | 1. PATCO members and many supporters believed that the right to strike was a human right, no matter whether you worked in the public or private sector.
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| 1. Reagan opened his campaign with a pledge to drastically cut big government and have a balanced federal budget. What came to be known as Reaganomics was based on the neoliberal thinking of Margaret Thatcher and economist Milton Freedman, both of whom were radical union busters.
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| 1. On August 3rd the AFL-CIO held its summer Executive Council Meeting in Chicago with the leaders of the biggest unions. When Lane Kirkland heard of the strike he said PATCO had neither warned nor consulted him or any other unions. PATCO was a member of the AFL-CIO through its affiliation with MEBA the Marine Engineers Beneficial Association).
 |  | 1. Many union leaders, while they believed all workers should have the right to strike, thought it was very risky to support an illegal strike waged by relatively well-paid workers funded by taxpayers against a popular President.
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| 1. Kirkland deferred to the two leaders of the large air transportation unions: J.J. O’Donnell, head of ALPA – the Airline Pilots Association and William Winpisinger of the IAM – the International Association of Machinists. Their unions could refuse to fly or repair planes. One government transportation official said, “Had the Machinists gone out, we couldn’t have withstood it. It would have closed every single airport.”
 |  | 1. Wimpy (IAM President) gave a speech at the AFL-CIO Executive Council meeting on August 3rd on the need to stand up to Reagan, but he didn’t promise to strike. He waited on ALPA.
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| 1. ALPA’s O’Donnell said he would not support PATCO because even if he ordered pilots not to cross the PATCO picket lines, many pilots saw the strike as a threat to their jobs and incomes. “If I call people out, and they don’t go. I’m dead,” he said.
 |  | 1. AFL-CIO leaders never seriously considered staging mass walkouts or sympathy strikes.
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| 1. After Reagan’s ultimatum, Lane Kirkland called Drew Lewis and urged that both sides return to the table to negotiate. Lewis said the government wouldn’t talk as long as PATCO members remained on strike, and Robert Poli said he needed a better offer before he’d send controllers back to work.
 |  | 1. Privately union leaders were furious at Poli for launching a strike they couldn’t win.
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| 1. The AFL-CIO issued a statement on August 3rd which placed all the blame on the FAA’s history of “subterfuge, evasion and delay.” It demanded the government call off “punitive measures” against PATCO and engage in “frank, open negotiations designed to alleviate clearly justifiable grievances of controllers.”
 |  | 1. After the Executive Council Meeting on August 3rd, Lane Kirkland and other union leaders picketed with PATCO at O’Hare Airport and then charted a bus to go back to DC. so as not to fly.
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| 1. Reagan instructed the Justice Department too slow the planned arrests of strikers so as not to antagonize other unions. One Reagan aide said, “We do not want to make martyrs out of union leaders.”
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