

## Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



*Collision Course: Ronald Reagan, the Air Traffic Controllers and the Strike that Changed America*, By Joseph A. McCartin, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, 504 pp., ISBN: 978-0-19-983678-9.

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Volume 67, Number 1, Winter 2012

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1008204ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1008204ar>

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Publisher(s)

Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0034-379X (print)

1703-8138 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Solomon, N. A. (2012). Review of [*Collision Course: Ronald Reagan, the Air Traffic Controllers and the Strike that Changed America*, By Joseph A. McCartin, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, 504 pp., ISBN: 978-0-19-983678-9.] *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, 67(1), 156–161.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1008204ar>

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Dans la troisième partie sur le genre et l'âge, Catherine Marry avance que l'usage du mot « genre » au singulier désigne un processus, un système de pouvoir qui construit des différences et des hiérarchies entre les catégories d'hommes et de femmes. Aussi, le genre n'est pas une catégorie dichotomique immuable. Outil heuristique, il a permis de rendre visible et légitime le travail gratuit opéré par les femmes dans la sphère domestique. Suit une première étude, de Sophie Pochic, Aurélie Peyrin et Cécile Guillaume, qui fait appel à du matériel d'enquête auprès de diverses cohortes à partir desquelles des carrières ont été reconstituées. Les inégalités de carrière, notamment sexuées, sont interprétées par une confrontation des trajectoires individuelles aux mécanismes formels de sélection et de mobilité dans les organisations. Une autre étude, de l'historienne Aline Charles, porte sur l'activité et l'inactivité selon le genre et l'âge au Canada au cours du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle. Le classement de la main-d'œuvre en catégories « jeune », « d'âge mur », « vieillissante » ou « âgée », en se moulant sur des catégories statistiques, fait en sorte que la gestion de la main-d'œuvre et la gestion des âges s'arriment plus solidement que jamais. L'auteure a aussi patiemment retracé l'évolution des concepts d'activité et d'inactivité pour montrer leur caractère socialement construit, en interaction constante avec les catégories de sexe et d'âge.

Dans la dernière partie enfin, sur la frontière entre la santé et la maladie, Michel Gollac se surprend de la complexité des processus en cause dans la distinction qui devrait permettre d'établir cette frontière, que l'on pourrait croire bien objective *a priori*. Par exemple, chez l'enfant, est-on « vraiment malade » ou « assez malade pour ne pas pouvoir aller à l'école » ? La coupure n'est pas la même selon le contexte. Anne Pellissier-Fall fait porter son analyse sur la médicalisation de la santé, ce qui permet de démontrer certains des

mécanismes à l'œuvre, même s'il est plus difficile ici de voir l'apport du longitudinal. Dans le domaine de la maladie, le social n'est jamais loin : de la corpulence, on passe à l'obésité, une maladie, puis à une pandémie. D'après Johanne Collin, on passe de la même façon de l'impuissance à la dysfonction érectile, ouvrant un vaste marché à l'industrie pharmaceutique. Elle étudie aussi les cas de l'hypertension artérielle et de la dépression.

En conclusion, on comprend que les catégories ne sont jamais neutres et qu'elles sont également des produits de la construction sociale de la réalité. Il s'agit d'enseignements qu'il est toujours bon de rappeler à ceux et celles qui les considèrent trop souvent comme acquises. La réalité n'est jamais entièrement noire ou blanche. À cet égard, les concepteurs des catégories visant à découper et à analyser le social, catégories que l'on souhaite le moins déformantes et le moins réductionnistes possible, doivent demeurer vigilants concernant les interprétations susceptibles d'être tirées de leur utilisation.

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### **Collision Course: Ronald Reagan, the Air Traffic Controllers and the Strike that Changed America**

By Joseph A. McCartin, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, 504 pp., ISBN: 978-0-19-983678-9.

This book presents an excellent and compelling scholarly study of the events before, during and after the landmark strike by the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) against the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in the summer of 1981. President Ronald Reagan refused to negotiate with the striking union, determining that the strike violated federal law, and that each striker was also violating a no-strike oath they had individually taken. He then authorized the FAA to dismiss

some 11,000 air traffic controllers and hire replacement workers. The failed strike dealt a fatal blow to PATCO and caused hardships to thousands of PATCO members and their families, and to thousands of air travellers.

Six key themes emerge from the book. First, beginning in 1960, the controllers' activities largely focused on being exempted from civil service regulations so they could bargain over economic issues to improve their wages, reduce their work week and enhance their retirement program. Second, the controllers' workplace improvement efforts were met with resistance at almost every point by autocratic FAA managers. Third, in large part because of the FAA, obstacles to the controllers' workplace demands occurred regardless of whether there was a Republican or a Democratic administration in the White House. Fourth, the failure of the FAA to treat the air traffic controllers as professionals caused worker frustration toward the FAA to grow exponentially over the years. Fifth, PATCO members' frustrations with management manifested itself in six serious job actions during the period 1968-1981—including slowdowns, sickouts and of course the 1981 strike. Sixth, although President Reagan was well within his legal right to dismiss the strikers, he failed to consider other less drastic alternatives that might have mitigated an explosive situation.

McCartin excels at illustrating in great detail how the organization, unionization and eventual militancy of the air traffic controllers was the result of both poor management on the part of the FAA and of a flawed U.S. labour policy for federal employees. The author sets the story of the air traffic controllers in the broader context of early development of public sector unionism in the municipal, state and federal sectors in the late 1950's and early 1960's. The federal government's acceptance of federal employee unions and their right to negotiate was mandated in President Kennedy's Executive Order 10988,

*Employee-Management Cooperation in the Federal Service* in 1962. Note the title... McCartin argues that the Executive Order was flawed in that it did not even clearly mention the words collective bargaining. He also notes that organized employees could not actually negotiate over wages and benefits because these items remained within the authority of Congress. What was clear was that strikes were forbidden and that worker organizations could not force federal workers to join or to pay dues—the latter making it more difficult for fledgling federal sector unions to support themselves.

Managers in the FAA never really embraced the spirit of the Executive Order which encouraged labour-management cooperation. FAA supervisors, many of whom had been trained in the military, continued to use a hierarchical 'command and control' approach to management. According to McCartin this contributed further to a tense relationship between the FAA and individual employees as well as between the FAA and the nonunion employee associations that pre-dated PATCO. McCartin emphasizes that the air traffic controllers perceived themselves as middle class professionals and wanted to be treated as such by the FAA, not treated as line workers needing close supervision. Controller hours were long, the job was stressful, mandatory overtime was common and pay increases were limited by rigid civil service system grids. Additionally, the FAA was not proactive in mitigating stressful working conditions or in improving pay. McCartin shows that the unyielding attitude by the FAA fed continued anger and bitterness among the controllers that reached its peak in the 1981 strike.

The book provides ample detail on the struggles of the air traffic controllers to get the FAA to fully understand and to redress their concerns. While this detail enhances the scholarly aspects of the book it sometimes detracts from the otherwise gripping

narrative achieved by the author. Overall however, McCartin skilfully deals with the challenge of making historical facts come to life by focusing on the organizing efforts of two early PATCO leaders, Mike Rock and Jack Maher this brings a human face to the controllers' daily struggles. For example, McCartin explains that flight safety was the catalyst for Maher's and Rock's involvement in labour-management issues and for the eventual formation of PATCO in 1968. The book's graphic description of the 1960 mid-air collision of two commercial airliners over New York City which claimed 134 lives, the worst U.S. air catastrophe to that day, sets the stage for the two decades of controller activism that followed. Air traffic controllers such as Rock and Maher were shocked at the FAA's approach in the Civil Aeronautics Board's (CAB) accident investigation hearings. While they expected the FAA to try to fend off blame on the agency, the controllers thought the FAA's efforts to place blame entirely on the pilot of one of the airplanes was inappropriate. Many controllers believed that if the FAA had had more modern equipment for the controllers the crash might have been avoided. They also believed that shorter hours would improve the controllers' effectiveness in what was a very stressful work environment.

The FAA's role in the investigation of the 1960 crash caused many controllers to lose faith in the agency's ability to address their own problems. Thus over the course of the 1960's, the air traffic controllers as chronicled through Rock and Maher, tried various ways to improve their lot, including efforts to obtain pay increases through civil service reclassifications and improve working conditions via the grievance procedure and arbitration. These were difficult efforts and often faced opposition from the FAA. The controllers' attempts to improve their lot did not really gain traction until famed trial lawyer and amateur airplane pilot F. Lee Bailey took on the cause of the controllers in 1968. His experience as a pilot with

first-hand knowledge of air traffic control issues motivated Bailey to help establish the organization that became known as PATCO. He was its first General Counsel and essentially established the framework for the organization. Bailey used his considerable public persona to promote the cause of PATCO, even in such unlikely venues as NBC's 'Tonight Show with Johnny Carson'.

The controllers were firmly 'on the map' by 1968, in large part as a result of Bailey's promotion. However, the organization continued to struggle to achieve gains. PATCO also looked with some envy at the successful strike waged by about 210,000 postal workers in 1970. Although the postal strike itself was illegal and troops were called out to deliver the mail, the Nixon Administration negotiated a resolution to the strike within two weeks and without wholesale dismissal of strikers. As a response to the strike the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970 was passed and the U.S. Postal Service was given status as a self-funded agency with the ability to negotiate wages, benefits and working conditions with its unions. These bargaining rights were goals to which PATCO aspired to but never achieved.

Following on the heels of the postal strike, in March 1970 PATCO organized a sickout that eventually involved about 2200 controllers or less than 20% of the workforce. The job action failed to shut down air travel and was ended by court order after 20 days with a stipulation that PATCO would not engage in such activity in the future. The FAA had had an effective strike plan in place, leaving PATCO without strong countervailing bargaining power. F. Lee Bailey, who had been closely identified with the sickout soon lost confidence in the wisdom of the sickout and asked the controllers to return to work only about a week after the job action started. In part as a result of his somewhat weak support for the sickout, in June of 1970 PATCO dismissed Bailey as its

general counsel and he ended his association with the union.

The 1970's also saw PATCO influenced by many of the same challenges facing society as a whole. One example was the increasing influence within the union of returning Vietnam era veterans hired as controllers. Veterans had always been an important source of FAA hires but the Vietnam era cohort was a different breed. Many of the veterans had developed a visceral distrust of government while serving in an unpopular war, and this distrust bred additional militancy within PATCO. Also, at the same time that PATCO needed to present a united front to management, it failed to show solidarity with the new cohorts of black and women controllers joining its ranks. McCartin details the ugly hazing faced by members of both of these groups from their white male counterparts. In part because of this treatment, the respective coalitions of black controllers and women controllers refused to support the 1981 strike. Also, although PATCO had affiliated with the Marine Engineers Beneficial Association (MEBA-AFL-CIO) in 1970, it did not make further strong efforts to associate itself with the greater labour movement. This was largely because the controllers regarded themselves as 'professionals' and not as blue collar workers. This failure to embrace labour solidarity was one factor leading to weak support from the AFL-CIO leadership and its constituent unions, especially the machinists union and the pilots union during the 1981 strike. The machinists and the pilots crossed PATCO's picket lines in 1981.

However, throughout the 1970's PATCO did increase efforts to flex its muscle in the political arena. For example, in 1972, it became one of the few AFL-CIO unions to support Richard Nixon's re-election. In 1976 PATCO switched back to supporting Democrat Jimmy Carter. But having had challenges with Carter's FAA director, Langhorne Bond, in 1980 PATCO withdrew

its support for Carter and supported the election of Ronald Reagan.

The irony of PATCO supporting the election of Ronald Reagan who became the President who actually 'broke' the union is a story well told by McCartin. One could argue that in its 1981 negotiations with the FAA, PATCO snatched 'defeat from the jaws of victory'. Prior to the strike, the union actually secured an impressive offer from the FAA resulting in a more than 11% increase in wages—better than had been achieved by any federal union in the past. President Reagan was also prepared to go to Congress—despite the concerns of some key Congressional leaders—to get the raises approved, since the union could still not 'officially' negotiate wages and benefits with the government. Victory seemed to be at hand for the union...but the newly elected president of PATCO, Robert Poli, failed to make a compelling case for the package to his Executive Board and the Board voted to reject it. The general membership subsequently voted down the package as well. A key reason for the rejection was PATCO's view that the government failed to adequately address the union's demand for a shorter work week and a better retirement package. One could argue, however, that Poli made a tactical error in not pushing for acceptance of the agreement. He could have made the case to the Executive Board that the gains were historic, and accepting the package would enable the union to build on these gains in the next set of talks. He failed to do so despite warnings from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) and prominent members of both the Senate and the House of Representatives that PATCO should not expect their support in the event a strike.

Why did the union challenge Reagan by rejecting the original package? In short, PATCO thought it had the President's strong support. In a pre-election letter to PATCO, Reagan expressed sympathy for the control-

lers' plight and pledged to help them if elected. Reagan himself had been President of the Screen Actors Guild and had led that union in a strike; he thought of himself as a friend of labour. As governor of California, he had signed legislation giving state workers the right to organize and to bargain. Reagan had also encouraged his Transportation Secretary, Drew Lewis, to arrive at the original negotiated settlement with PATCO. But Poli and his supporters thought they could get more out of the government given Reagan's letter. Needless to say they terribly miscalculated what Reagan would do when faced with an illegal work stoppage. They not only miscalculated the President's strong support of the recommendation of his Transportation Secretary and FAA Administrator to keep planes flying, but also Reagan's willingness to stand on the principle that no one is above the law. McCartin writes that the FAA strike plan had actually been developed under the Carter Administration and the Reagan Administration subsequently strengthened that plan. The administration was not eager for a fight but it was ready for one.

McCartin argues convincingly that what was extraordinary about Reagan's actions was not that he enforced the law and held the workers accountable to their no strike oath but that he did so in such an unequivocal fashion, unlike any President before him. There had been a number of federal work stoppages and slowdowns previously—including the 1970 postal workers strike and the 1970 PATCO sickout—both during the Republican Nixon administration, but there had not been wholesale dismissal of strikers in either case. McCartin argues that Reagan could have employed different tactics if he truly wanted the controllers to return to work. For example, he could have addressed the workers before the strike and warned them that they would lose their jobs; this surely would have forced sober reflection by the controllers. He could have also set a more flexible deadline for

a return to work after the strike began. The 48 hour deadline simply increased the workers' anger. However McCartin does a good job explaining the political calculations that went into the administration's decision to take a strong stand and not to compromise.

Reagan did not give PATCO and its members any way to save face—violating a long held axiom in labour relations that each side should leave the other with a graceful way to concede defeat. That Reagan did not seem to take the PATCO members' pent-up frustrations into account is regrettable and led to results that could have been avoided. Some analysts have argued that, as a relatively new and untested President, Reagan was trying to show that he could be firm. Some have even claimed it was his first foreign policy decision, and that he needed to show the rest of the world that he meant what he said. There were, in fact, reports that the leaders of the Soviet Union were very impressed with the resolve the new U.S. president displayed during the PATCO dispute.

The decision to dismiss the strikers and not to rehire them also created tremendous costs for the U.S. government as it ramped up its efforts to hire and to train replacements. In addition, the PATCO dispute had important repercussions for collective bargaining well beyond the federal sector. The dismissal of the strikers was a critical signal to private sector employers that it was acceptable to hire replacement workers. This further discouraged the use of the strike as an economic weapon and increased management's bargaining power. The reluctance by unions to use the strike weapon continues to the present day. As a point of comparison, in 1960 there were some 222 work stoppages involving 1000 workers or more while in 2010 there were only 10 such strikes recorded. Private sector employers in the U.S. had had their right to hire replacement workers validated by the Supreme Court many years earlier in

the 1939 *Mackay Radio* ruling. There had even been an increased trend to use such workers in the 1960's and 1970's, with the federal government's actions in the PATCO dispute further encouraging this trend.

The legacy of the PATCO strike also crops up when reviewing the defeats of public sector unions at the hands of some state governments during the past few years. For example, in 2011, Governor Scott Walker of Wisconsin cited President Reagan's stand against the PATCO strikers as an exemplar in Walker's own campaign to strip Wisconsin public sector workers of most of their collective bargaining rights. The irony in this is that as McCartin so ably points out, President Reagan never set out to 'break PATCO' and Reagan's record as governor of California showed him to be favourably disposed to public sector bargaining.

In summary, this book does a terrific job of chronicling the events leading up to the strike, why it shouldn't have happened, why it did happen and its long lasting impact on trade unionism and collective bargaining in the United States. It deserves to be read by all serious students of industrial relations.

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### **Diversification des mains-d'œuvre, mobilisation des savoirs et formation**

Sous la direction de Colette Bernier, Laurier Caron, Normand Pépin et Michel Racine,  
Québec : Les Presses de l'Université Laval,  
2011, 217 p., ISBN : 978-2-7637-9374-0.

Le processus de la diversification des mains-d'œuvre et, parallèlement, les changements qui se sont produits en matière de gestion des compétences, des savoirs et de la formation constituent l'objet principal de cet ouvrage.

Pour ce faire, les auteurs organisent leurs réflexions en trois temps. Ils s'intéressent d'abord à la question de la gestion des âges, plus particulièrement selon une

perspective intergénérationnelle du transfert des savoirs. Ensuite, ils traitent de l'un des objets principaux de l'ouvrage, à savoir la différenciation des mains-d'œuvre et l'accès à la formation. Enfin, ils s'intéressent aux principaux dispositifs de formation mis en place récemment au Québec pour prendre en compte cette diversification des mains-d'œuvre. Cette dernière partie discute aussi du rôle des partenaires sociaux et des acteurs qui sont conviés non seulement à participer mais à penser le débat et à l'orienter. Cet ouvrage se termine par une postface situant le livre dans une démarche collective et partenariale de réflexion au sein de l'axe de recherche sur la « gestion des savoirs et de la formation » de l'Alliance de recherche universités-communautés (ARUC) *Innovations, travail et emploi*.

La première partie de l'ouvrage comprend trois chapitres qui présentent et décrivent comment les organisations québécoises vivent le transfert des savoirs et des compétences entre les travailleurs expérimentés et les plus jeunes. Ainsi, à partir d'un projet de recherche-action mené de 2003 à 2006 par la Centrale des syndicats démocratiques (CSD) intitulé « Vieillesse de la main-d'œuvre et perspective intergénérationnelle », De Bruycker met en lumière deux principales lignes directrices. La première précise que le transfert des compétences est une activité complexe qui n'est pas encore très présente dans les milieux de travail et qui est influencée par différents déterminants individuels, organisationnels, sociaux et démographiques. La seconde réfère davantage à la nature des compétences à transmettre et à l'identification des savoirs qui doivent faire l'objet d'un transfert. On y apprend que pour que les compétences, les trucs du métier et les connaissances des travailleuses et travailleurs expérimentés soient transmis et partagés, il faut que le transfert soit orienté vers l'intergénérationnel et que l'environnement de travail le favorise, ce qui n'est pas toujours le cas au sein des entreprises étudiées. L'enquête