

The Air Traffic CONTROLLER

January/February 1999, Vol. 13, Issue 1

Public attains positive and sympathetic view of controllers

*Are controllers paid adequate wages?
Is air traffic control equipment the best possible?
Is controllers' work more stressful than the average occupation?*

Although the answers to these questions may seem blatantly obvious to most NATCA members, nationally renowned Opinion Dynamics Corp. polled 900 individuals to determine the general perception of controllers nationwide. The survey was conducted using a random digit dialer which adjusted itself only to keep the quota 52 percent women/48 percent men.

*Why was the poll necessary?
Why conduct it now?*

NATCA members' livelihood is ultimately dependent on the taxpayers for their existence, so it needs an objective assessment of public opinions about air traffic controllers. The union has grown and developed over the last 11 years. Does the public understand controllers' issues and obstacles?

NATCA must determine if communications with Congress and media need

strengthening in specific topic areas. Ultimately citizens should connect the dots in a way the picture they draw is the one NATCA wants them to see.

What benefit will this have to the membership?

Using this benchmark data, the national office and field can remedy loopholes in the public's understanding of air traffic controllers and their work. By then improving the way information to the public is positioned, NATCA makes strides in garnering support for new equipment, higher raises and opens people's awareness to controllers. The practical use of these statistics may be used as a resource in many ways, such as testifying or lobbying on Capitol Hill.

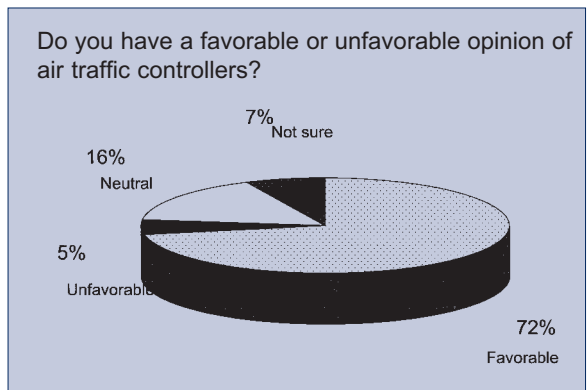
What were the poll's results?

The public attains a positive and sympathetic view of controllers. Around 80 percent polled believe they do an excellent or good job. In fact, 72 percent has a favorable view of controllers, while five percent reported an unfavorable outlook. And 85 percent believe controllers' work is more stressful than the average occupation.

One explanation for this perception might stem from

the fact over half of all respondents believes controllers work with inadequate, out-dated equipment.

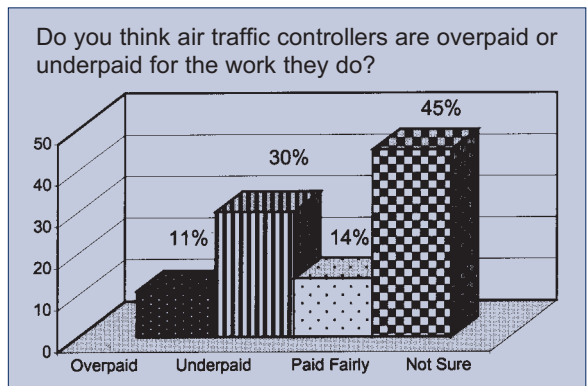
A mere 24 percent believes it is the best possible system. The remaining 25 percent are not sure. A closer look at the data reveals moderates (60 percent) and conservatives (51 percent) are more aware of the equipments' poor condition



than liberals (49 percent).

Likewise, when questioned about controllers' pay and benefits, almost half (45 percent) are uncertain if controllers are

continued on page 6



January / February

Inside

National Office

Learn more about the Labor Relations Team....4

Open Season

March of Freedom rolls around again.....7

Lobby Week

NATCA in Washington '99 preparations start.....8

In his own words...

NATCA President
Michael McNally



Quest for true retirement system continues

NATCA will commission study, propose package for Congress

Dear Friends and Members:

For as long as I can remember, we've talked about our desire for a true, 20-year retirement system for the air traffic controller workforce. On the surface, this sounds good. Only after careful analysis will we know for sure.

Both federal employee retirements systems have pros and cons, and undoubtedly, you have read summaries of both plans during the open season this past year. I will not belabor those points here.

We know employees under the Civil Service Retirement System do not accrue annuity continuously. We also believe currently the Federal Employee Retirement System does not match up properly to the public law relating to air traffic control specialists' early retirement.

NATCA's approach will be to commission a study of both retirement systems

and measure their affects against the occupation of air traffic controllers. From this comprehensive report will come recommendations to improve CSRS and FERS as they apply to our unique profession.

The blending of our wants and needs to existing systems into a single, new retirement program will probably be extremely difficult to pass in this Congress. At this early stage, we believe we will need to be creative within CSRS and FERS when specifically addressing our issues.

Correcting the air traffic controllers' retirement plans will be a multi-year effort. As we have already developed a cost neutral approach to an early out option, we now are beginning to identify professional, external contractors who special-

ize in retirement systems. The study will provide the needed documentation to move forward with a retirement package before Congress. Down the line, we will seek your assistance in grassroots lobbying.

Although a final resolution to achieving our objectives is still years away, now it the time to move on a plan that could lead to additional benefits for you and your family.

In solidarity,

Michael McNally
President

SW Region



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Feb. 21-27
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Package Includes:

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Contact:

Milton Scherotter at 281/590-6661

* rate quoted based per person double occupancy

coming soon...

NATCA in Washington '99

May 10-12

Hyatt on Capitol Hill



Don't be left out of the crowd...Contact your regional legislative chair for more info.

The Air Traffic Controller

An official NATCA publication.

January/February 1999

Vol. 13, Issue 1

How to reach
The Air Traffic Controller

Feedback

All letters must include an address and phone number. NATCA reserves the right to edit letters for clarity and space.

Address Changes

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The Air Traffic Controller is published monthly by NATCA. 1st class postage paid in Washington, D.C.

Controllers share feelings on FAM program

I feel very strongly about the possible loss of the familiarization program. I feel it is an invaluable tool for CONTROLLERS to get a "bird's eye view" from the cockpit. Every time I utilize the program, I come away from the experience with insight into the operation. This program offers us the unique chance to gain a different perspective on air traffic control operations. I definitely feel we should not give up on it.

I capitalized "controllers" in the above paragraph to emphasize what I feel is a major problem in our FAM program. I feel most of the problems we experience (abuses by riders) comes from personnel that are NOT actively involved in the separation of air traffic. They are only there for one reason, a free ride. I feel very strongly that NATCA should fight vigorously to amend the program to include only air traffic controllers that are actively involved in separating traffic. This would eliminate this "free perk" from all who abuse it and give us and the program a black eye. If we kept it to ourselves, and policed ourselves, this could be a very successful and useful program. We need to get rid of those who are messing up the system for us.

Mark Sickle
Washington Center

Roundtable Discussion

These are just a few of the letters on the familiarization program the Communications Team recently received. The newsletter survey on NATCA's website, www.natca.org, indicated many members would like to see roundtable discussions on topics.

In an effort to fulfill those needs, an upcoming issue of *The Air Traffic Controller* will feature a roundtable discussion on the familiarization program.

Should the program be maintained? Do controllers gain an increased awareness of the National Airspace System? Share your thoughts by sending them to Courtney Barron in the national office at cbarron@natcad.org.

The familiarization program must be maintained! It is a great training tool for controllers and allows pilots to gain knowledge about the air traffic system. The facts tell us it is very important for pilots and controllers to know about both sides of the air traffic control system. Most everyone in the aviation business agrees it is a worthwhile program for training. The restriction Congress is proposing regarding not using FAM with annual leave or regular day off will stop it dead, because the staffing will not permit scheduling work days for the trips. NATCA has to get the positive information from all sources into the public news and on Capitol Hill.

Bill Rabek
Atlanta Center

March of Freedom...

1. How many members joined during last year's March of Freedom?

(hint: look in April 1998 newsletter)

- a. 23
- b. 110
- c. 66
- d. 726

2. Who recruits the most new NATCA members?

- a. ATC Supervisors
- b. NATCA members
- c. Congress
- d. Ed McMahon

3. How much does it cost to join NATCA during the March of Freedom?

- a. Normal recruit price
- b. Ten dollars
- c. Free
- d. None of the above

4. What are the benefits of gaining additional NATCA members?

- a. More resources for all ATCs and engineers
- b. A growing PAC base (influence in Congress)
- c. Solidarity (protection in numbers)
- d. All of the above

Say What?

Express yourself!

NATCA Member Steve Dye, Orlando Tower, submitted this photo of the tag that appeared on his 1994 Corvette.

Mail in a photo of your "NATCA plate" to Courtney Barron at the national office or email cbarron@natcad.org today!



viewpoint

Member



We want to hear from YOU!

Do you think the FAM program should be maintained, changed or abolished?

Mail
Courtney Barron
at the national office
Email
cbarron@natcad.org
Fax
202/659-3991

February 25
Respond Today!
Selected answers will appear in future issues.

Deadline

Q & A

Q: Who should members contact to obtain the new password for the members only section of NATCA's website, www.natca.org?

A: Contact their regional vice president or call Candi Derr or Wilma Gisala in NATCA Field Services at 202/223-2900. Or email at cderr@natcad.org or wgisala@natcad.org.

Labor Relations Team garners support of membership and agency

The recent newsletter survey on NATCA's website, www.natca.org, revealed the majority of the membership wants to better understand the role and functions of the national office.

In response, *The Air Traffic Controller* will feature "National Office: In Depth," which highlights a different department each month.

This issue, Director of Internal Operations Bob Taylor sat down with *The Air Traffic Controller* to discuss his staff.

The Air Traffic Controller: How are the responsibilities divided among the Labor Relations Team?

Taylor: Issues that can't be resolved at the facility or regional level progress to NATCA's national office. Each arbitration case is reviewed for arbitrability by the labor relations staff. I am responsible for giving advice and counsel to the National Executive Board and the Labor Relations Team. I handle national contracting matters, and assist in facility and arbitration training.

As a team, we divide the arbitration cases primarily by region or issue. (Please see table below for distribution.)

The Air Traffic Controller: What is the labor relations staff currently working on?

Taylor: On a daily basis we field a tremendous number of phone calls from the field. Since the new contract went into effect on Sept. 15, 1998, a lot of members have questions about contract interpretation. The team also spends time researching issues and inquiries posed by the regions.

As usual, we are preparing for several arbitration cases to be scheduled for this year. The grievances range from issues such as contract interpretation, suspension and removals.

Along with working on these issues, we are ironing out some of the wrinkles with the controllers' contract, and we will begin contract negotiations for the engineers in January.

What challenges has the LR Team recently endured? How has it overcome them?

Taylor: Our recent battle to garner a \$200 million agreement for the controllers was the most recent obstacle, along with a very solid new collective bargaining agreement.

Now, we will turn our energy toward creating a new collective bargaining agreement for engineers. This will be a collaborative effort between NATCA and the Federal Aviation Administration.

We are going to attempt to obtain a new pay scale for the engineers, but as usual, money is an issue. This

process will probably take between 12 to 18 months. (For a more detailed look at recent activities please turn to the LR Report on page 11.)

The Air Traffic Controller: What aspects of the LR Team have you seen evolve or change over the years.

Taylor: Our team has grown steadily since its inception, allowing us to gain more experience and add more experienced staff to our group. We have been able to get our hands into a more diverse range of issues. The team has stepped up to the plate and provided NATCA representation by policing employment issues between the parties, which has gained us not only the respect of the na-



Labor Relations Team Members (l to r standing) Bob Taylor, Mike Doherty, Susan Grundmann, Jim Morin (l to r sitting) David Sandbach, Shannon Grant and Laurie Bay gather for a photograph. (Not pictured Melinda Kim)

tional office staff, but also the membership as well.

As a result of the Labor Relations Team's strong reputation, we continue to gain cooperation from FAA management and the labor movement in general because there is a perception NATCA is credible and competent.

The Air Traffic Controller: What future changes do you see for NATCA's LR Team?

Taylor: As a result of organization development, NATCA's membership has increased, and there are more opportunities to continue growth. As new groups join the union, whether it's the Department

continued on page 5

Staff	Region	Speciality
Laurie Bay	Eastern	Article 7
Mike Doherty	NW Mountain	Article 7
Susan Grundmann	Great Lakes Western Pacific	Nat'l Grievances, Contract Towers, Environ., OSHA
Melinda Kim	Southern	Equal Employment Opp. Article 7
Jim Morin, general counsel	Alaskan, Central New England	NTSB, OWCP, Medical Issues
David Sandbach	Southwest	Engineers

The Air Traffic Controller:

First contract negotiations begin for engineers in the new year

Doug Hintz

Southern Region engineer local president

Jan. 19 begins the first negotiations for NATCA engineers. We had very high hopes prior to forming a union, which the Federal Aviation Administration quickly squashed after we began to work with it. Much of the cooperation we expected, instead be-

came resistance and sometimes hostility.

The honeymoon is over. We now know none of this will be given to us without our continued diligence. We have come a long way, and have already put a great deal of ourselves into this effort, so it will

be difficult to discourage us now.

The engineers have received a great deal of support from many NATCA controllers who have been more than willing to give us the benefit of their long history with the FAA.

We are about to try Interest Based Bargaining with the agency. I have been collecting as much information as possible to learn what this type of bargaining entails. It appears if both sides stay with the process and commit to making it work, the results will far exceed the expectations of both sides.

Starting in January, the FAA and NATCA teams will train together at the Center for Management Development on the Interest Based Bargaining process. In spite of our lack of overall cooperation to date, I am still hopeful we will break through this logjam at the CMD.

It will be our first opportunity to get a feel for the direction of each team. Many of the managers involved in the negotiations have indicated they support the engineers' reasons for forming a union, and feel the contract will remedy many of the inequities that have existed for the past few years.

I can only hope these managers, many of who are engineers, will be true to their statements. If this occurs, negotiations will proceed very smoothly.

One significant difference I have noticed between all union and management negotiations teams is their motivation. The management group is there because it is their job.

Many times they would rather be somewhere else, and the outcome of the discussions often times doesn't affect them directly. The union team participates because their livelihood is on the line. The agreement's impact will be real and noticeable.

This reason alone is why we will see this process through, no matter what personal sacrifice is required.

I welcome any advice or tips any members who have been through an Interest Based Negotiation may have.

My email is douglashintz@juno.com. Wish us luck!

Election for engineer vice president held

NATCA's National Executive Board expanded last year when the convention body voted to add an engineer vice president to the group. "This representative will primarily focus from a national perspective on the many issues unique to the engineers," commented Western Pacific Region Local President Mike Martin.

The position, today held by Pete Healy, is up for special election because the engineers felt an elected, rather than appointed, official should serve the remainder of the three-year term. Healy was appointed to his role when it was initially created in 1997. This individual's selection will then fall into the three year election cycle mirrored by the board. "All of the other NEB members have been selected by vote, so this should be an elected position," commented Southern Region Local President Doug Hintz.

"I think most of the engineers are looking at this election to establish support for the engineer vice president that would only come from an election, as opposed to an appointed position. It will also prove beneficial to learn more about Pete or anyone else running," remarked Martin.

The National Election Committee will receive nominations Jan. 1-31. Any member in good standing may run for office. The committee will determine the nominees' eligibility and confirm they wish to accept the nomination. Acceptance of nominations must be complete by Feb. 15. Ballots will be mailed on Feb. 27, to be returned by March 30. The Field Services Team will help the committee count the votes on March 31. In addition to the national election, many of the locals will hold local elections which will conclude sometime in May. For further information, contact the appropriate engineer regional local president.

LR Team

continued from page 4

of Defense controllers or traffic management, new collective bargaining agreements will be mandated. I am anticipating, as our work load increases, we will need to add more personnel to the staff. We are currently looking to fill a few positions, including a paralegal and two labor relations professionals.

The Air Traffic Controller: What philosophy do you use to run the LR Team?

Taylor: We must use thorough analysis to fully investigate whether or not a violation of any law, rule or regulation or

the collective bargaining agreement has occurred.

If so, a determination is made to proceed based on the success of the potential arbitration. Sometimes there is no remedy that would benefit the union or an employee.

We must always inform our members of the facts, and not what they want to hear.

We must keep an honest approach while maintaining our integrity and the integrity of NATCA's elected leadership.

I am very proud of the LR staff, in respect to their contribution and hard work towards our accomplishments.

Survey

continued from page 1

over or underpaid for their work. These findings may be a result of the public's lack of knowledge about controllers.

Only 69 percent knew what they do, leaving almost one-third who thought they checked the safety of airlines, ensured planes functioned properly or directed planes on the ground, showing which gates to use and how to maneuver. Over half are unaware the Federal Aviation Administration employs controllers. But the majority of the public, 81 percent, is certain it would willingly pay an additional dollar per airline ticket to upgrade air traffic control equipment.

Feelings toward labor unions representing U.S. government employees and labor unions in general are more mixed. A narrow majority, 53 percent, describes its attitude toward labor unions as positive.

More specifically, 66 percent of Democrats approve of unions, compared to 40 percent of Republicans.

A smaller number, 41 percent, thinks labor unions representing U.S. government employees are a good thing for the country, whereas 40 percent hold unions are bad. Out of this group, 55 percent of Democrats versus 31 percent of Republicans are supportive of unions.

What is NATCA's next move? How will it use the data for its benefit?

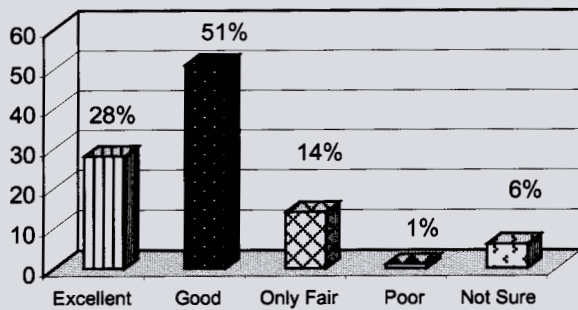
This information is beneficial to NATCA in several ways. It provides a great resource for the union to use while fighting on controllers' behalf. For instance, when the FAA wants to know how to pay for equipment upgrades, NATCA can say 81

percent of the flying public is willing to contribute through increased airfare.

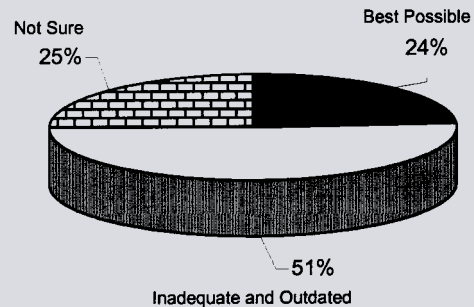
But the data also reflects the areas of improvement. By educating the public more on what controllers' jobs entail and how their equipment hinders their ability to execute simple, daily tasks, NATCA may build a larger pool of support.

The union also now knows new specific areas it needs to improve on, such as establishing a stronger link between air traffic control, the federal government and safety. Since the public does not clearly connect controllers, their employer and inherent responsibility for aviation safety, it may not resist future privatization efforts. NATCA must draw a clearer picture. Bottom line: NATCA has begun to pave its path in the right direction, but still has many miles to go.

How would you rate the job air traffic controllers do ensuring safety?



Do you think the air traffic control equipment in the U.S., which includes computers, radar and communications equipment, is the best possible or is much of it inadequate and outdated?



Keeping you
abreast

of

www.natca.org

updates on natca's homepage

Engineers and Organizing Want to stay connected with NATCA engineers and the Organizing Team? They are part of the www.natca.org website. Both sections contain five levels of information. The organizing pages deliver committee news about membership campaigns. Read about NATCA's internal organizing goals, how to increase membership, as well as keep up with the 1999 *March of Freedom*. To view the entire organizing section, go to members only and click on organizing.

The engineer pages contain a letter written by Organizing Team Lead Lew Zietz. The content also includes a list of frequently asked questions, along with testimonials. To view them go to the public site, join and click on how to become a FAA engineer. The private engineer pages are folded under the organizing section under members only.

Reclassification The reclass site has moved to the front page of members only. Classification/Compensation Chair Tim Haines added the latest facility pay grades, including a memo from the NATCA/FAA Classification and Compensation Work Group.

Display System Replacement Seattle Center Fac Rep Jack Fader wrote a letter on ZSE's DSR transition. He outlines all the phases and problems they have encountered so far. Meanwhile, the DSR team added the latest automation updates. To view these documents, go to members only, Safety and Technology and click on DSR.

Pitter patter of feet heard as *March of Freedom* planning progresses

And the march goes on...

The National Executive Board declared March 1-30 as NATCA's second *March of Freedom*. Anyone eligible to become a member may join NATCA during this open season, and avoid paying the initiation fee.

With Federal Aviation Administration controller membership hovering at approximately 11,400 members, NATCA has the singular distinction as the federal sector union with the highest percentage of eligible employees.



to its future success. In a nutshell, mem-

bership in the union is a controller's investment in his/her personal and professional future.

Historically, the best sales people for NATCA has been its members. During this event, the National Organizing Committee is asking each member to sponsor a new individual, and they will be rewarded for their effort and hard work.

For the first new member, sponsors will receive a specially designed spill-proof NATCA ceramic mug.

Sponsor two, and individuals will garner a mug and a new NATCA baseball cap.

Motivate three people, and a newly embroidered NATCA golf shirt will be added to the bounty.

"This is an excellent window of opportunity for prospective members to take advantage of," commented Organizing Team Lead Lew Zietz. "NATCA benefits, the members benefit...it's a great deal all around."

"This campaign is geared toward cap-

turing those individuals who know the benefits of joining NATCA, but they have just not done it yet. We are hopeful they will be



swayed to become a part of this organization during this event," he added.

Over the next few months, facilities will hear more about this new recruitment blitz, and will see posters and other paraphernalia reinforcing the drive.

"The national office is excited about NATCA's campaign this year, and we hope our energy filters down into the facilities," concluded Zietz.

Have any questions? Contact Zietz at lzietz@natcadc.org or 202/223-2900.

Collision avoidance equipment sets planes on near fatal path

Q: What may result from mixing three airplanes, an outdated aviation collision avoidance system and a busy traffic area?

A: A near midair collision.

When most passengers board an aircraft, their biggest worry usually entails fretting their luggage won't arrive at their destination or whether they forgot to pack something. The majority trusts the aviation system, and assumes the airplane's equipment is the top of the line. But is it?

Traffic Collision Avoidance System, a plane's on-board computer system, is designed to give warnings of nearby aircraft. So it probably would never cross the flying public's mind this system may actually put two aircraft on a collision course.

But this is exactly what recently occurred southwest of Albany, N.Y. The quick thinking of controller Mike Edmonds, Boston Center, averted the collision of a Northwest Airlines jet and an Air Ontario commuter flight. In fact,

Edmonds had only two seconds to react to the potential horror his scope revealed.

"In my 18 years as a controller, this was the closest I have seen two planes come to each other. I felt pretty scared, but I did what I was trained to do. I was just doing my job," he commented. They were so near, the two targets on the radar scopes merged into one, confusing the computer, causing it to lose one of the planes. The last reading showed them 300 feet apart, but they were probably much closer, controllers speculate.

The two planes and a third, a US Airways flight taking off from Albany airport, were safely separated until TCAS alerts prompted course changes.

The problem evolved when the Air Ontario flight's system recognized the US Airways plane ascending toward it and "told" the pilot to climb. (The aircraft taking off did not pose a threat to the Air Ontario flight, because it would have leveled off before reaching it.)

Nearby, a Northwest flight was initiating its descent. Suddenly, its TCAS detected the rising Air Ontario aircraft and directed the plane to dive. Realizing a

collision was about to occur, Edmonds immediately warned the Ontario crew to look ahead for an oncoming aircraft, which the pilots saw and quickly turned the airplane to safety.

What might have prevented this incident from evolving? New on-board computer software.

The upgrade version, TCAS 7.0, attains several improvements over its predecessor, including the ability to handle three plane situations. "In certain configurations, such as this, the system fails. We need a safety system that works. What we have now is not the best that it could be," stated Boston Center Facility Representative Bill Johannes. "We are working with junk compared to the rest of the world."

Although the European system mandated to use the new software starting Jan. 1, 2000, the Federal Aviation Administration pulled the funding for this program, even though it would cost a mere \$150 per plane to complete the upgrade.

Pilot and airline organizations nationwide join NATCA in its pursuit to motivate the agency to support this initiative.

NATCA in Washington '99 plans initiated

As Congress settles back into its offices after a long holiday break, the union's legislative group fires up preparations for *NATCA in Washington '99, The Next Step*.

The event, held May 10-12 at the Hyatt on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, will host NATCA members along with a mixture of members of Congress, representatives from other aviation unions and social security experts in panel discussions.

"The timing of *NATCA in Washington '99* is no accident. We are faced with several legislative challenges, and May will be an excellent time for our prepared activists to take to the Hill to educate and influence their elected representatives," remarked Legislative Committee Chair Alan Clendenin.

"Our union continues to grow and expand its political influence. Our last two events were focused on educating and training our grassroots activists. This May we will take 'the next step.'"

This year's lobby topics and issue briefings will cover maintaining the "Liaison and Familiarization Training" program, 20 year retirement, access to the Merit Systems Protection Board and saving Social Security.

"NATCA has developed a pool of extremely effective grassroots legislative activists. Key to our growth and maturity as an organization, we need to extend our resources to assist our brothers and sisters in the labor community," elaborated Clendenin.

"Social Security is an important labor issue every working family has a stake in. With the help of hundreds of educated NATCA activists and thousands of AFL-CIO members, labor's voice will be heard on this matter."

In an effort to continue to train and develop more members in the legislative arena, NATCA will also host a "First Timers' Break Out Session" to provide new participants the information they need to get up to speed.

Another special event includes a reception in the Rayburn House office building for union and Congress members. Participants will be asked to invite senators, representatives and their staff.

"I encourage you to contact your regional legislative chair and ask to become involved," concluded Clendenin.

FAA Private Contract Tower News

Organizing Efforts

✦ Controllers at Robinson Van-Vuren (RVA) Ithaca, N.Y., and Kissimmee, Fla., facilities recently petitioned the National Labor Relations Board for NATCA to represent them as their exclusive bargaining representative. Both NLRB supervised elections took place on Jan. 20.

Labor Relations/Arbitration News

✦ An arbitration regarding Robinson Van-Vuren's violation of contractual provision relating to benefit plans and accrual of leave is scheduled for early this spring. Although Stewart Tower filed the grievance, it will impact all RVA contracted towers.

✦ NATCA prevented the recent attempted termination of a controller's employment at an RVA tower in Texas.

✦ An arbitration regarding pay issues will be held at a "Midwest" facility in Wisconsin shortly.

✦ Share comments or suggestions about this section with Organizing Team Lead Lew Zietz at lzietz@natcacdc.org.

NATCA Membership Benefits

A SAMPLE OF A FEW OF THE UNION'S PERKS

questions?
call NATCA Field Services
202/223-2900

Accident Insurance

Take advantage of Union Member Accident Insurance Program, and receive at no-cost \$10,000 worth of union workplace accidental death insurance. This covers members at work, as well as driving to and from their union job. Plus, NATCA members garner at no-cost an additional \$2,000 of 24-hour worldwide, all-cause accidental death insurance. These offers are good for one year, do not cover members' spouses and may be renewed annually. For program details, call NATCA Field Services at 202/223-2900.

Flower Service

Receive a 15 percent union member discount on flowers from the Flower Club. Log on to its website, www.flowerclub.com/unionpriv/ to discover details about floral selections, pricing, ordering procedures and the company itself. Members may also view floral arrangements and place orders on-line. Or call NATCA Field Services at 202/223-2900 for more information.

Reduced Hotel Rates

Members may now obtain Walt Disney World's hotel discount at a new low price. For just \$89 off-season and \$99 during peak season, members may stay at the Hotel Royal Plaza, located in the heart of the park's village. This 1999 rate applies through Dec. 26 and is subject to availability. For additional information, check out the hotel's website at www.royalplaza.com, or call its reservation department at 1-800/248-7890 and ask for the "union leisure rate."

However, at time of printing, ABC/Disney had not resolved employee issues that led to a lock out of NABET CWA Local 31. Until agreement between the two is solidified, NATCA members are urged not to support either company.

New weather equipment could enhance controllers' performance

*Is it sunny? Or how about cloudy?
Maybe a little chance of rain?*

This is the guessing game controllers must play when attempting to determine the weather surrounding their facility. Sometimes it seems they are playing roulette rather than directing air traffic. But there is hope thanks to possible improvements to the Automated Surface Observing System.

Today's system, usually located around the center of an airport, obtains weather information from its platform with an array of tools. Sensors measure ceiling and cloud height, precipitation, such as rain or snow, temperature, dew point, altimeter and freezing rain. But ASOS temperature and dew point sensors often fail due to outdated technology and equipment, making backup equipment necessary.

A backup system is vital for airports to maintain operation. Information such as the temperature or dew point is imperative to determine whether planes may land or leave. The loss of this data could restrict operations for commercial carriers by preventing their arrival or departure.

A procurement is in progress to acquire backup equipment for the facilities with limited aviation weather reporting require-

ments. Controllers at these towers must verify and if required edit basic elements of the current ASOS report, which adds

additional duties.

"Controllers must augment ASOS for thunderstorms, tornadoes, hail, virga and volcanic ash. These are events it can't observe. They may also add lightening information if they find it operationally significant. We also edit ASOS when it is not representative of actual weather conditions at the airport. If it is sunny but one cloud happens to hang over ASOS, it will generate an "overcast" report even though only one cloud looms in the vicin-

ity," elaborated ASOS Representative Cal Smith.

A solution to rectify this problem may also occur after a few months of testing of new technology in mid to late summer. The agency will experiment with video, infrared and lasers which will look around the airport to determine ceiling and visibility above 12,000 feet and within 10 miles of the facility. The current system reads up to 12,000 feet from one point.

"The new equipment will help ASOS to perform the tasks it was originally intended to handle," commented Smith. "Not only will it draw a more accurate picture of the weather conditions, it could also reduce our workload. Rather than controllers feeling like they must baby-sit the ASOS, the new technology offers a real possibility of less interacting with the equipment."

The improved ASOS should be more responsive to changes in the atmosphere because it will see weather approaching the airport not waiting until it has already arrived to be reported.

"These improvements will enhance the controllers' performance because they may focus on directing traffic, not adjusting ASOS. It is a more automated system. This is the technology we have been waiting for," concluded Smith.

Book depicting 1981 controller strike available at discount rate

Jim Morin, NATCA general counsel

In my present position as NATCA's general counsel, and a former officer in the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization local at LaGuardia, it was with great interest I read Willis J. Norlund's book, *Silent Skies, The Air Traffic Controllers Strike*.

After reading many other accounts of the strike, and the events leading up to it, I must admit to a large amount of skepticism prior to reading it. Too many other authors, and so-called "experts" have all examined this subject, many with preconceived views and biases towards those involved in this tragic event for so many on both sides of the strike. It was indeed refreshing to read Norlund's unbiased, professional account of the major players, and the period leading up to the final showdown.

The author takes no sides in his description of events and relates the major mistakes and miscalculations on both sides that escalated to the strike on Aug. 3, 1981. From the legitimate collective bargaining goals of the union and Federal Aviation Administration, to both's decision to "flex their muscle" and force a job action to establish who was in control, Norlund examines issues and motivations of all parties.

He goes into great detail on the preparation for a strike threat which would forego the previous tactics of slow-downs and sick-outs; tactics courts had long deemed to be job actions as much as a blatant strike violation of federal statutes and regulations. Norlund delves into the history of unionism among air traffic controllers and the working conditions lead-

ing to the foundation of PATCO. He examines the personality traits comprising good controllers, as well as PATCO's leaders. The author writes of the strike's aftermath highlighting the costs to all parties. Without question, *Silent Skies* is a historical account of PATCO's demise and NATCA's beginning.

I truly enjoyed reading this saga, despite the pain of reviewing this tumultuous period in my life and the air traffic control profession. *Silent Skies* is a must on the reading list of every controller or management official who cares about the system and its improvement as it enters a new phase of growth and technology.

Editor's note: Members may receive a 20 percent discount off the book's list price of \$49.95 by calling 1-800/225-5800 and mentioning source code F227.

Keep those eyes peeled for a seniority survey arriving soon in NATCA members' mailboxes. Due to several factors, such as age restrictions and the 1981 strike, virtually the entire existing controller workforce will retire in a relatively short period of time. In a proactive effort to determine the number of controllers that must be hired in given years to maintain the current staffing levels of Full Performance Level controllers, NATCA is sending out a survey to gather data. The information will be analyzed in mid-March, and used in the union's negotiations with the agency and lobbying efforts related to congressional appropriations. All members are encouraged to complete and return it to the national office as soon as possible. Questions should be directed to Ruth Marlin at 202/366-7621.

In recent weeks, NATCA's National Organizing Committee members have received numerous inquiries from traffic management coordinators concerning possible future NATCA representation. To gauge the actual numerical support for any eventual representation, the committee requested that interested TMCs sign a preliminary, informal document indicating their interest in joining. This would not commit the signer to become

a member, nor would there be any implied future obligation. Its singular objective is to identify the overall numerical strength needed for any organizing initiative. Sample petitions and accompanying information have been mailed to all fac reps. All petitions must be returned to the national office no later than Feb. 15. Need additional information? Contact Organizing Team Lead Lew Zietz at lzietz@natcad.org or call 202/223-2900.

Airplane exhaust, asbestos, fires and sick building syndrome are just a few of the problems controllers endure on a daily basis. These topics are some of those highlighted in NATCA's recent environmental booklet. Controllers from an array of facilities, including Dulles, Chicago TRACON, Cleveland Center, Houston Center, Miami Center and Tower and Moses Lake/ Grant County Tower shared their stories. Rather than mailing it directly to each member, the national office distributed them to fac reps, national aviation reporters, Congress, corporate and associate members and other external audiences. Any member may obtain a copy by contacting Candi Derr or Wilam Gisala in NATCA's national office at cderr@natcad.org or wgisala@natcad.org or 202/223-2900.

As the year 2000 rolls closer, the topic of Y2K compliance continues to loom in the air. On Jan. 1, NATCA Executive Vice President Randy Schwitz voiced the union's concern over the Federal Aviation Administration's contingency plans on CNN's special report on the year 2000 computer problem.

NATCA Executive Vice President Randy Schwitz's quote "I'd rather have a hot poker in my eye than have an airport named after him (Ronald Reagan)," made *Newsweek's* "Most Memorable Statements of 1998" issue.

Want to know the latest, up-to-date information with NATCA? Subscribe to McNally/Schwitz Alert and find out about events as they happen. Email (ssimpson@natcad.org) or call (202/223-2900) Sandra Simpson in the national office to be placed on the list.



Controller Chuck Mote (l) with Gen. Valery Kozlov of the Russian Air Force at the 1998 ISASI conference in Barcelona, Spain.

Controller and Senior Air Safety Investigator Chuck Mote, Tuscon Approach, was recently elected chairman of the Air Traffic Services Working Group of the International Society of Air Safety Inspectors. The group includes representatives from air traffic services of 12 countries, and works closely with International Civil Aviation Organization.

Display System Replacement went fully operational at Seattle Center on Dec. 15, 1998. Although controllers are using the equipment, several environmental problems remain, including temperature and lighting issues. A lack of space is particularly problematic. Too many controllers are packed into rooms too small and filled with too much equipment. NATCA and the agency will continue to work on improvements as DSR enters more facilities, at a rate of almost one a month. Salt Lake Center will have initial operating capability on Feb. 1, followed by Cleveland Center on March 31. "DSR is deployable, but the challenge now is to figure out how to make the improvements," commented DSR Lead Mitch Coleman.



Engineers break from training.

Labor relations, Title 5, employee/union rights and an introduction to negotiations are just a few of the topics covered in training held for 22 engineers in Las Vegas, Nev., Nov. 15-18.

Plans for future educational sessions for this group are under development.

It may be cold now...but the warm weather is coming soon. Dust off those golf clubs to prepare for Tampa Tower's NATCA in Paradise Golf Tournament to benefit the American Cancer Society on May 17 at Tampa Palms Golf Club. For just \$80 per person, participants may play in this four person scramble, win prizes and consume refreshments and dinner. Have any questions or need more information, call 813/371-7724 and ask for the NATCA office.

100 Percent Facilities	
Richard Hall	Hailey Tower
Dale Hernandez	Shreveport Tower
CONGRATULATIONS	

Familiarization training at impasse

NATCA and the FAA met in Washington, D.C., with the Federal Labor Relations Authority on Jan. 7-8 to continue negotiations regarding Article 23, familiarization training. The agency has declared this issue non-negotiable because of a violation of ethics. The parties are continuing to meet with the FLRA in an attempt to resolve the issue.

LR Team needs to fill three positions

The LR Team is looking for a paralegal and two labor relations professionals. Forward resumes to the national office.

Union and agency officials met to examine memoranda of understanding

NATCA's Director of Internal Operations Bob Taylor and Barry Krasner, former president, met with FAA officials, Herman Lyons and Ray Thoman, to examine the memoranda of understanding elevated by the regions and locals to the national level. In total, 398 MOUs or subsections were raised, many regarding the same issue. The only one that could not be agreed upon, minimum staffing will be scheduled for arbitration. Issues will remain in effect until the appointed arbitrator decides. The following is a breakdown of the results.

86 issues were found to be in conflict
235 issues were found not in conflict
33 issues were split – separate sections of one elevated issue were dealt with separately by this group. Each section was given its own result.
25 issues are now at impasse pending arbitration
19 issues were not applicable to this process

Past Practice Review Committee meets to review elevated cases

NATCA's Director of Internal Operations Bob Taylor and Barry Krasner, former president, met with FAA officials, Herman Lyons and Ray Thoman, in New York on Jan. 4-6 to review 29 elevated issues of past practice.

Controllers receive back pay and overall wage increase

Controllers at Central Wisconsin Airport will receive their holiday bonus a little late this year.

As the result of two grievances filed by NATCA and a Department of Labor audit prompted by a complaint from the local facility representative, the bargaining unit members will be receiving back pay dating back to Feb. 1, 1997 for underpayments in the wage rate.

Following the DOL audit, Midwest, the employer, agreed to make payments to the four controllers totaling over \$13,000. These efforts also resulted in an overall wage increase in October 1998.

Increase of international air traffic escalates concern in aviation field

Controllers share stories on how they interact with pilots who don't speak English as a first language

How does one define English as a second language? For people working in the aviation profession, the explanation is a complicated one.

International accents are heard over thousands of controllers' headphones nationwide. As this challenge escalates, so do concerns of air traffic controllers.

The International Civil Aviation Organization says English is the official language for aviation, but not much support from other aviation groups exists on this issue. Early last year, the Bar Association of New York City Committee on Aeronautics said the current language standards were not up to speed, and the Federal Aviation Administration had done little to rectify the problem.

The committee cited several examples of fatal accidents attributed to language. As a result, the group recommended the FAA to work with ICAO to enforce a spoken English test for foreign pilots and controllers.

According to Miami Tower's Andy Cantwell, 30 percent of his facility's traffic involves foreign carriers. "These pilots

will speak English on the radio frequencies, but they only understand the normal U.S. terminology. If anything out of the ordinary comes up, they do not have the English capability to deal with it," says Cantwell.

Miami Tower is no stranger to foreign air traffic, but it can add complexities to an already demanding profession. "Recently, two foreign planes collided as they taxied down the runway," stated Cantwell. One of the pilots misinterpreted a command from the controller. The incident is under investigation from the National Transportation Safety Board.

At New York's Kennedy Airport, the situation is ever present as increased air traffic brings a deluge of foreign carriers. Controller Barrett Byrnes encounters a language barrier on a daily basis. "We are so used to the situation that we are pretty well adjusted on how to handle it. The controllers will typically slow their speech and enunciate flight numbers clearly so the pilot can hear. It is more important that foreign pilots understand the commands because there is no room for error," he added.

A California solution has produced positive results on both ends. Los Angeles Fac Rep Elliot Brann says, "Every September we hold a meeting with foreign chief pilots to discuss issues like this." Brann also stated foreign pilots often have trouble understanding the slang American controllers use.

At Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Fla., a program specializing in training foreign pilots and controllers is gaining world recognition. The department is so well respected that China's Civil Aviation Authority chose Embry-Riddle to provide the education to more than 200 air traffic controllers.

"The students learn functional English, including American phrases and slang. We currently have 125 teaching centers around the United States and Europe," says Lisa Ledewitz, director of communications.

As international air traffic continues to increase, solutions to resolve the issue will be considered top agenda for air traffic controllers.

