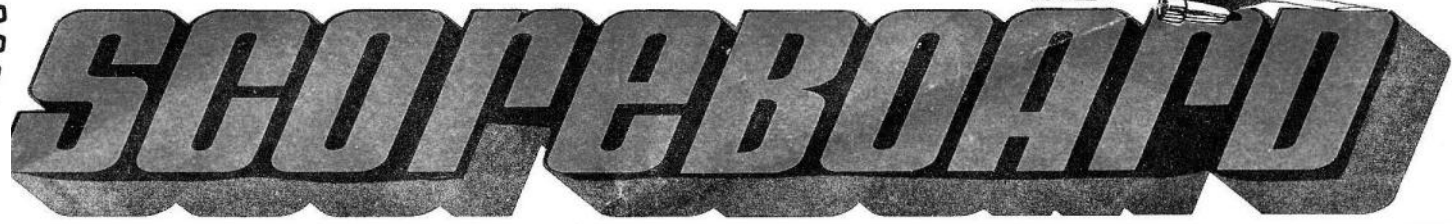


AERO LODGE 834



A SUPPLEMENT TO THE PLAINDEALER

KEEPING SCORE FOR 834

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SEPTEMBER 2010

Is it really our fault?

Relax and Enjoy Labor's Holiday. You Deserve It!

Are We Responsible For "This Economy"?

By Denise Harris—Editor

First of all, I am not an economic expert. I am just a person who has lived through several decades that have come to define working in the United States of America and Wichita, Kansas. Most days, I feel beat up and none too happy about growing older. Then today, I thought about all I have seen in the years I have been alive and it came to me: We've really screwed up and we need to stop using the phrase "in this economy" and start taking responsibility for where we are as a country.

Since I can remember, there has been a sort of natural order to how Americans move through the jobs in their lives. We started out in about junior high having low-paying jobs that just paid enough money to buy records, candy or toys and were intended to help us "learn the value of a dollar". These jobs were usually babysitting for the girls and lawn mowing for the boys. This was valuable work that needed to be done for adults in the neighborhood so they could go out for the evening or spend a Saturday afternoon relaxing.

Then came high school and we wanted a car so we could drive to school or go out on the weekends. Gas wasn't very expensive but we needed a lot of it to take us where we wanted to go. We needed a better paying job to support this new habit. Because of this, some of us had to move up to working for real businesses but still "kid" jobs like McDonald's, Sandy's, Griff's or a grocery store. They were "kid" jobs because they were still low paying but provided more hours (as flakey and ever-changing as the schedules were) and no benefits. But, hey, we didn't need benefits, our parents had good insurance provided through their "real" jobs that covered us, too.

After we graduated from high school, we either went to college or started looking for a "real" job right away. Most of us still didn't need benefits because we lived with our parents and were STILL on their insurance so we could go to school and work at Pizza Hut or any of the zillion other restaurants that grew like weeds around here. Just in case we needed higher pay and benefits, Wichita WAS one of the most prolific manufacturing company cities in the world and they accepted many, many non-skilled people who could learn on the job. Besides the four best-known aircraft companies ever created, Wichita geniuses also gave birth to Coleman camping and air conditioning, Love Box, Vulcan, Chance, Air Midwest, Wescon, Big Dogs, Henry's, Shepler's, Koch and Taco Tico, with all the corporate offices that went with them. And I haven't even started on meat packing and oil refining. It was pretty clear that in Wichita, we MADE things.

When we were young, people in Wichita who are now over the age of 45 had more job opportunities than you can shake a stick at. This was only 35 or 40 years ago. What happened?

We happened. Baby Boomers were born into a better, more prosperous economy than ever before. When we grew up we could go to college, work at any manufacturing job we wanted, be stay-at-home moms or start our own businesses. Anything we wanted to do, we could do. Wages were high, house payments and rent was low. We could live in a great neighborhood, our kids could do the great things we did as kids but something went wrong. Or someone went wrong. Or we went wrong.

The reins were passed to us and we didn't grab them and take control. Instead, millions of Baby Boomers came up with a really crazy resolution: We wanted our children to not have to *work* as hard and have it "better" than we did. We wanted "better for our kids", but better than what? Our parents had nice houses, two cars, boats, pools, belonged to a "club" or two or three, bowled, golfed and went on family vacations. We were allowed to be active in sports in high school, play in the band, go to the movies, hang out at Pizza Hut after the Friday night football game. We went to scout camp in the summer, dated whoever we had the nerve to ask out, had nice weddings and produced 2 or 3 or 4 kids.

And, why did we have it this good? Because our parents worked hard! Then, when they were ready to stop working hard, they retired. There was no shame in building airplanes, camping equipment or building amusement park rides. And, ya know why? Because we built the best damn airplanes, camping equipment and amusement park rides in the world, that's why. And other parts of the greatest country in the world built the best other stuff like cars, too. Our generation has put the brakes on working hard. We have watched major manufacturing companies like Boeing send our work, OUR WORK to be done in what used to be third-world countries. Now, we have given those countries as much of our technology as they could absorb and we want to know how we lost our jobs... how did it become "this economy"?

Everyone else seems to be so confused about how we got to be in "this economy" but we should know better than anyone. We worked hard to help Boeing off-load work to other companies first in other states then in other countries. I've seen hourly employees work *overtime* to gather work to send out. We used to do it all. I think we could have built an entire plane in Wichita and flown it right out. And why shouldn't we? We have had the best trained employees in the world from engineers to tool makers to mechanics. Boeing was the top of the heap and manufactured the best airplane in the world. "If it's not Boeing, I'm not going" because we had the best product built by the best employees that could be recruited. And, when you build a high-profit product you should put that money back into the building of the product by paying the people who made that airplane happen. Somewhere, however, in the heat of sending

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the work elsewhere to get it made for less money, Boeing skipped over those who previously turned out the best airplanes... the American Boeing Workers. Especially the guys in Wichita, Kansas. Especially the ones who used to work hard because now they didn't want to work hard anymore. That's why things are falling apart.

This story is being played out in manufacturing towns all over the U.S.A. and we know it. We know why we are in "this economy". It is because we need to work hard and we don't. If we don't work hard, all sorts of things change. We start to feel guilty about drawing a decent wage with decent benefits from a company that is receiving high profits every year. We feel like, hey, we can pay part of our insurance premium or maybe all of it even though workers in the past walked picket lines for months to get it paid for us. We don't think we deserve what workers have won in the past because after all, we are living within "this economy" and we don't really work that hard at the few jobs we have left here because we gave in to the Boeing company's subcontracting language in our contracts because "at least we have a job."

Since people aren't working hard building stuff, they don't need to retire because they're not getting tired. So, my generation will work, work, work, work, die. But, just for old-time's sake, we will still attempt to negotiate retiree benefits in our contracts that we know our members will never use. Even though there are still improvements to be made so we can retire and let younger people (let's just use for example our own children) have our jobs we will continue to allow manufacturing companies like Boeing to give our work away to other countries because they will do it cheaper and Boeing can call themselves a white-collar management company.

Since 2005, I have had to make a lot of adjustments in my life that most of you who are reading this have not. In 2005 Boeing pulled one of the sweetest cons in U.S.A. business history. By taking a huge legal risk and selling the commercial portion of the Wichita site, Boeing succeeded in breaking the hourly workers away from the strength of IAM District 751 in Washington. Boeing also managed to lay off over 800 senior employees by violating their seniority rights. This same thing is happening all over the country as people in the 40-55 year old age bracket lose their jobs because of subcontracting.

So, the bottom line is, we know exactly why we are in "this economy". It is because the United States is quickly becoming a third-world country with the very rich controlling the very poor. Because we WORKED, our country became great and the only thing that will save us from being on welfare is taking back our work and rebuilding our pride. It will be the hardest work we have ever done but we have the knowledge and the backbone to make it happen. We are the ones who can build a world-class product and we are the ones who deserve to be paid for it.

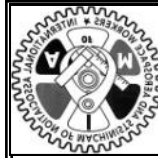
In Solidarity!

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Keep in touch with your representatives/stewards
Check the LL834 and District Lodge 70 web sites often
Attend 834 monthly meetings
Second Saturday of every month at:

District Lodge 70
3830 S. Meridian
Wichita, KS
E-Board Meeting 8:45 AM
Regular Meeting at 10:00 AM

See Ya There!



Letters to the Editor



Are You A Floater?

If you're reading this, chances are you may not be a "floater". You are being active by reading the Scoreboard. I'm willing to bet you know many other people who are "floaters".

So what is a "floater"? "Floater" is a term that's used a lot on reality television shows when someone gets "voted" out of the house, off the island, etc. The "floaters" are the folks who don't get involved or do anything to call attention to themselves. They avoid anything that gets them noticed by the other people in the group. A "floater" tries to get by on anonymity.

There are some "floaters" in labor unions as well. They pay their dues, show up for voting (sometimes) and always support our work stoppages. That's as far as they will go in their involvement. These members seem be unwilling to take a more active role, preferring to let others take the reins.

Within larger locals, there are usually more people available who are willing to lead so this might not be a major concern but certainly isn't the best way. Letting others make decisions for you without closely watching what's going on is always a huge mistake. I did that for too many years when I was younger. I am now much more involved!

We need to, instead, encourage the "floaters" to become interested in more than just getting their union-negotiated wages but not bringing the union into their everyday lives. By becoming involved in the daily goings on with their local and district they will come to understand that without the majority of the members showing real solidarity and fervor for the issues, we all stand to lose many of the gains we have made in the past.

I foresee increased pressure from Boeing as they attempt to convince us we deserve less of the company's profits and we should even give up some benefits we already have. Historically, every time Boeing wins a take-a-way, the administrators give themselves big bonuses. We give, they take, and it has never strengthened the company's business stance one bit. It has only gone to prove that Boeing can still bamboozle the workers out of the fruits of their labor.

If we can get more members involved and asking tough questions about the earnings they deserve it will only make us stronger. Having a solid base of present and future members willing to really fight and sacrifice will assure our children and grandchildren decent wages when they enter the job market. Everyday, union members fight for the future of all working Americans!

In Solidarity,
Brother Bob Feldt

SPOTLIGHT ON OUR MEMBERS

Local Lodge 834 member Bob Feldt started working in tooling as a Jig Builder on July 15, 1986. He worked first in Mod and later in production as a mechanic along some layoffs. Bob was shop steward on E4B until a medical layoff. He has served the lodge as a District 70 delegate and is currently a delegate to the Wichita/Hutchinson Labor Federation.

Bob has been a great contributor to the Scoreboard. If you would like to be a spotlighted member, send your photo and a short bio to deeharris3154@hotmail.com

