

Who Shut Down the Shutdown?

January 26, 2019



Who ended the shutdown? The Democrats? Nancy Pelosi? Mitch McConnell? None of the above.

The shutdown got shut down when workers took Laguardia Airport off-line on Friday, January 25. A rolling disaster of massive commercial disruption was about to unfold for capitalist America and that pushed the GOP over the edge.

Disgusted and outraged employees - TSA security and FAA air traffic controllers - did what their unions should have done at least two weeks ago. We don't know what positive role IF ANY their national union leadership played here. More likely, as with all great accomplishments for workers rights, the real leadership probably came from the bottom, from the workers collectively voting with their feet.

In past momentous worker actions (like getting the 8 hour day) what typically happened was some outrage finally broke the camel's back and thousands of workers hit the streets, with their leadership frantically racing to catch-up with the members. We'll have to watch and see if the current union leadership at the top even bothers to get out and walk quickly, let alone run; to acknowledge the profound lesson we just learned, again.

What happens in three weeks? Maybe the next shutdown should be pre-empted by a strong credible threat: next time it won't take three weeks to stop it. We'll stop it on day two. The federal unions should sign on to a pledge: "You want shutdown, you'll get shutdown, motherfucker." They could even toss out the idea of a general strike so that the rest of us can get involved in determining our future.

It's about time the labor movement showed the Democratic Party for what it is. Why didn't THEY call for a walk-out and promise protection? This would have been a great opportunity to encourage a lot of Trump's base to re-think their worldview.

The federal unions that should have immediately responded to the shutdown include: the American Federation of Government Employees (TSA, IRS, Social Security, Homeland Security, CDC..), National Treasury Employees Union, National Air Traffic Controllers Association. And of

course the AFL-CIO - the American FEDERATION of Labor - itself should have been there instead of doing nothing like they did when Reagan fired our air traffic controllers years ago (1981).

This isn't just about Trump or the GOP, or even the pathetic Dems; the labor movement needs house-cleaning, redemption and resurrection. They could set the agenda for America if they wanted to.

** Robert Park is a federal employee and AFGE member in Cincinnati, Ohio. He describes himself as a life-long activist, schooled in imperialism (Vietnam) and class-analytics; trained in science and public health; waiting for the tipping point.*