

HISTORY OF THE MFA

There have been 4 MFA's - 1964, 67, 70 and 73 and this presentation will basically show how the IBT bureaucracy has integrated the opposition each time - pulling the noose tighter until all dissent has been brought under the Master structure. The toughest opposition to crack has been the big freight centers with strong militant locals - San Francisco, New York, Chicago, St. Louis, LA. Chicago with its independent union, the CTDU (Chicago Truck Drivers Union) remained outside the longest. Now, however, recently there are rumblings of a new kind of opposition, new militancy from a disgusted R&F against the industry, the government and the union. But that's a separate story. Let's look at the prelude to the first Master contract in 1964.

One big powerful contract was Hoffa's dream. Over a period of time he managed to arrange for all regional contracts to expire at the same time in 1964. He worked on opposition locals by removing those dissidents who were in appointed positions. He also used his power to change things at the conventions. At the 1961 IBT convention he got amendments passed that made regional contracts binding on all locals if a majority of the region approved and the local couldn't withdraw unless the International approved.

1964 - the first MFA - Hoffa deals with opposition on the east coast

- IBT and TEI (trucking employers incorporated), which represents 35 trucking assoc. sit down to negotiate a national contract
- this only deals with non-economic issues except for the cost of living adjustment formula. It covers union security, grievance procedure, seniority
- economic provisions - wages, pension, welfare, are still negotiated in supplements which follow regional lines
- three areas remained outside the MFA
 - 1) NY and NJ
 - 2) Chicago
 - 3) Maine, NH and Vermont
- the NY and NJ independence shows opposition - 17 locals on the East Coast strike 8 auto hauling co. - Hoffa denies internal dispute
- IBT and the car haulers reach agreement - the R&F reject it 3 days later
- Hoffa refuses to accept the reject
- there is a new vote and the locals are back to work two days later

At the 1966 IBT convention Hoffa works at bringing in the opposition in preparation for the 1967 contract. He gets an amendment passed so that the general president appoints the negotiating committee for area wide or industry wide bargaining. Now a local's ability to go its own way is further circumscribed by the constitution. NY and NJ area and the Maine, NH and Vermont area vote to come under MFA provisions. Economic issues are still covered by 30 regional supplements, but are becoming more and more similar.

- 1967 - Hoffa chooses Fitzsimmons to become president since he is to be sent up for 8 year jail sentence for jury tempering. Thinking his stay will be brief, he wants someone who won't give him any trouble when he gets out and wants to take over again. In any case he hopes to rule from his prison cell. He chooses Fitz over other more well known figures because he thinks like Hoffa
- Hoffa lays out negotiating plans for Fitz - he plans selective strikes if necessary, called "whip saw" which means the union hits a few key industries allowing their competitors to keep operating. He doesn't want full scale strike as this would bring down anti-strike legislation
 - Hoffa goes to jail - this is Fitz's first test. He promises \$3.00 an hour increase in wages
 - TEI warns of lockouts if there are selective strikes
 - 38 locals strike, IBT says they are unauthorized
 - TEI locks out 200,000 for 3 days, country wide
 - this is followed by a 2 week strike in Chicago - CTDU and 8 IBT locals, 705 and 110

-this time the TEI are strong - the unions in confusion due to the change in leadership and a rapid settlement follows - \$1.10 an hour raise

By the 1970 contract, Fitz has had time to learn a new lessons and tighten control. TEI now represents 15,000 trucking companies with 400,000 employees. This is the year of the big strike and Chicago plays a leading role.

1970 -- negotiations reach an impasse quickly - the contract expires and there are walk-outs with 72 truck co. in 37 cities shut down, mainly in the central states
-there is a tentative agreement of \$1.10 raise - Fitz lauds it as the "best ever"
-this doesn't go over - there are wildcats next in LA, Milwaukee, St. Louis, SF spreading across the country and paralyzing freight
-Chicago strikes

some background on Chicago - the CDTU was known as the Al Capone local. It has remained out of the IBT since 1905. It was taken over by racketeering in the 1920s. Fenner, who is still President, took over in 1946 supposedly to clean up racketeering. Chicago didn't lead the walkouts as you would be led to think reading the press at the time - they waited 2 weeks until after the wildcats. There was no R&F initiation. It was from the top down. Now there have been no membership meetings for the last 20 months. Fenner appoints the BAs and stewards. However, good news - IS has a caucus there. Thousands showed up a few months ago when the caucus leafleted for a meeting - was a near riot and they had to stop the meeting.

-CTDU signs contracts with local companies getting benefits nearly double the national contract
-Teamsters elsewhere naturally don't want to settle for less than Chicago
-Fitz blames the commies for wildcats - meanwhile in Ohio and Penn. the National Guard are called out to curb violence
-steel carriers in the mid west attempt to break from IBT and become their own bargaining agents
-the IBT is forced to reopen negotiations and wins increase of \$1.85 - a rise of 13% a year
-this ends the 85 day strike - in Chicago alone that resulted in \$1 billion business losses

Nixon's Phase III is in action by 1973. The Labor Dept. reports that the number of days lost to strikes for the 1st 6 months is the lowest in 9 years. Agitation occurs before the contract. In December the independent truckers all over the country protest high fuel costs and the 55mph speed limit. Work stoppages and demonstrations take place throughout the country. Fitz has lunch in the White House and promises to get the repeal of the 55 mph but in fact did nothing to move the union behind it. TEI asks sacrifices by truckers due to the fuel shortages. As far as I can tell there is no opposition during these negotiations. The 2 big locals in Chicago, 705 and 710, and the CTDU together sat in on the negotiations, made a separate agreement but essentially were incorporated into the structure of the MFA.

1973 - the contract is settled easily with a 7% increase
-the Labor Secretary hails this as good news for the nation, in keeping with the gov. economic stabilization program to keep wages close to 5.5% increase
-the contract is ratified 2 1/2 to 1. The iron and steel supplement tried to get vote but failed

Summary - This is an overview and very sketchy, and a great deal of this comes from the capitalist press. Teamster power now is such that it can control the outcome of negotiations and also technological changes in the industry if it chooses. This last through "change of operation" clause which is part of the grievance procedure. It requires approval by a union-management Joint Area Committee before any change in terminals, breaking points, or driver domiciles can occur. The real Teamster strength of course lies with the open ended grievance procedure (or just the threat of it) - that is, the end step is the strike, not binding arbitration unlike the majority of contracts. All the union has to say to uncooperative management is that they'll whip up a grievance and take it to the strike. Of course, this process has also worked to keep the locals in line since the International controls the local's strike.