



Amtrak union leader Jed Dodd and N.J. State Industrial Union Council president Bill Kane are taken from the field at Yogi Berra Stadium last night

## Amtrak Labor Protest Makes Ballgame Late

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Angered by stalled contract talks with Amtrak, disgruntled members of a track maintenance union walked onto a minor league baseball field in Little Falls last night, briefly interrupting the start of a New Jersey Jackals game.

About 10 union members took the field near home plate in Yogi Berra Stadium at Montclair State University immediately after the singing of the National Anthem.

The protestors, members of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division, an AFL-CIO affiliate were escorted off the field within about two minutes. One union member was arrested.

Jed Dodd, head of the union's Pennsylvania Federation which represents about 800 New Jersey employees and 1,000 employees elsewhere, was led away by campus police.

"They don't put the capital requirements in it to keep the trains

running and they just walk over the workers every chance that they get," Dodd said before the start of the protest.

About 50 other people demonstrated for about 45 minutes outside the stadium prior to the start of the game. The workers said they targeted the Jackals because team owner Floyd Hall is on Amtrak's board of directors.

Hall, of Montclair, the former chief executive of Kmart and Grand Union, put up the cash for Yogi Berra Stadium, home of the Jackals, and the Floyd Hall Arena ice-skating rink at the university. James DeMatteis, a spokesman for Floyd Hall Enterprises, said the company had no comment on the protest.

"We made every offer to arbitrate it and we've been ignored and ignored and ignored ... so we figured we'd bring it to his back yard," said union official Kevin E. Hussey of Old Bridge.

The workers, electricians and maintenance workers on Amtrak lines. blame management for Amtrak's bleak financial picture and

for the doomed talks, which they said have led employees to work without a contract for six years.

Citing Amtrak policy. Karina Romero, a Washington-based spokeswoman for the National Railroad Passenger Corporation, declined to comment on the union's claims, contract negotiations or the issues behind them.

The two sides are still far apart on pay increases and retroactivity, health plan contributions and Amtrak's ability to contract out work, which union members say will result in job losses.

According to Dodd, track workers earn an average hourly rate of \$19 per hour or \$39,520 per year and receive annual allowances that amount to a fraction of the cost of living.

On April 10, 2006, New Jersey Congressional members sent a letter to Amtrak board of directors chairman David M. Laney urging the agency to complete negotiations with labor unions representing employees that perform maintenance on New Jersey's

tracks.

The two sides finally met on April 26, 2006, the first meeting since May 2004, according to union members. At the April meeting Amtrak rejected a union offer to settle the dispute in arbitration, the members said.

Congress agreed to give Amtrak \$1.3 billion in subsidies in 2006. The cash strapped agency has a debt of more than \$3.5 billion and a 2006 operating loss of more than \$550 million.

Created in 1971. Amtrak employs more than 19,000 people along a rail network that passes through 46 states.

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