

TWA and women

At its July 16th meeting, the Honolulu County Committee on the Status of Women discussed the situation of the nearly 7,000 flight attendants represented by the Independent Federation of Flight Attendants (IFFA) who are currently on strike against Trans World Airlines.

Our committee was greatly disturbed by statistics which indicate that they are the victims of a clear pattern of sex discrimination and wanted to formally bring these facts to the attention of the general public.

The vast majority of these striking flight attendants (85 percent) are female, their average age is 35, and most have been on the job for 14 years. We understand that this predominantly female work force was asked to take a 44 percent cut in pay, benefits, and work rules concessions while male-dominated employee groups were asked to give back only 15 percent.

According to the IFFA negotiators, the reason for this unequal pattern was that Carl Ichan, TWA head, felt that female flight attendants were not family "breadwinners" and that they were less likely to retaliate against the airline than disgruntled male employees.

We understand that the experienced flight attendants have made an unconditional offer to return to work, but that instead of rehiring these workers, TWA has hired younger, inexperienced workers for lower pay. This action, taken together with the previous corporate stance in negotiations, suggests that TWA does not support women's rights to fair compensation for their work.

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Chair, Honolulu County Committee
on the Status of Women
MEDA CHESNEY-LIND, Ph.D.
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I am an appointed representative of IFFA residing in Hawaii. The labor dispute with Trans World Airlines has resulted in 5,000 senior flight attendants being replaced by 18- and 19-year-olds who received 18 days rather than the normal 5½ weeks safety training. This reduced training has resulted in two runway emergencies when passengers had to evacuate themselves from the aircraft because the crew could not open the exits. In addition, 750 alleged safety violations against TWA are currently being investigated in Washington, D.C.

On May 9, I presented the documented violations to Senator Neil Abercrombie. He con-

cluded that safety should not be sacrificed for economics — and wrote TWA about his concern for air safety. At a press conference, Abercrombie stated that "Safety violations are rampant" and publicly stated that Hawaii residents should boycott TWA.

Abercrombie is my man for Congress. He is committed and not afraid to take a stand which may adversely affect his position.

LEI KIHOI

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