

Example of how did
the change of political
parties (democrat
republican) influenc...

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The change of political party leadership from the Democratic to the Republican Party in the 1980's had a profound influence on the NLRB's decisions regarding unions in the 1980's and 1990's. Ronald Reagan took office in early 1981 and was soon confronted with his first labor struggle, with PATCO, the union representing air traffic controllers. In a move which would symbolize his administration's attitude toward labor, Reagan ordered the controllers back to work after they went on strike. When many of the workers refused, they were immediately fired, a move which was not revoked for almost all of the air traffic controllers.

Using this example as a backdrop, the NLRB held a lot of power and was anti-union. As noted in the Sloane and Witney text, the president of the United Food and Commercial Workers asked " if we cannot get fairness from the board, why fool with it?" (2010, p. 122). Many union leaders felt that the position of the NLRB under the Republican leadership of presidents Reagan and Bush was to bust the unions. The appearance was that the neutrality of the board had vanished and that management had gained the upper hand. This was reflected by the drop in enrollment by many unions, especially the AFL-CIO, which was headed by Lane Kirkland during this time (1979-1994).

The board reversed over a dozen of the precedents set during the Carter administration. Rulings included:

- Stating that employers could move work being performed by union workers to a nonunion facility
- Also said that these employers did not need to bargain on this position if the move was made because of factors not related to labor cost

- Reduced protection for employees that labor had built up under Democratic leadership

Reference

Sloane, A. A. & Witney, F. (2010). Labor Relations (13th Ed.). Prentice-Hall:
Upper Saddle
River.