

It Doesn't Have To Be This Way

In July of 2008 Thomas Kochan, Co-Director of the Institute for Work and Employment at the MIT Sloan School of Management warned of problems ahead. He was testifying before the U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor on the effect of the Northwest-Delta merger.

Kochan said, "If the labor and employee relations issues that will confront the merged organization are not addressed satisfactorily prior to or as a part of the merger process, the merged organization will experience intense and prolonged labor management conflict over organizing rights and representation and in negotiations of labor agreements."

He says further, **"They [Delta] should work with the existing unions at Northwest... and should identify how they are going to manage the representation process so that there isn't a prolonged conflict."**

If Delta does not take a positive approach toward resolving representation issues, Kochan predicts **"a workplace culture fraught with tension, bitterness."**

Wrong Path

Unfortunately, in the 20 months since Kochan testified, Delta has embarked on a path that has convinced many PMNW employees and PMDL employees that they are not a valued part of building the largest airline in the world.

PMNW and PMDL employees who are pro union have both experienced intense scrutiny and hostility from Delta management. Delta has made it difficult for the union message to be heard. Deltanet has become a daily purveyor of an anti union message. There is no pretense of neutrality. Many PMDL

employees are nervous to even be seen discussing the question of representation.

Bonuses, raises and stock payments to executives have exploded in the last 2 years. At the same time, Delta management has refused to give PMNW employees raises, at first saying our contract prevented this. They then reversed themselves saying that they could but would not. PMDL did receive raises, including a promise of more after the union vote. There have been few who did not see through the use of "money on a string". This was a move clearly intended to sway the vote.

Kochan describes a different way to proceed and we hope that Richard Anderson can reverse course and stop the damage that is being done to our airline. The MIT professor says 3 steps should be taken:

- 1- The Company and the union should negotiate Rules of Conduct for the representation campaign that would allow a neutral atmosphere to be established.
- 2- Both parties should meet to discuss how a positive workplace culture can be established.
- 3- Both parties should engage in discussions on a long term compensation plan and should redesign union management processes for contract negotiations to avoid protracted conflicts.

Kochan says having a union **"is not a luxury and it isn't something that is only appropriate in good times. It is even more important during stressful times, during difficult times. The evidence is very clear that over a long period of time that represented employees fair much better than non represented employees during difficult times, during times of recession."**