

Union Representation Issues

Last week the flight attendants union (AFA) filed with the National Mediation Board for a union representation election. Several newspapers reported that an October election was likely. On the same day, July 27, IAM General Vice President, Robert Roach Jr. requested a meeting with Delta CEO, Richard Anderson to discuss the airline's business plan as it relates to IAM represented crafts and classes. This type of meeting is generally seen as an important precursor to filing for a representation election.

Delta Executive Vice President, Mike Campbell responded with several dates this week for such a meeting. He also "called on the IAM to expedite the resolution of union representation issues for the combined work groups."

Delta has been in a hurry to have elections for groups represented by the IAM take place since the winter of 2008. This was long before many single carrier issues were resolved.

But Delta's haste makes no sense to us. If, as Richard Anderson has said, Delta's wages and benefits are generally superior to those guaranteed in an IAM contract, why be in a hurry for an election. If the union loses, those poor IAM/NWA workers would have to be brought up to Delta standards. From a business stand point this would drive labor costs up. If the union wins there would also be a clamor to bring those poor Northwest workers up to standard, again raising costs.

We have a hunch as to why Delta would want an election before the two airlines were truly one carrier. As the airlines are combined, Delta and Northwest workers have had a chance to compare notes. Many Delta workers have become more familiar with what they might gain with a union and Northwest workers are keenly aware of what they stand to lose without one. A quick election would have short circuited this process, putting Delta in a better position to defeat the union.

We know a union contract guarantees things Delta workers would love to have and the overall package tilts heavily in favor of union workers. Here is some of what we see as the union advantage:

- 1-System Seniority with guaranteed bidding, bumping and recall rights.**
- 2-Superior safety net if injured or sick-OJI, Sick and Long Term Disability.**
- 3-Superior Health Benefits, with strict caps on premium increases.**
- 4-Guaranteed IAM Pension, with lifetime payments upon retirement.**
- 5-Subsidized retiree health benefits.**
- 6-No outsourcing of work to contractors during course of contract.**
- 7-Work rules to guarantee overtime after 8 hours, extra pay for working through lunch, etc.**
- 8-Limits on part time percentages, no Ready Reserve.**
- 9-Workers are not "at will" employees. IAM members have guaranteed legal rights to "due process".**
- 10-An organization to back us, so we don't have to go up against "Corporate America" alone.**