

## Uncertain Times

These are uncertain times. This is borne out by an article published in the March 7 edition of the Minneapolis Star Tribune. Entitled "Poverty Hits Suburbs With More Sting", the article recounts the economic destruction sweeping through the middle class.

"Job losses, foreclosures and disappearing insurance coverage have pushed requests for food stamps, medical assistance and emergency housing aid to record levels. Homeless numbers are rising. Food shelves are scrambling to meet demand" says the article. It continues, "It's a trend mirrored in suburbs across the nation, where a recent study found that suburban poverty has grown five times faster than it has in big cities...financial stress reaches well into the middle class."

From Minneapolis to Atlanta to Cincinnati to Detroit the trend is the same. Poverty in the suburban bastions of the middle class is up more than 8% from 2000 to 2008 and climbing.

These statistics place the drive for unionization at Delta at the center of the battle for the economic survival of the working class in the United States. It is a certainty that if pro union workers are not successful in their effort to win a representation vote that thousands of full time permanent jobs will be lost. Ready Reserve will continue to spread unabated with an accompanied loss of jobs with medical benefits and any measure of security.

If the union drive is lost, Delta, as the largest airline in the world, will be free to set industry standard downward. The pressure on other airlines to try to force wages and

benefits down to compete with Delta will be enormous. The fight to stop "the race to the bottom" will become far more difficult.

With a union victory we can stop the spread of a revolving door workforce. We won't be workers whose jobs are outsourced at a whim. We can begin the fight to return career jobs to the American landscape.

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**Ready Reserve** – In a March 3, 2010 memo Delta Vice President, Gil West once more attempts to defend the Ready Reserve Program. We want to reiterate that Ready Reserve workers accrue no vacation time, no OJI time, no sick time, no pension, no seniority. They are limited to 999 hours per year. They do not receive medical insurance. They cannot trade days with permanent employees. This is a status we shouldn't accept for any worker.

In SLC, a hub with approximately 750 ramp workers, 30% are Ready Reserve according to workers there. If the same percentages were used in MSP, approximately 350 would be Ready Reserve. This would mean that those with 2006 seniority and less would likely be in a Ready Reserve status. Those with around 1996 seniority and less would be part time.

Delta is very committed to this program. Ed Bastian and Gil West, both vice presidents for Delta, have said the program will continue. It provides Delta with labor costs that are less expensive than an outside vendor.

The only way to successfully fight the spreading use of disposable workers is with a union and a union contract that guarantees equality in writing.