

Issue # 51 December 23, 2009
(612-726-2230) Newsletter of the MSP ESSC Shop Committee (612-201-0383)

nmb.gov – A major win for airline workers could be in the offing. Support to change an undemocratic rule which counts those who don't vote as votes against the union is building. To see evidence of the overwhelming support for a rule change, go to nmb.gov. Then click on What's New. Finally, click on NMB Notices – Proposed NMB Representation Rulemaking.

You can view all of the testimony offered to the National Mediation Board at a hearing held in Washington, D.C. on December 7, 2009. You can also see which U.S. Senators and Representatives have signed on to support the change. It is impressive.

Thousands of cards, letters, emails and petitions have been sent to the NMB. Right now the total is running about 20 to 1 for the change with many more in the pipeline. Our favorite letter comes from 10 year old Spencer Smith who says, "Please make the change for my dad. Thank you." We can't let up now. If you have not filled out a card or letter please contact the Shop Committee. You may also send an email directly to the NMB by going to nmb.gov.

John Klein – The Congressman from the 2nd District in Minnesota does not support a change in the rules for union representation elections, in spite of the fact that thousands of airline workers live in his District. You should let Klein know how important this issue is to you. You can contact him by phone at 952-808-1213, by fax at 952-808-1261 and by email at kline.house.gov.

Solidarity – The ESE and CSA Shop Committees and Local 1833 President, Ken Hooker met with several unions with members at the airport last week. The subject was solidarity. How can unionized workers help each other? Each group is under attack. By joining together we have far more power than if we face these attacks separately.

Present were leaders of TSA workers, airport janitors, MAC workers and workers at American Airlines. The janitors opened contract negotiations with employers demanding all jobs be part time. Workers at American Airlines are going through tough negotiations.

TSA agents are unionizing under the American Federation of Government Employees. They are pressing Congress to recognize their right to enter into collective bargaining for their members. On Monday, January 11 at 1:30 PM they

will hold a press conference on the mezzanine level of the Lindbergh Terminal to push that demand forward. Any IAM members who are not working should plan on attending in uniform.

Ready Reserve – Good For Who?

In a flyer published by Delta Air Lines on December 9, 2009 the airline puts forth its arguments defending the Ready Reserve Program. Their arguments boil down to this:

The Ready Reserve Program works for some workers who are looking for some extra cash and flight benefits, therefore, it is a good program. According to Delta.

The Ready Reserve Program allows Delta to deal effectively with changing operational and seasonal demands and saves the airline money, therefore, it is a good program. According to Delta.

We have heard the same arguments made by Delta executives in MSP when \$10/hour aircraft cleaners were fired and replaced with \$7.25/hour workers. Delta needed 200 cleaners and 300 applied. It works for those employees, we were told. It certainly works for Delta.

Commuter airlines employ large numbers of part time, “flexible workers”. Some of these are students, mothers and people with other jobs. The problem is this creates a revolving door, a throw away job. It negatively affects passenger service, safety and the worker in the long run.

It’s What’s Wrong In America

We believe the Ready Reserve Program (not Ready Reserve workers) is at the heart of what is ailing America. We believe this type of program is key to how Wall Street and major corporations are targeting the middle class or working class. Every worker in America has seen the dramatic spread of part time, temporary and seasonal work. Every worker has either felt the effect or had a family member or friend feel its effect. We all know that a part time, temporary America doesn’t work.

While part time and seasonal work may fit for some, the vast majority of part time, temporary or seasonal workers desire full time jobs with good pay and benefits. At most large companies today, you simply can not get hired as a full time permanent employee. That is certainly true at Delta where you must start off as a Ready Reserve on the ramp or at the counter. It is not some nice convenience. It is a condition of employment!

Ready Reserve Is Unjust

One of the most unjust aspects of the Ready Reserve Program is the inability of those workers to establish seniority. If you are Ready Reserve for a couple of years, you gain nothing in terms of vacation, sick, OJI or pension accruals. You gain nothing in terms of pay progression. Delta CLT, we have to ask you all personally if you think this is just or fair.

It is not that we don't understand the need for temporary workers in the airline industry. At least let the temporary worker build something for the future. There should be no difference between part time and full time, no difference between permanent and temporary except for hours worked. We can't allow Ready reserves to be treated as second class citizens.

Another problem with Ready Reserve at Delta is the lack of guarantees. The number of hours worked, the pay, the percentage of the workforce that is Ready Reserve can all be changed at the Company's whim. There is only one solution to that problem – a union contract, with written guarantees.

Union workers, union supporters diverge sharply with Delta over the question of Ready Reserve. Our views of the future are very different. Delta believes in the WalMartization of our industry. We believe in a strong and vibrant working class.