

Delta-Northwest Merger Sets Stage for Industry's Future

The merger between Delta Air Lines and Northwest Airlines is setting the stage for additional airline pairings and a series of union representation battles that will determine if workers have secure wages and benefits, or terms that can change at any time, with or without notice.

Delta Air Lines indicated its attitude toward employee rights when CEO Richard Anderson urged Delta employees to contact the local police if they were approached by union representatives outside the workplace.

In a recorded message, Anderson claimed IAM organizers were frightening workers, spouses and their children, and

in some cases, blocking their driveways and preventing them from leaving their homes.

The IAM immediately demanded to see any evidence to support the charges. No such evidence was produced and the home-visit program continued.

Positive Response

Contrary to the negative stereotypes Anderson's message suggested, IAM organizers reported an overwhelmingly positive response from employees anxious for an opportunity to ask questions about the benefits of union representation.

"Delta supervisors closely monitor employees in the workplace and will question any

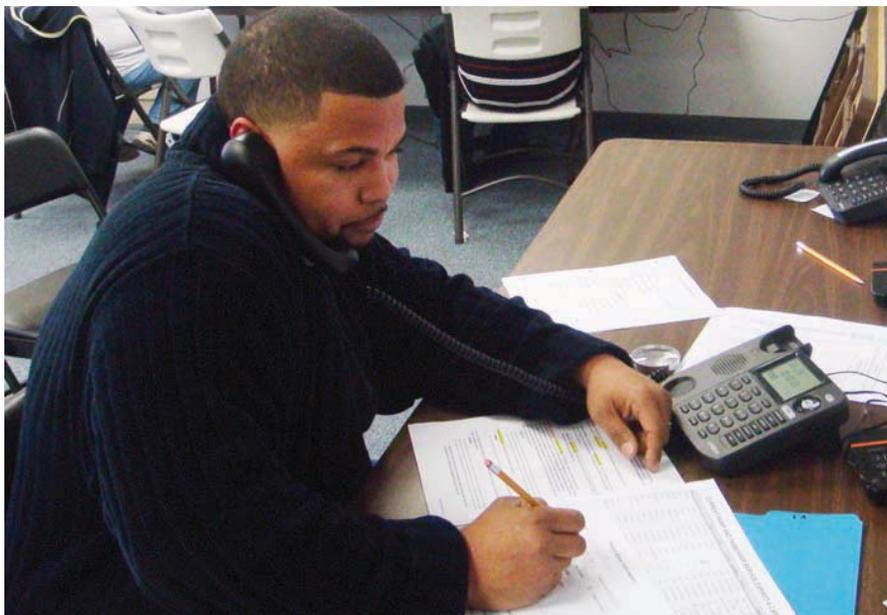
employee seen talking to union organizers," said Grand Lodge Representative Tony Klinakis, who spoke with dozens of Delta workers in their homes. "The atmosphere at work is unmistakably hostile, and the workers I met with welcomed the opportunity to speak freely."

Delta has a long history of opposing union organizing drives and frequently boasts that its employees are part of a "Delta Family," where there is no need for contracts or union representation.

"Like many corporations, Delta would like to cling to an image of itself that simply no longer exists," said Transportation General Vice President Robert Roach, Jr. "This is a ruthlessly competitive industry that has stripped tens of thousands of employees of their jobs, pensions and health care benefits. Every carrier is involved and every employee is vulnerable."

More Mergers

As the Delta-Northwest merger unfolded, United and Continental Airlines announced similar intentions. "We cannot look at these mergers in isolation," said Roach. "The United-Continental merger is in response to Delta and Northwest's 2008 merger, and there is already speculation



Detroit Local 141 member Anthony Davis volunteers to help with calling Delta-Northwest employees about the benefits of union representation. Contrary to claims by Delta, "The response has been great," says Davis.



AP/World Wide Photo

More iconic carriers like Northwest Airlines will be swallowed up into a few mega-carriers if the pressure for consolidation sparked by the Delta-Northwest merger spreads through the industry.

about US Airways looking for another merger partner. We agree with James Oberstar, Chairman of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, when he wrote that ‘This merger will move the country far down the path of an airline system dominated by three mega-carriers... If United and Continental merge, another domino in a chain of mergers will fall, and there will be strong pressure for further consolidation.’”

Airline employees need a strong voice more than ever. In the absence of a legally binding contract that protects wages, benefits and pensions, airlines have demonstrated repeatedly they will sacrifice front-line workers in the battle to cut ticket prices and reduce operating costs.

“It is clear that airline deregulation has failed to deliver on its promises of a stable and profitable industry, and staying the course will continue the industry’s downward spiral,” said Roach. “Airline bankruptcies will continue, more proud airlines

will disappear, employees will continue to suffer and passengers will receive less service.”

Difficult Process

Merging airlines is much more difficult than painting planes and combining websites. American Airlines’ 2001 acquisition of TWA’s assets resulted in tremendous job loss, employee integration problems and the closing of a hub in St. Louis.

The America West-US

Airways merger cost the city of Pittsburgh, PA, its hub, and employee integration problems persist nearly five years after the merger. The 2008 Delta-Northwest merger is still far from being completed, and management’s promises to preserve jobs in the merger were quickly broken.

More than 30,000 workers at Delta Air Lines will soon have an opportunity to vote in what may be the most crucial point in modern airline history.

Their decision will be a true choice: To speak up and demand a say in their fate, or forever remain silenced.



Bill Burke, Page One Photography

The IAM has waged a relentless campaign on Capitol Hill to protect airline workers in mergers and bankruptcies. IAM Transportation General Vice President Robert Roach, Jr., right, testifies before the Senate Commerce Committee about the United-Continental merger proposal’s impact on employees, consumers and communities. At the same hearing was Continental CEO Jeffery Smisek, center, and United CEO Glenn Tilton.