

IAM Campaign at Delta Heats Up



AP/Wide World Photo

The merger of Northwest and Delta Air Lines has sparked one of the largest organizing drives in airline history to preserve union benefits for more than 12,000 Northwest workers and extend those benefits to more than 18,000 workers at Delta.

The IAM launched its initial organizing effort at Delta Air Lines in October 2006, following requests from Delta ramp workers. The campaign, however, exploded in scope and urgency when Delta and Northwest Airlines announced plans to merge.

Following the merger announcement in 2008, the original campaign grew to include other ground employee groups at Delta and an all-out effort to preserve the established union benefits for more than 12,000 IAM members at Northwest Airlines.

Following the merger's completion, representation elections for the combined Delta-Northwest classifications have the potential to create the world's largest unionized air carrier, or establish an anti-union monolith with the power to set standards for the entire industry.

New Phase

The massive campaign entered a new phase on August 13, 2009, when the IAM took the first steps that would lead to representation elections for fleet service (including equip-

ment service employees), flight simulator technicians and plant protection employees at the combined Delta Air Lines and Northwest Airlines.

The IAM formally petitioned the National Mediation Board (NMB) to declare that the two airlines are operating as a single carrier with respect to those classifications. According to NMB rules, a "single carrier ruling" must be made separately for each work classification before an election can be held at a newly-merged airline.

In response to the IAM filing, Delta urged the NMB to

"We want the opportunity to negotiate a contract that covers all stock clerks and supply attendants at a merged Northwest and Delta Air Lines."

Tom Ryan, left, and Udo Lindemann
NWA Stock Clerks, Local 1833

ignore their own guidelines and make a single carrier determination for all classifications, including those for which the IAM had not yet filed. The NMB previously denied a similar Delta attempt when the Board made their single carrier determination for the combined Delta/Northwest pilot group.

"After meeting with Delta management and reviewing the integration plans they provided, it is clear that Delta is integrating the various employee groups at a different pace," said IAM Transportation General Vice President Robert Roach, Jr. "As soon as we determine that the two airlines are operating as a single carrier under NMB guidelines for passenger service, stock clerks and office & clerical employee classifications, the IAM will move to resolve their representation issues as well."

Right to Vote

While publicly conceding that employees have a legal right to vote for union representation without interference, Delta is attempting to deny 98 flight simulator technicians the opportunity to vote on union representation. According to Delta, these workers, who currently enjoy the protection of the IAM-Northwest Airlines agreement, should be transferred into the mechanic & related group, which is not part of any union organizing effort and would not have the opportunity to vote for union representation.

Similarly, Delta asked the NMB to dismiss the IAM application on behalf of plant protection employees. Although there are only a handful of plant protection employees at Northwest, and none at Delta,

the airline is fighting to



prevent even a single Delta employee from having IAM representation.

While the final battle to win representation rights at the combined Delta and Northwest airlines may be months away, it is obvious that Delta will focus its efforts among workers on a "Don't Vote" campaign while trying to persuade the NMB to limit voting rights at every opportunity.

"The Machinists Union is committed to securing the basic right of all Delta and Northwest employees to choose if they want the protections and guarantees contained in an IAM contract," said Roach. "Delta, in contrast, is actively seeking to suppress their employees' collective voice."



"Winning collective bargaining rights will protect jobs and bring stability for workers, the community and the carrier."

Shavon Bowen
Delta Ramp Worker