

AFA Activist Promises versus Union Reality

As Delta AFA activists try to get us to vote yes in the upcoming election, they have been making many promises. It is important to know that they are acting as salesmen, accentuating the positive while ignoring the negative. Because Federal Law does not require full disclosure by union organizers, you should be aware of the difference between an activist promise and the reality of union life.

Promise: The AFA will negotiate better pay and benefits for Delta flight attendants.

Reality: The AFA can only ask Delta to make changes. Delta has the legal right to say no to any union demand that is unreasonable or not in Delta's best interest. If the AFA is not satisfied with what Delta is willing to give, the AFA can call a strike.

Promise: The AFA will never call a strike at Delta Air Lines.

Reality: Many unions have made this promise during their organizing drives. After the employees voted in the union, the union called a strike. Remember, a strike is the only real weapon that a union has to try to force its bargaining demands on management. Anyone who tells you differently is either uninformed or being deceitful.

Promise: The AFA will get Delta flight attendants the "respect and dignity of a contract."

Reality: Many AFA members are discovering the hollowness of this promise as they are being walked off of the property during the furlough process. The only thing that can guarantee us respect and dignity is dealing directly with a management that has consistently treated us better than our peers are treated at the union represented carriers.

Promise: If there is a strike, the AFA would pay our salaries out of its strike fund.

Reality: Strike payments are only made at the discretion of the union. It is important to note that the AFA does not have a strike fund, and according to its recent LM-2's the AFA does not have any significant financial reserves. Additionally, the AFA's dues-revenue base is shrinking as AFA represented airlines furlough thousands of flight attendants. Other AFA represented airlines are shutting down completely. Even if the AFA had the money, there is normally a waiting period of two to four weeks before payments begin, and payment is generally tied to a requirement that the employee to do picket line duty. In addition to Delta cutting off the salaries of striking workers, Delta has the right to stop paying for our families' medical insurance and stop our nonrev benefits. The strike funds provided by unions are minuscule, amounting to a mere fraction of the employee's normal salary.

Promise: The threat of a strike would make Delta agree to union demands at the bargaining table.

Reality: It is difficult to predict the outcome of the collective bargaining process. Whether or not a strike will occur will depend on many factors including whether Delta can afford to agree to the demands of the AFA and whether the AFA has to win concessions at Delta to appease union members at the other airlines. Every year, thousands of employees go on strike. These strikes can last days, weeks, or years. Delta will develop a contingency plan in case of a strike. This plan can include the hiring of replacement workers for the striking employees. Remember, Frank Lorenzo replaced striking flight attendants and pilots at Continental. These workers are still gainfully employed at Continental, while many strikers had to leave the industry.

Promise: **The AFA can provide job protections.**

Reality: A unionized employer can fire any union member for “just cause” under a contract. Just cause can be any good reason. At Delta, this is already standard practice. Delta only discharges employees after an extensive process of progressive discipline starting at oral warnings and ending at final probation. An employee is only terminated as a last resort. At Delta, more so than at many AFA carriers, it is extremely difficult to get fired. The AFA will not change this.

Promise: **It does not cost much to belong to the AFA.**

Reality: The AFA currently charges \$39.00 a month (\$468.00 per year) to belong to the AFA. Because of the poor financial state of the AFA, many are expecting dues to be raised after this election. In addition to dues, AFA members can be forced to pay fines or assessments. For example, ALPA members paid a significant monthly assessment to pay the salaries of striking Comair pilots. AFA can also fine you for being disloyal or crossing a picket line. The AFA will charge us an initiation fee. Remember, if the AFA ever called a strike, the cost will include lost homes and jobs.

Promise: **The AFA wants to help Delta Flight Attendants.**

Reality: The AFA, like all unions, is a big business. Like all businesses, the AFA wants to expand its market share. Like all big businesses, the AFA has expenses. Any dues collected do not directly benefit the individual dues payer; they are used for union business. Our dues will pay the salaries of union employees, contribute to the organizing funds of the AFL-CIO unions, and pay for expenses incurred (parties and expense account dinners). Remember that for duration of this campaign, each AFA member at every AFA represented airline has been paying a mandatory \$2.50 per month into the AFA organizing fund. This fund pays for glossy flyers, telephone calls, expense accounts, hotel rooms, food, office space, lost hours compensation for Delta AFA activists, and airline tickets.

Promise: **The AFA can protect Delta Flight Attendants from furlough.**

Reality: The AFA negotiated a contract at US Airways that contained strong “no furlough” language. The US Airways contract guaranteed that no US Airways flight attendant would be furloughed before 2005. However, it is now 2001 and US

Airways is in the process of furloughing 2,500 dues- paying AFA members.

Promise: **The AFA will cause all of us to join together and become one cohesive group.**

Reality: As we have seen during this campaign, unions cause dissension. Unions maintain power by pitting the employee against the employer. The whole collective bargaining process is based on creating this friction. A worker happy with the company is not a good union member. You can also expect union supporters to attack those employees who disagree with the union line or who do not support the union. This creates additional divisiveness in the workplace. We are seeing the beginnings of this divisiveness on our aircraft now.

Promise: **A union would fix problems and improve our working environment.**

Reality: Unions often create more problems instead of solving existing problems. If we unionize, we can expect conflicts, divisiveness, and poor communication to come on the property with the AFA. We can also expect even more dissatisfaction as the yes voters slowly find that the union can never live up to the promises that the AFA's activists made.

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