

What's now known as Vicious Truths started out with a letter to Delta F/As on October 31, 1995. I wrote it out of frustration because Delta was remaining virtually silent while the afa was bombarding us with propaganda laced with lies. The great majority of the many responses to that letter were favorable and highly encouraging. Many F/As reported making and distributing copies. Most asked how they could help. Some suggested other topics that needed to be addressed. Before long, what had started out as an individual effort became a team effort and "we" quite appropriately replaced "i" in the letters. This continued until the afa organizing campaign withered and died about a year later.

In August of 1998, the afa launched another drive so we resumed letter writing. Before long the transportation workers also launched a campaign so we responded to it as well. In August of 1999 we received a letter that led us to start labeling our letters VICIOUS TRUTHS initially, and VICIOUS e-TRUTHS somewhat later.

**If you like our new name, you can thank a twu supporter who sent us an unsigned note saying, "Your Vicious lies will backfire on you! We will not be seeing you in heaven." We haven't told any lies so what really must be irritating this F/A is that truth really can seem vicious when it lays waste to false and unfounded ideas and opinions. That inspired our new name.**

The TWA dropped out eventually, but the afa persisted until 2001 when, having spent over \$6,000,000 - an average of about \$300 for each Delta F/A - it finally managed to qualify for an election in which, as you know, it got blitzed. Our best guess is that the afa had spent over \$1,250 for each of the votes it received.

When the afa returned for its third campaign, we remained largely on the sidelines because by then Delta and other F/As were doing an excellent job of countering afa claims and explaining the disadvantages of afa representation. Under the circumstances, it did not seem necessary for us to get involved.

Now, as a result of the NWA and Delta merger, the issue of F/A representation of our combined F/A group has to be decided. NWA F/As have been trying to get an election to decide this issue, but the afa has been stalling, no doubt because of concern that it will lose yet another election and thereby lose the \$4 million or so it collects in dues, fees and assessments it pockets from NWA F/As each year. The afa's concern is warranted in light of its pitiful performance in recent years and the fact that NWA F/As each stand to save \$516 in dues each year and, according to NWA F/A Jose Ibarra, gain 18% increases in compensation if they reject the afa.

The afa, having lost all its members at ATA and Aloha, thousands at United and potentially seven or eight thousand more from NWA, is in a fight for its life. It will most certainly put up quite a fight so we've decided to crank up Vicious e-Truths again. That will take far less effort than in the past because we've previously responded to most of the issues and afa arguments the afa is raising. Consequently, rather than respond to them anew, we plan to respond with Vicious Truths Flashbacks. Following is the first of these.

To: Delta Flight Attendants  
From: Lynne Atwood  
Date: October 31, 1995  
  
Subject: Union attempt to organize Delta F/As

It would be a terrible mistake for us to allow ourselves to get straight-jacketed with a union that has "distinguished" itself chiefly by presiding helplessly over the massive loss of F/A jobs. Sure, we have problems (who doesn't these days?). We're not too pleased with the pay cut we've had to take, with having to do work Delta is paying contractors to do, etc., but, when faced with severe competition, as we certainly are, companies sometimes have to make decisions that are going to irritate people. Could a union solve our problems? Based upon the number of concessions unions have had to negotiate to save jobs (and dues revenue), and based upon the widespread use of contractors in our industry, the answer is obviously a resounding "NO!" There is not one single problem that non-union companies have that unionized companies do not also have! In contrast, unionized companies have tons of problems non-union companies do not. If anyone doubts this, they should talk to F/As at our unionized competitors. While they're at it, they should listen to the number of complaints these people have about their unions.

A union will argue that it can protect us from unfair discipline or discharge, but how much of a problem is there? I don't know of a single F/A who has been discharged without cause. Frankly, I have rarely even heard of anyone being discharged. Delta simply is not "trigger happy." Why would it be? Unlike some other (unionized) airlines, Delta pays for our training. It doesn't make any sense for Delta to invest huge amounts in training F/As and then discharge us without good reason.

Could a union get us higher pay and better benefits? A year after American Airlines F/As went on strike, a federal arbitration panel just issued an award that Denise Hedges, president of the Association of Professional Flight Attendants declared was "almost total and absolute victory for us." Sounds fantastic, what did they get for the almost \$9,000,000 AA F/As pay in dues each year? They got flight attendants pay raised to what we are already making (minus about \$500 per year in union dues, of course). They must have been thrilled.

Even if a union were to get us increases, with our wages and benefits already as high or higher than our unionized competitors, Delta would have to find a way to recoup this cost in order to remain competitive. What could Delta do? One of the painfully obvious things would be to require regular F/As to work at least 70 or 75 hours a month. That would eliminate a gaggle of our jobs and save a pile of money.

It would also upset a lot of us. Unfortunately, that would no longer be as much of a concern for Delta. When employees forsake a company and bring in a union, the relationship changes. It's no longer a matter of what is fair, reasonable and acceptable, but rather a matter of what the labor agreement requires. A union is going to hold a company to every last dotted "i" or crossed "t" in the agreement and is going to continually attack, malign and criticize the company to justify its existence and the hefty dues it charges. Management-employee relations will inevitably erode.

The overwhelming majority of Delta F/As are good, hard working people. Unfortunately, like any other large organization, we have some pitiful exceptions. How would we like it if people like that represented us? Couldn't happen? Sorry, but it happens all the time. Complaining is a national past-time in the U.S. and complainers usually bombard union representatives with petty complaints, absurdities and belly-aches (it's not easy being a union representative - how would you like all the complaints you hear, and many more you don't hear, directed at you night and day?). After a while,

people decide holding office simply isn't worth the endless hassle so they resign. Before long almost anyone who volunteers can hold office. Guess who volunteers? Even the best union can change dramatically over night when reasonable and responsible representatives abandon ship and the hard core lunatic fringe takes over. How would you like being dictated to by this crowd?

They could be out-voted at union meetings, of course - if people came to them. Unfortunately, attendance at union meetings is nothing short of pitiful. People just don't want to be bothered (would very many F/As sacrifice their free time, pay for baby-sitters, etc., to attend them on a regular basis. I sure doubt it.). Consequently, a very small contingent can, and usually does, call the shots for all the people in a union.

Companies oppose unions because they greatly increase operating costs - even with the same pay and benefits. Can anyone think of anything we could possibly do that would make our competitors happier than for us to join a union?

Many of us are really upset because our seniority is no longer great enough to hold lines, days off, etc., we've held in the past. Some F/As seem to think a union could solve this problem Wrong! If Delta's operating costs rise further, more lines will become unprofitable. When they are discontinued, it will become even more difficult to hold positions and, like pilots, many of us may get furloughed.

Some of us have never worked anywhere else and expect Delta to be Utopia. There is no Utopia and there never will be. But, with all our problems, we probably come as close to it as anyone. Some of us may not appreciate what great jobs we have, but millions of working stiffs in the real world envy us beyond belief. We complain when we have to contend with unruly and unreasonable passengers. That's sure understandable, but does anyone seriously believe that part of our job is all that much tougher than, for instance, a \$7 per hour clerk working twice or three times the number of hours we do each week in a department store, especially during busy times like Christmas? How many of could find other jobs that even approached being as attractive and well compensated as ours? If anyone doubts this, they should check out a few want-ads and find out for themselves on one of the dozen or more days they're off in the next month. Or, they should ask some of the thousands of F/As who have lost their jobs and are back in the job market.

I sure hope nobody falls for the union's line about caring for us and wanting to help us. Unions aren't religions, crusades, or charitable institutions (although they often try to convey the impression that they are), they're businesses. They're in the business of representing people and their business has been awful! Union membership has been in a free-fall for years, declining from about one in three to one in ten in the private sector. Desperate, unions have been increasing dues, merging, trying to steal each others' members and trying to attract new members in order to survive. If the afa succeeds in organizing us, it will take in a cool \$8 million a year in dues - to start (for that kind of money we could hire OJ's dream team). Delta, and employers generally have to invest tremendous sums in capital equipment. Guess how much capital equipment unions require? That's right, their return on investment is phenomenal! Ask yourself, why is the union really interested in organizing us?

Instead of dumping \$38 per month into union dues [it was actually \$39], we would be far better off to invest the money [If we had contributed the equivalent of the dues we'd have had to pay to a 401k, we'd be over \$12,000 wealthier by now]. That's a fair amount of cash for retirement but, best of all, Delta would be a far more viable company and far more likely to survive and prosper. We, in turn, would be far more likely to have good jobs for as long as we need or care to work.

Lynne