

IS afa HISTORY?

The gargantuan horror of September 11, the war against terrorism, the anthrax scare, and the seriously depressed state of our industry and economy have greatly obscured the afa issue. Our concerns now are infinitely more important – our personal safety, the safety of our friends, neighbors and loved ones, the security of our country, our jobs and the survival of Delta. The afa has one additional concern and it's huge – its own survival. **Already hard pressed financially, the afa is losing thousands of members and urgently needs to increase its revenues.** FAIR, the independent union trying to replace the afa at United, reports *“Information provided to FAIR ...suggests that the furloughs in our ranks may reach 10,000!”* Add the losses at United to thousands more at US Airways and other airlines and **the afa's financial outlook is desperate.** Things may well get worse. US Airways is already in peril and United's president said United will “perish” by mid 2002 if it does not stem its huge losses (reportedly \$5 to \$10 million a day). The unions screamed, the stock tanked, and he got fired – because he told the truth.

If the afa is unable to entrap us to compensate for the huge losses it is experiencing, it is likely to be merged with another union, probably the Service Employees International Union which, incidentally, is agonizing over the recent loss of 87,000 of its own members.

A dues increase seems like a virtual certainty, but the afa will delay that until after the election at Delta for obvious reasons. In early 1996, the afa tried to raise dues from \$39 to \$48 per month, but apparently ran into a firestorm of opposition and backed off. With a staggering loss of members on the horizon we fully expect the afa to renew its effort to raise dues - even though it could compensate in large part for its loss of members by discontinuing its practice of paying “member volunteers” \$1 of every \$4 it collects in dues. Insofar as obtaining new members is concerned, we are the afa's only viable option so it is being forced to strive all the more aggressively to entrap us (and avoid a shotgun wedding with the “janitors” union).

Accordingly the afa says now, more than ever, we need its expertise to guide and protect us. The problem with this line is that you motivate people by satisfying *unfilled* needs and the afa cannot begin to fulfill ours. The afa cannot get pax to resume flying. On the contrary, Pat Friend is even discouraging pax by going around insisting that it's not safe to fly.

Insofar as our personal safety is concerned, when it was suggested that pilots carry firearms or stun guns, **the afa said it rejects the idea of arming pilots against hijackers because “We don't need to make these situations more dangerous than they are.”** In a terrorist attack, things couldn't be more dangerous for pax and crew so arming pilots could only make things more dangerous for terrorists. Wouldn't that be awful? Apparently it finally dawned on the afa that, if pilots had been armed, the World Trade Towers and Pentagon would likely still be standing, four planes wouldn't have crashed, thousands of people would still be alive, billions of dollars would be saved and we would not be engaged in a deadly war. Even though the afa opposed arming pilots, NBC reports that it favors arming F/As with stun guns and mace. Some logic. **The afa thinks it's too dangerous to arm pilots who typically have extensive military experience, but it's OK to arm us. That's really nutty.**

The afa obviously cannot offer job security or it wouldn't be losing thousands of members, so what would it have to offer? Early retirement incentives? Delta has already provided them. Extended leaves? Delta has already made them available. Severance pay? Delta is already providing it. Delta is going to great lengths and expense to avoid lay-offs, by offering leaves, buy-outs, extended insurance coverage, etc. Prospects are good that few, if any, Delta F/As will have to be furloughed. Under the circumstances, that is remarkable. What is the afa doing for its members? Precious little. Here's what FAIR reports as of October 22:

*“Where is our union? Where is the Association of Flight Attendants? Where is the AFL-CIO? Where is our MEC? **Where are the AFA leaders who have recently fed us “CHAOS” to the point of regurgitation?** What, if anything, is AFA and its top leadership doing to stop this hemorrhaging? ... The ink on the furlough notices has been dry for some time now and we have yet to receive any written correspondence from our MEC of AFA International providing us with an explanation and account of what is happening and what resolutions are being sought. We have heard little of any AFA attempts to counter these furloughs. In the past, surpluses of flight attendants were effectively reduced via ‘line sharing’ and retirement incentives. Yet, we hear nothing from AFA. The silence is deafening.”*

It certainly wouldn't be surprising if United has been balking at providing line-sharing, retirement incentives, etc., to a union that has been promoting CHAOS "*to the point of regurgitation.*" What possible motive could the union that claims it "*can help make Delta a stronger organization*" have for promoting CHAOS at this incredibly inopportune time? Starting this year, the 6th year of the current 10 year contract, United F/As were to get raises that make their pay equal to the average of the major carriers. Since Delta and American F/As are paid 15% to 22% more than United F/As, we expected United F/As to get a raise in the 6% to 8% range. The afa appealed to arbitration and got nothing, nada, nil, zilch, zip, zero. (After all the afa's BS, wouldn't it have been a hoot to have been at the arbitration and hear the afa claim that United F/As were entitled to big raises because their pay was below average?).

We think we've figured out why the afa got skunked in arbitration. Throughout its campaign against us, the afa has continually boasted that the United F/As compensation is industry leading. Consequently, all United management had to do was to cite these afa's oft-made claims to support its contention that United F/As were not entitled to raises. If, as we suspect, that's what United did, it was a brilliant strategy because the only way the afa could rebut it was by admitting that it had been lying to us. The afa would never do that, even though you can count the number of times the afa and its supporters have lied to us on the fingers of ... hordes of dentists who look forward with malicious delight to Halloween candy. Why has the afa "leadership" been promoting CHAOS? Probably in retaliation for getting its socks knocked off in arbitration. Whatever the reason, promoting CHAOS in this economy it's about as intelligent as having a taxidermist care for your pets.

For all these and many more reasons, we believe interest in the afa and its chances of success have declined substantially. We also believe that the afa's invigorated efforts to entrap us will backfire because, in effect, the afa is trying to sell an insurance policy that may protect us against falling off a building, but not against hitting the ground. Furthermore, we have more important things on our minds and don't want to be hounded and pestered about unions, period! Pro or con.

That, we think, is why we've been hearing so little talk about the afa. Under the circumstances, we're concerned that campaigning actively might prove annoying and resuscitate rather than discourage interest in the afa. In fact, we've been so concerned that we've hesitated to send out this issue, and would not have, were it not for it having been so long since our last one. What do you think? Should we back off and only re-enter the fray if it appears that the afa is gaining significant ground or should we campaign actively? Please let us know. We'll be guided by your input.