

## Special Edition

It has been almost three years since I came into office and back then I immediately joined the negotiating committee for the TWU. In May of 2008 AA management handed our negotiating committee a contract proposal that was so clearly objectionable we refused to bring it back to the membership for a vote. We did our job and rejected the company's "offer."

At that time, AA informed us they would not negotiate an agreement that added to the company's financial burden and that they wanted a "cost neutral contract." Last year we pushed the negotiations into a federally mediated process in the hopes that we could get some help to move the company to a reasonable position.

Now we are two and a half years into negotiations and one year into a federally mediated process, but we are still without a contract. No question, the company has seen fit to stretch out negotiations as long as they can and to take advantage of our members, this coupled with the current environment in the industry has left our members without compensation for their efforts.

Two months ago, we asked for release from the National Mediation Board (NMB) so the TWU would have the option of "self-help." The NMB is still holding their decision back on whether or not to release us from mediation. In the meanwhile we were directed to go back to the table and keep on negotiating while they keep the question of release in abeyance. The Railway Labor Act is what it is, we didn't have any choice but to go back into mediated negotiations. There was no other way to legally move the process forward.

Fast forward to two weeks ago, we reentered mediation with the Federal Mediator and AA management in an effort to move the ball. This latest mediation session was a marathon beginning on April 27<sup>th</sup> until a tentative agreement was reached on May 5<sup>th</sup>. Now when we started this session there was no doubt in the majority of our committee members minds that it would be like 'Ground Hog Day' (the movie) seeing the same type of proposals from the management team; but this time they opened a door with structural increases this was of course along with a myriad of issues they were interested in. As a committee we decided in lieu of a traditional response to their proposal, we would request that management put their cards on the table 'best offer' and our TWU leadership requested AA to

involve Senior Management in the process. With the mediators support to that approach AA management did just that they brought in SVP Jim Ream and VP Mark Burdette and they eventually passed a comprehensive proposal that was characterized as their 'best offer'. This offer along with a strong wage opener helped me come to the conclusion that this was something that the membership needed to consider.

This would beg the question - why after two years was a tentative agreement reached? Why did the company move their position? Well I believe it was a compilation of things first and foremost being the fact that we the TWU requested a release from the National Mediation Board, coupled with rally's in Tulsa and picketing in DFW along with the fact that AA Management needs some positive press regarding labor by reaching a TA.

Three years ago, it was very easy for me to say "NO" to the company's offer. This time it was different when you consider where we are in the process and with the possibly being released, or at the minimum another year of mediation sessions. I honestly believed it was my responsibility to bring back the best offer we can get from the company and let our members decide.

Now I am well aware of all the self appointed experts out there, (inclusive of folks on our committee) that feel that there is more on the table and there may very well might be more, but that wasn't what I was seeing from my view of the situation; it was their 'best offer' and it was time to involve you, the membership.

Yes, we have a closed negotiation process, but the negotiation process is open to everyone when we bring back a tentative agreement to the members. That is why I am urging you to wait, read the whole T/A, understand what it means, and then make an informed "Yes" or "No" decision.

All I can tell you is that, at this point, in this environment I believe it is the negotiating committee's obligation to bring this tentative agreement back so that every TWU member can let their voice be heard. You can tell the committee, the company, and the NMB that you are content with the tentative agreement or you can tell us that it is time to make the next move.

The bottom line is that the choice of direction is in the hands of our members and that is as it should be.

Respectfully,



Steve Luis, President

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