

To My Fellow Flight Attendants:

It seems incredible to me that whenever I talk to flight attendants about union representation that they only talk about this present point in time. I believe this a tremendous mistake. No matter how long an individual has been flying, they have seen changes. In the 23 years I have been flying: beepers have been replaced by cell phones, manually written pay sheets are calculated by computers, paper bidding is replaced by computer bidding, voice response came into place on telephones, PBS bidding replaced SLIC bidding, computer programs were written for crew members, and cell phones came into existence. I remember carrying a calling card. Life does not stand idle in the airline industry. So, how can a flight attendant just think "in the moment" when it comes to union representation?

I have also heard flight attendants talk about "our work rules" and "their work rules" and will vote on that premise alone. This is another mistake. I know that the flight attendants that have been on reserve for a decade are disgusted with the NW reserve system. This is understandable. However, this would be a mistake to make a voting decision on this premise alone. When voting, we must consider the future.

How many CEO's have come and gone in your time? I have experienced many styles and philosophies of management. Now I am experiencing another.....or am I? But, no matter what, we experience the end product of business decisions that are about one thing and one thing only, money. Our executives are in place because they can make the shareholders money. For this reason we must protect our careers and work environment.

There are some questions one should consider. Who would replace Richard Anderson? What would their management style be like? What if there was a hostile takeover of Delta? Would the same management style continue? I doubt it. What if we merged with another airline? What if they were union? What would happen with the seniority list? What if there is another terrorist attack on the industry? Would there be layoffs? In what order would it happen? I believe we must consider what **could** happen in the future when making this decision. *I* want to protect my future career.

I believe that if it were not for unions, we would not have the work rules that we have today to protect us and our work environment. If we did not have our Scope clause, Pacific-based flight attendants would be flying to and from the U.S. today. Many of you wouldn't even have a flight attendant position at Northwest because a Pacific-based flight attendant would have replaced the need for you. I want a published seniority list. I want my rate of pay contractual. I want representation of a union representative if I get called into a manager's office. If a flight delay comes into play, I don't want to be forced to work longer than physically possible or necessary. There are many work rules I am glad we have. There could be many improvements of course, but that is not the real issue here. With a union, the contract is negotiable. And if one speaks up, one will be heard.

We shouldn't just consider "their work rules" or "our work rules", this is really about protecting our careers and futures. Think about the "what if's....." when making your decisions. Get out of the mindset of today and protect the future of your career. Some of you are in the beginning of your career. Some are in the middle or will be retiring in the near future. This is not the time to just consider yourself and your present situation. We must consider the collective. I believe AFA will protect our careers and our futures. This is my career and one I hope to retire from. I hope to continue to have a voice and choice in my work place.

Most sincerely,
Kathy Swarts, ATL/MEM based Flight Attendant, 23 years