



*Sunday, September 13, Rich Delaney* — This past week was historic for District 141. We were able to reach an agreement with United Airlines over the most important issue facing our membership – job security. Our agreement addresses the work that 700 members perform in ORD every day in support of the United Express operation. As we have reported before, United had begun the process of calling for, and accepting, outside vendor bids to take over this work. In 2005, United employees were awarded this work to replace a vendor that was not performing up to United standards. District 141 had started a process with United, in reaction to other losses of UAX work in stations across the system, to look at ways we could compete with vendors and reduce the likelihood of having the work contracted out. We applied that process to the ORD operation and found that the Company could be more efficient by adjusting some scheduling aspects of the operation without having to furlough United employees. Each suggestion we made had a dollar figure which was compared to what it would cost United to switch to another company. Although we were able to find significant savings this way, it was not enough to outpace the non-union contract companies that were trying to take this work away from us. In response to a Company suggestion, we began evaluating their proposed Dependability program.

The concept the Company proposed was to replace their current Absence Management policy with a system that assessed points for specific occurrences of absence. These points would accumulate and have a set number that, when reached, would result in discharge. Our first reaction was to reject this plan. It was very strict and looked like the goal was to fire people instead of addressing their dependability. However, in trying to find ways to bridge the gap of the vendors costs we began researching these type of programs already in effect at other companies – both airlines and non-airlines. We found that a lot of companies had been using this type of system but the most understandable and workable for employees were those plans that had been developed jointly by a company and the union representing their employees. Plans dictated solely by a company were consistently one sided – they benefitted the company and harshly punished the employee (much like the United imposed Absence Management). We found that union involvement changed the programs from a fast track to discharge to a more reasonable, understandable policy that looked at all employees – those with good attendance records and those that needed more help in establishing good records. District 141 determined that if it was possible to modify the current out of control Absence Management program, recognize good employees, and also protect the jobs of

hundreds of employees then we needed to continue talking with United over this issue.

This was not an easy process as both sides had very definite ideas of what needed to be done. Many proposals, rejections, amendments, and revisions were made before reaching the understanding we did last week. In the same way we previously had kept talking to United about other jobs, and were able to agree on the return of Customer Relations jobs to our Reservations Centers, we kept our eye on the goal of securing jobs without damaging our contract.

After reaching the agreement with United we turned our attention to how to communicate and explain this to everyone. We have been working this past week to put together an information program that we believe will explain this agreement in total. We want to present it to our local representatives first so that they are in a position to explain it in their stations. We also want their input on the program to see if there are parts of it that still need to be discussed with the Company. That will be done on September 15th.

I realize that by taking the time to put together the correct information it allowed time for speculation and rumor to grow. I wish individuals did not feel the need to create fear and anxiety within our membership when they do not know the facts, but I know that is what happens during the period between announcement and explanation. We believe that when the information is available to everyone these rumors will be proven wrong.

This agreement has been reviewed with all levels of our Union – the Negotiating Team, the Executive Board, our International, and Legal Dept. to make sure that it stayed within the boundaries of our contract.

While this agreement prevents the loss of 700 jobs in ORD immediately, it also addresses possible job security issues in the future. By agreeing with us, United has committed that before any future contracting out of IAM work, specifically CSR work across the system, they will come to us and allow us to find alternatives or identify cost savings. This is a major difference from today's environment in which a Company decision is made and announced and then we try to reverse it.

Contract talks will resume in a few weeks. Job security will continue to be our focus. This week's agreement allows us to keep moving forward on this crucial issue and breaks the cycle of job loss we had been experiencing for years.

After Tuesday's meeting with Grievance Committee members, we will post all information on our web site for our members' access.