

TWU Tells AMR: No Contract, Release!

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TWU leaders, who represent more than 28,000 workers at American Airlines and American Eagle, announced this morning that unless all outstanding contract issues are settled at the two carriers by the end of mediated discussion on March 8, union members will seek an immediate release from federal mediation.

Under the terms of the U.S. Railway Labor Act – which governs labor relations in the commercial airline and railroad industries – a release from mediation entitles workers to exercise “self help” -- essentially the right to go on strike. TWU would be the first union representing a major carrier to request such action from the National Mediation Board (NMB) since the Obama administration took office last year.

TWU members have been in negotiations with AMR, the parent company of American Airlines and American Eagle, since contracts became amendable in 2006, and the parties have been in federal mediation since 2008.

“Four years is time enough to settle a contract,” said TWU International President James C. Little. “In the dark days of 2003, when AMR was in desperate financial straits, it took us just two weeks to reach an agreement which included major sacrifices from our members in order to keep this company alive. If we could get the job done in two weeks in 2003, an agreement, years in the making, can certainly be reached by March 8.”

In 2003, even after accepting painful concessions, TWU members increased productivity and implemented process improvements, such as decreasing the standard turn time required to perform aircraft overhaul.

The enormous contributions made by our members, “are simply not being recognized at the bargaining table by AMR executives. This situation cannot continue,” said TWU Air Transport Director John Conley. “Over the past four years we have utilized a facilitated approach, direct

negotiations, mediation, super mediation and recess sessions, all to no avail. Releasing the parties is the natural order of progression and called for under the Act.”

TWU members work in eleven American Airlines and American Eagle bargaining units in locations across the United States. The parties have reached two tentative agreements – covering aircraft maintenance technicians and fleet service workers at American Eagle that are currently pending ratification.

“If AMR is sincere about reaching an agreement, we can settle the remaining nine contracts,” said TWU International President Little. “The company needs to recognize the wage and benefit needs of our members, as well as the contribution they’ve made through enhanced productivity and by bringing new business into the company.”

“If AMR executives are not serious, they’re going to find out very quickly that TWU members are – and we’re going to do what it takes to reach a fair and equitable agreement,” Little added.

TWU represents ground workers who work in a wide variety of job classifications at American Airlines and American Eagle.