



# Info Picketing Spotlights Unfair Management Tactics



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► What do pilots do when they're mad as hell and aren't going to take it anymore? What can they do, for instance, when their contract isn't even on the table, but they have a serious beef with management, which has little interest in adhering to the current contract?

The Railway Labor Act, which governs labor practices for ALPA and other transportation unions, offers precious few legal avenues for fighting a recalcitrant management. But one route is relatively simple, is gratifying to the participants because it's a strategy of action, and gets results: informational picketing.

ALPA and its president, Capt. Duane Woerth, have been pulling out the informational picketing tool a lot lately. "My philosophy," he says, "is that informational picketing needs to

be done not just at the end of cooling-off periods or right before a strike, but periodically through the year at any airline at which we're having a problem getting our grievances heard."

This year, ALPA pilots from Trans States, FedEx, Mesa, and Atlantic Southeast have taken to the informational picketing line at airports around the United States to air their grievances and frustration with management.

Pilots carrying protest signs are an attention-getter: professionals in full uniform, orderly and determined, carrying picket signs near their airline's ticket counter in a strategic airport's terminal. "What's going on?" people want to know. "Is my flight canceled?" And then, relieved that it isn't, they focus on the signs and the leaflets to learn what's really going on.

But Capt. Woerth says that he has

no illusions that informational picketing has much effect on the "consumer-driven public," particularly given the facts that only 8 percent of the private sector is unionized and that saving a few bucks is most passengers' first priority. The real targets of the picketing are two: management and Wall Street.

"A lot of times management thinks that an MEC chairman or a couple of hothead negotiators are the only ones who just can't get over something," Capt. Woerth says. "Informational picketing shows management that the pilots and their families are the ones who are mad—it is really a grassroots-driven thing.

"Also, management tends to paint a very rosy picture for Wall Street and capital markets, going to different events and telling them how wonder-

ful everything is, that everything is good with labor, that they have no problems. With informational picketing, we can let people in the capital markets know there is trouble in paradise. We need to have that out there to help us move the process along.”

Informational picketing relies on the enthusiasm and resolution of the line pilots who volunteer to walk the

line and on a smooth structure based on planning and experience at ALPA’s home office. ALPA staff members coach pilots ahead of time on permit requirements, procedure, and demeanor; arrange for signs and leaflets to explain the issues for passersby; contact the news media; videotape the event; and oversee the picketing site to provide everything from transpor-

tation to and from the staging area to orbit demarcation to water bottles and rest periods.

During picketing, pilots are asked to refrain from talking to spectators and to refer questions to the news media spokesman, usually a pilot. They are to move methodically, perform turning movements squarely in a military fashion, hold the signs to the outside of the orbit, and generally “walk tall in silent professionalism.”

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—**Capt. Tom Wychor, Executive Vice-President, Group C2**

An average stint on the line is about one and a half hours.

Capt. Tom Wychor, executive vice-president for ALPA’s Group C2 pilots, was the news media spokesman for the Trans States pilots’ informational picketing at Washington, D.C.’s Dulles International Airport in August (see “As We Go to Press, p.10). He believes that “a key value of informational picketing is that it brings the pilots together and gives them a way to demonstrate their unhappiness with management and to try to secure their future.”

“It lets pilots be hands-on, do something, participate,” Capt. Woerth says, “to show management that whatever issue they are working with is a big deal and not just an irritant that matters to only a few union leaders.”

—**Susan Burke, Publications Specialist**

**FACING PAGE:** Nearly 400 FedEx pilots conduct informational picketing in front of the carrier’s operations center in June.

**THIS PAGE:** Mesa Air Group pilots picket near their airline’s corporate headquarters in Phoenix, Ariz., in February.



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