

British Airways workers denounce company “offer” to slash pay and conditions

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British Airways (BA) cabin crew have responded angrily to company emails inviting them to accept massive pay cuts and reduced conditions as an alternative to redundancy.

The emails were sent to BA's legacy Worldwide (WW) and EuroFleet (EF) cabin crew on Thursday.

BA, with revenue of £13.3 billion last year, and whose Chief Executive Willie Walsh has pocketed £13 million in pay since 2011, wrote, “in order to protect jobs and avoid redundancies we've proposed new market-competitive pay rates that are sustainable in the long-term.”

The airline is preparing to lay off 12,000 of its 42,000-strong workforce, seizing on the coronavirus pandemic to force through a long-planned assault on pay and conditions. The same agenda is being rolled out by airline companies globally, with hundreds of thousands of jobs under threat.

BA's email stated, “Our proposal would guarantee that if you secure a corresponding role in our new team, we will safeguard your basic pay at least 80% of your current rate.”

In reality, the pay cuts are far deeper, with BA confirming, “Pay protection would apply to basic pay only, not variable pay.”

Cabin crew have taken to social media slamming BA's assault. “20% PAYCUT is the headline. In reality, it is 60% as basic salary is made up with meal allowances and incorporated flight pay. Also, no mention of the 6 week stand down on zero pay, or decimation of current Ts&Cs.”

BA spelled out a new low-wage flat pay-rate, “As we move away from an incremental pay scale, basic pay would be fixed at current levels and no further basic pay increments would be paid.

“Pay protection as outlined here will only apply to

colleagues who move over into a corresponding role. If following selection you choose to accept an offer to move into a different (lower grade) role as an alternative to redundancy, pay protection as outlined here will not apply.”

#BABetrayal and #NoWayBA were trending on Twitter yesterday, with cabin crew exposing the company's fine print. “Allowances as per new fleet structure (are) (3K-5K a year!)”, one worker tweeted, referring to the variable allowances that would be lost. “They have subjected us ALL to feeling like we are worth nothing. They have no morals, no shame and they are a disgusting company,” wrote another worker.

Legacy staff currently have differing pay rates depending on when they joined BA. However, they all receive Contractual Flying Pay (CFP) and additional allowances for longer flights. This means that WW and EF cabin crew receive higher pay if they work longer hours. Short haul flights staffed by Mixed Flight (MF) crew operate on lower rates that were introduced after the 2010 BA strike was betrayed by the Unite union.

Angela, a legacy BA crew member, told WSWS, “I am at the top of the pay scale with basic pay at just under £29,000 a year. CFP [contractual flying pay] is £9,654 a year pro rata. I work 75 percent, so I earn just over £36,000. This offer would mean a base pay of just over £23,000, a 20 percent reduction of basic pay. That's a £13,000 pay cut, or a 37 percent basic pay cut, plus losing terms and conditions.

“I know that not all of staff are on that much, but I have 25 years' experience. The new contracts came in after 1997.”

Angela said that she and other legacy crew believe the company is setting out to divide them from their worse paid MF colleagues, but she said they were all in the same boat. “We made BA £45,000 profit last year

each, that's every single of the 42,000 staff made them £45k each a year.

“This offer is a total insult. The email has all of these graphics trying to make it look all rosy.”

While Unite and BASSA (British Airlines Stewards and Stewardesses Association) are currently refusing to meet with BA over the proposed job cuts, no trust can be placed in the unions. Unite has issued no public reply to BA's outrageous email and has refused point-blank to issue any call for industrial action.

Unite's refusal to call strike action is aimed at dividing BA workers and wearing down united opposition. The union's various publicity stunts, including projecting the logo of its #BAbetrayal campaign onto Liverpool's Liver Building, are empty gestures that conceal a refusal to take on BA. Unite is promoting nationalist crocodile tears from Labour and Tory MPs who bemoan BA's actions as “un-British,” a ludicrous claim belied by the decades-long offensive against the working class dating back to Margaret Thatcher.

BA workers must break free of the corporatist grip of the trade unions and fight for rank-and-file committees, organising joint action with airline workers in Europe, the United States and across the globe. The conditions for such a united fight already exist, with pilots and cabin crew facing an historic assault. Recent job cuts in Europe alone include 3,000 at Ryanair, 26,000 at Lufthansa, and 6,000 at Air France-KLM. The failure of the major airline companies to protect staff and passengers during the coronavirus pandemic is an argument for socialism.

The international airline companies must be expropriated and placed under the democratic control of the working class to protect the welfare and safety of airline staff and the travelling public throughout the world.



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