



The Highball

Official Publication of

Railroad Workers United

Rank & File Defeat BNSF Single Train Crew Initiative

The members of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail & Transportation Workers (SMART) General Committee GO-001 have spoken. In a clear mandate, with 70% of those eligible voting, they have told the BNSF, their union leaders, and the world, that they do not support single employee train crews. By 5-to-1, the rank & file voted down the tentative agreement, that – had it been ratified – would have resulted in conductorless train operations on more than half of the BNSF system, the second largest rail carrier in the U.S.

The members showed that rails cannot be bought for some silly “signing bonus”, for some vague promise of lucrative “buy-outs”, or for theoretical “full-pay furloughs”. They made it clear to the carrier *and* the union that they cannot be fooled by some “smoke and mirrors” contract that pretends to offer the moon while in fact, slits their throats. They stated unequivocally that they would not lay down and be hoodwinked by the carrier or their own union leadership. And most importantly, they showed that they are ready, willing and able to stand up and fight against the unsafe and irresponsible initiative by the carriers to run trains with a single crew member.

In voting down this contract, the SMART GO-001 rank and file have won a decisive victory, not just for the trainmen and engineers on the BNSF, but for every railroad worker in North America. While the victory belongs to them, it is of course shared by all those who assisted – engineers (both UTU and BLET); union brothers and sisters from other crafts and carriers who rose to the occasion and helped out; family members who took part in pickets, rallies and demonstrations; and fellow unionists and citizens who grasped the importance of the struggle and pitched in to help.

Railroad Workers United (RWU) is proud to have assisted in this fight. Since our founding in 2008, RWU has pledged to do all in our power to resist the carriers drive for single employee operation of trains. We drastically ramped up that effort in 2012 with a full-blown campaign to raise awareness and understanding of the issue among both railroaders and members of the general public. And once we learned of the BNSF TA, RWU swiftly moved into action. Within 48 hours, RWU convened an “emergency meeting” of the Steering

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Railroad Workers United helped to organize rallies and pickets at various BNSF terminals to coincide with the ratification Q&A meetings for the contract. While members of SMART-TD GO-001 angrily questioned the smoke-and-mirrors of the TA inside the meeting hall, other railroaders and their labor and community allies staged a spirited picket outside the Seattle meeting on July 30th. The next day's meeting in Spokane was disrupted by angry trainmen, forcing cancellation of the morning meeting scheduled for August 1st.



RWU Membership on the Rise - Maybe it's Time for you to Join ...

Membership in RWU has been growing since our 4th biennial Convention in April. We had a flurry of rails join in the spring, and then in July the floodgates opened as scores of railroaders across the U.S. and Canada got wind of the tentative agreement of the BNSF that would introduce single employee crews. While many BNSF brothers and sisters signed up, they were hardly the majority. Rails from the other major carriers all joined in the upsurge along with a number of members of unions other than the operating crafts.

Railroad workers are aware that if the carrier can pick off even a single general committee and institute single employee operations, that the pressure would then be enormous on the rest of us. The old union slogan "An injury to one is an injury to all!" has never been so glaringly obvious. We know that if the BNSF had succeeded in picking off a compliant GCA and have their way with it, then who might be next? The dominoes could start to fall very quickly.

RWU has been committed to this fight all along. In fact, our predecessor group — Railroad Operating Crafts United — was founded on the principle of preserving the two person crew and was committed to a democratic merger of the unions of the operating crafts. While the merger never happened, RWU was founded in 2008 to further the cause of all rail labor by building solidarity between workers of all crafts and members

of all rail unions in North America. And we have been having some successes. The various unions have been questioning behavior based safety more and more after six years now that RWU has been hammering away at it. The carriers first proposed single employee crews in 2004, and despite the unions' inability to unite and take an unequivocal stand against the idea, we have so far succeeded in staving off this menace.

More and more, workers are coming to understand that solidarity is essential, and that to move forward we need creative tactics along with new forms of organization. While lawyers, politicians and our unions might be essential to assist in fight our defensive battles, they simply cannot and will not provide the offense we need when it comes to building the movement that we must create in order to take on the railroad corporations. In this recent round, while our jobs, our crafts, our livelihood and our safety were in jeopardy, the unions were incapable of action. Apart from a couple of weak croaks of "protest", the leadership of the unions were on the sidelines, unable to lend assistance.

RWU is committed to fighting back with the mobilization of the rank and file. We are pledged to cross-craft and inter-union solidarity. We will not compromise our principles (check them out below). We aim to build a powerful movement of rail workers. If this sounds like what you want, then please join us!

Railroad Workers United

Railroad Workers United was organized in April 2008 at a Founding Convention in Dearborn, MI. RWU grew out of decades of struggle within the craft unions for unity, solidarity, and democracy. We are carrying on a tradition of rank & file activity which dates back to the 1890s and the time of Eugene V. Debs.

RWU is a cross-craft inter-union caucus of rail labor activists across North America. All rail workers of all crafts from all carriers who support our Statement of Principles are welcome to join in our efforts. Please write, call or email the address below.

Statement of Principles

- Unity of All Rail Crafts***
- An End to Inter-Union Conflict***
- Rank-and-File Democracy***
- Membership Participation & Action***
- Solidarity Among All Railroaders***
- No to Concessionary Bargaining***



International Steering Committee

- Mark Burrows, UTU #1433, CP, Chicago, IL**
- Paul Jenvey, IBEW #889, UP, San Luis Obispo, CA**
- Ron Kaminkow, BLET #51, Amtrak, Reno, NV**
- Paul Matchett, WSOR, Janesville, WI**
- Dreadsen Owen IWW #520, MRS, Chicago, IL**
- Hugh Sawyer, BLET #316 NS, Atlanta, GA**
- Daniel Scudder, TCU/BRC #6354, NS, Atlanta, GA**
- John Vitaska, NCFO #395, CP, Chicago, IL**
- James Wallace, UTU #305, BNSF, Lincoln, NE**
- Andrew Weir, TCRC-CTY #240, CN, Sarnia, ON**
- John Wright, BLET #78, CSX, Louisville, KY**

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BNSF Workers Defeat Single Employee Train Crew Initiative

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Committee and other members to discuss our approach. We mobilized our network like never before. Thousands of buttons and sticker, flyers and leaflets, "Talking Points" and more were disseminated to BNSF rails in the following weeks. We issued a press release that was picked up by a number of newspapers in BNSF territory. RWU members spoke out on radio and TV stations, and organized rallies, pickets and demonstrations at numerous terminals, from large cities like Chicago and Seattle to small towns like Creston, Iowa. RWU members intervened in the debate at the SMART Convention in August, condemning the contract in no uncertain terms before the delegates assembled. We held a series of open telephone conference calls open to all railroad workers to voice their concerns, ask questions, and devise strategies and tactics to defeat the TA. And we produced regular newsletter updates with the latest flyers, leaflets, stickers, articles, songs, graffiti and cartons.

Railroaders should rightfully be proud of their efforts and take the time to celebrate a hard won victory. We beat one of the most powerful corporations in North America today! But while we won this battle, don't think for a minute that we have won the war. The rail carriers are intent on running trains with a lone employee. Where will they strike next? Will it be UP, or CSX? Maybe Norfolk Southern? Or perhaps it will be on some regional railroad, opening the door for the big Class I carriers? We know that our embattled brothers and sisters on the Wheeling & Lake Erie (W&LE) have been fighting for years now to stave off single crews (see Page 8). And what General Committee (or union!) might be the next to capitulate and sell us out to the carriers? CSX Southern Lines already has an agreement with the UTU (SMART) to use "utility conductors", while the BNSF has agreement with the BLET to implement RCO operations on the road. Sisters and brothers, we need to be ready for the next round. We must gather our forces and build our defenses. This is just the opening shot in what will prove to be a protracted war.

The last decade has no doubt shown us that we cannot rely on politicians, the FRA or our union officials to defend us from the carriers' attacks. We must do it ourselves! This latest debacle should be seen as a trial run. We did a lot of things right – pickets, demonstrations, rallies, strident vocal opposition, mass action, community and family involvement, cross-craft solidarity, use of the media to make our case, member-to-member contact, building the network, making use of humor, satire, music and more. As long as we – the rank and file – stand strong and are ready and organized to fight this thing – with all the creativity and ingenuity we've got – then we stand a chance at winning.

RWU stands at the ready to assist in the next round of this fight wherever and whenever that may be, but we are still a small organization with limited resources and membership. We need you! If just one-out-of-a hundred railroad workers



A future rail expresses his thoughts on crew consist. While railroaders support legislative and regulatory efforts to thwart single crews, we must ready ourselves for the fight at the bargaining table. We have the support from the non-operating crafts, other workers and the general public.

were to join RWU, we would exponentially increase our power and quadruple our membership! With these kinds of numbers we would have so much more strength, and be far better equipped for the battle next round. This fight is real brothers and sisters. Who do you want in your corner when the threat of single employee train crews comes to your property?

But let's not wait for that fateful time to come. Between now and the next round of open warfare with the carrier, we must go on the offensive. Public opinion polls show that upwards of 80% of the population in the U.S. support a minimum of a two-person train crew. Citizens groups are aroused and organizing across the country for rail safety in the face of Lac Megantic. There are two-person train crew bills at the federal and state levels. Even the FRA is making noises about a two-person crew regulation. It is time for us railroad workers to grab the bull by the horns. The momentum is in our favor. We need to capitalize on our victory, take the initiative, and not simply wait for the next assault by the rail carriers which is surely to come.

The power of the rank and file has been displayed these last few weeks for all to see. The genie is out of the bottle. The confidence of railroad workers has been given a shot in the arm. We can fight back. And we can win! So we celebrate our victory today, and ready ourselves for the fight tomorrow, more united, more dedicated, more informed, and more determined than ever. Solidarity!



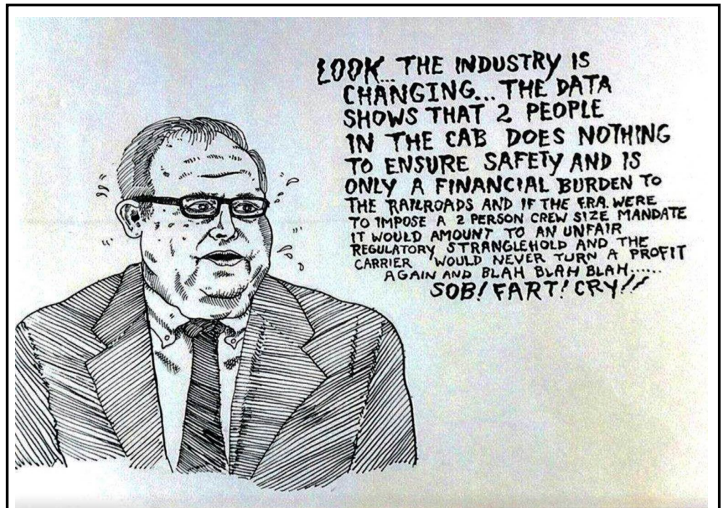
The Single Employee Train Crew Question & Passenger Rail: A Response to Railway Age and Frank Wilner

This submission was originally a response to an article in the September issue of the industry magazine *Railway Age*. It was submitted to RA by the author in the hope that the magazine would print it in full as a labor counterpoint ...

Some advocates of single employee crews for freight operations – including Frank Wilner – are pointing to passenger train operations (including Amtrak) that use a single engineer in the cab of the locomotive as evidence that freight train operations would be safe and efficient with a lone employee aboard. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is no comparison between what the freight industry is proposing and currently existing passenger operations.

Passenger train operations that utilize a single crew member in the locomotive cab always have a train crew of at least one other certified and qualified crew member on board the train at all times. The additional crew member(s) assist the locomotive engineer with many critical aspects of the job, too many to go into given space considerations. The proposed freight service operations make no provision for any other employee to be on the train at any time. In addition, passenger locomotive engineers who do run the train – alone in the cab – are not subject to the conditions of freight engineers. These include the following:

- Passenger engineers have fixed schedules, making for routine and predictable on-duty and off-duty times as well as defined layovers periods at both the home and away-from-home terminals. Freight engineers begin and end their tour of duty at random times 24/7/365. No two tour-of-duty start and end times are the same. There is little predictability to a freight engineer's schedule. Studies have proven that having no fixed schedule dramatically increases crew fatigue and the likelihood of forgetfulness, mistakes, and accidents.
- ✦ Most passenger and commuter train engineers work during normal waking hours. Very few passenger trains operate from midnight to 5 AM. Freight engineers regularly work at night.
- Extra board passenger engineers have a much better sense of when and where they will be called and used. Generally, passenger train start times are published and adhered to. Therefore, an extra board passenger engineer has a reasonably good idea if and when s/he might be called to work. A freight engineer – extra board or even “pool” – often has little idea of when s/he may be called to work, and must “protect” the board 24/7.
- All long distance Amtrak trains that do run throughout the night have an engineer and a co-engineer working together in the locomotive cab. Freight train engineers would be expected to routinely run trains through the night alone, with no one in the cab to assist.



While CEOs and stock holders see dollar signs, railroad engineers and trainmen see loneliness, fatigue, inefficiency, death and disaster. There is absolutely no comparison between what BNSF was proposing and current Amtrak and commuter operations.

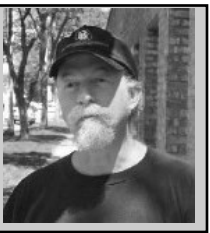
- ✦ Passenger engineers work scheduled runs, and lone engineer runs are usually scheduled for less than 6 hours. Amtrak crews with two in the cab are usually on duty for no longer than 8 or 10 hours. Freight engineers however, routinely work twelve hours. It is common for a freight engineer to then await transportation to the terminal.
- Passenger engineers at Amtrak all have at least one day a week scheduled off work. Freight engineers generally have no guaranteed regular off days.

The Tentative Agreement on the BNSF that Frank Wilner has been lauding makes no such provisions for engineers who would have to operate alone in the cab of the locomotive.

Because of the unscheduled nature of freight service, the myriad on- and off-duty times, the long hours, the night work, the lack of regularly assigned days off, and the absence of anyone else anywhere on the train to assist, the proposed single employee operations of freight trains on the BNSF has nothing in common with currently existing single engineer passenger service operations.

Ron Kaminkow

Ron Kaminkow currently works as an Amtrak locomotive engineer in passenger service. He formerly worked in freight service as an engineer for Norfolk Southern and in freight service for Conrail as both an engineer and a trainman. He currently serves as the General Secretary of Railroad Workers United.





Railroad Workers and Families say NO to Trains without Conductors!



From big cities like Seattle, Chicago and Kansas City, to smaller towns like Galesburg and Creston, Iowa, railroad workers on the former BN properties – together with their families and supporters – turned out in force to fight back against the move by BNSF for single employee operations of freight trains. They have sparked a movement. Their actions are an inspiration to railroaders across North America.

INTELLIGENT CONTRACT

- NO SINGLE CREWS
- DIGNITY AND RESPECT
- BETTER WAGES
- GOOD WORKING CONDITIONS
- SAFETY FIRST
- MORE JOBS
- SOLIDARITY

"SMART" CONTRACT

- SINGLE CREWS
- 2-TIER WAGES
- MASSIVE JOB ELIMINATION
- UNSAFE CONDITIONS
- ENTRY LEVEL RATES
- NO MORE CONDUCTORS
- TASK OVERLOAD FOR ENGINEERS
- TO HELL WITH NEW HIRES!
- NO SOLIDARITY

Ken Rocki ©2014 FOR THE RWU



Vote No!

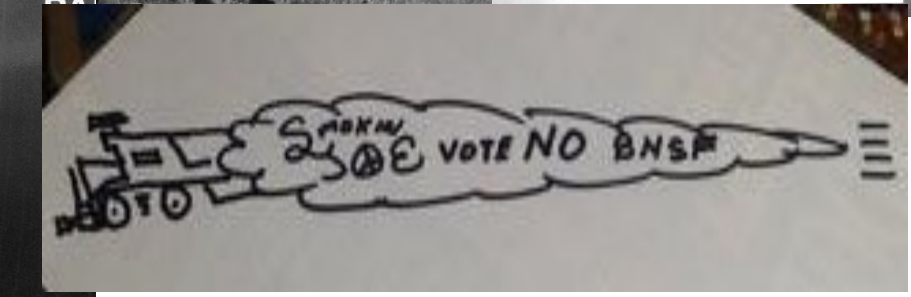
On the Memorandum of Agreement between SMART-Transportation Division G0-001 and BNSF Railway Company

With no input from the members, with no advance notice, without warning, the BNSF and SMART announce a relative Agreement that - if approved by the membership - would mean the beginning of the end of the road for the road conductor on through freight on BNSF. If approved, this contract would set a dangerous precedent that could soon lead to the demise of the road conductor throughout North America on railroads both large and small.

Stand up! Fight back! Vote No!

RAILROAD CARRIERS DEMAND CREW SIZE REDUCTIONS

1970s	1980s
1990s	2010s





The Fight Against Single Employee Train Crews:

Below is a listing of "highlights" from the last decade of struggle in the fight against single employee train crews.

11/1/2004: The National Carriers Conference Committee (NCCC), the umbrella group that bargains with the myriad unions at national handling on behalf of the major Class One Railroads in the U.S. serves "Section 6" notices to both the UTU and BLET. The identical documents outline the carriers' desire to run trains with a single "transportation employee". The carriers would henceforth have sole right to determine the staffing requirements of all trains.

4/1/2005: Railroad Operating Crafts United (ROCU) is formed by Class One rank & file railroad workers in response to the looming threat of single employee operations. With the UTU and BLET hopelessly divided after the failed attempts at merger earlier in the decade, ROCU sees a UTU-BLET merger – one based on democratic principles and membership control – as the only solution to the looming crisis. ROCU begins to draft a merger agreement and constitution that might provide a model for such a merger, and meantime begins educating railroad workers about the carriers' Section 6 and the plans for single employee crews. Petition drive started to urge UTU and BLET leadership to stand united.

1/20/2006: BLET organizes MM&A T&E employees. By the time of the 2013 wreck at Lac Megantic, Quebec, these workers will be operating trains with a lone employee.

1/31/2006: After 15 months of silence, the presidents of both the UTU and the BLET call a joint press conference and state that their unions stand united and will never accept single employee train crews.

5/1/2007: The truce between the UTU and BLET is torpedoed when the BLET General Committees on the BNSF under the leadership of then General Chairman Dennis Pierce reach agreement with the carrier to allow RCO to be used on the line-of-road outside of the confines of the yard, effectively opening the door to RCO, and thereby placing the job of road conductor in peril. The UTU leadership cries foul and the truce between the two unions abruptly ends.

6/11/2007: In response to the betrayal by the BLET, the UTU Board of Directors seeks a merger partner in the Sheet Metal Workers International Association and the "SMART" union is announced. While the actual merger will be held up in court for years by rank and file activists (primarily from ROCU/RWU), supporters of a merger between the two unions see this as a fatal blow to the hopes for any merged union of the operating crafts. The BLET, an affiliate of the Teamsters, is a component of the newly formed Change to Win federation; while the UTU appears on track to be merged into the Sheet Metal Workers, an affiliate of the old AFL-CIO.

8/2007: ROCU activists hold a series of meetings to decide what to do. The emerging consensus after lengthy debate and discussions is to create a new membership based organization

– Railroad Workers United – that continues the fight against single employee crews, but involves ALL railroad workers to assist in building a rank & file caucus to take on the carriers on issues of importance to all railroad workers.

4/11/2008: Railroad Workers United (RWU) holds founding convention in Dearborn, Michigan. The organization adopts a six point Statement of Principles, a set of bylaws and the slogans "Solidarity, Unity, and Democracy: The Rank & File in Action!" Among other things, the organization makes a formal commitment to opposition of single employee operations of trains.

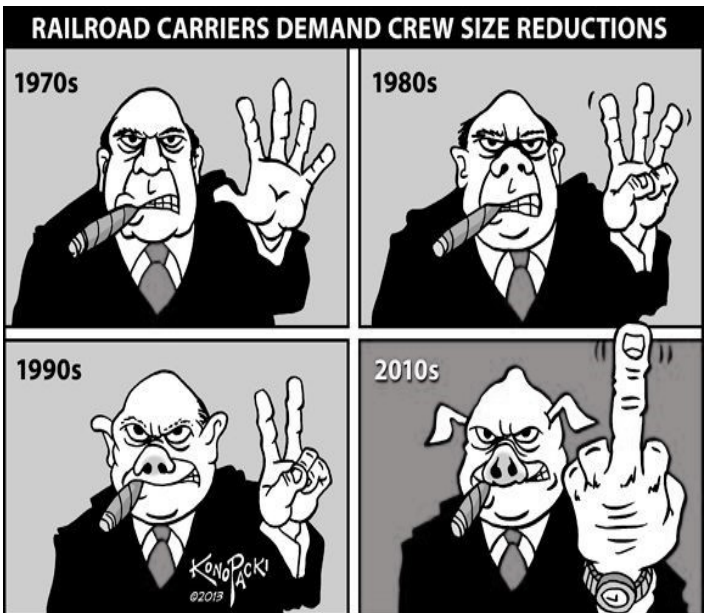
6/20/2008: Trainmen and engineers on regional railroad Wheeling & Lake Erie (W&LE) reach agreement, resisting attempts by the carrier to obtain contract language that would permit single employee train operations.

5/10/2009: Jared Boehlke – working a single operator RCO job in Selkirk, NY – is killed in the classification yard in Selkirk, NY. Together with other single operator RCO accidents, the unions feel the pressure to act.

5/14/2009: The UTU and BLET – in another rare moment of unity – file a joint petition requesting the FRA issue an "emergency order" to stop single employee RCO operations. RWU supports this effort and makes a similar request.

11/10/2009: The FRA denies the above requested motion.

4/6/2010: The UTU reaches agreement with CSX Southern Lines that allows for a new position, "utility conductor" permitting the carrier to establish such positions whereby a conductor would serve as an "assistant" for multiple road trains (foreshadowing BNSF "master conductor"). RWU vehemently opposes the agreement. Neither the UTU nor the BLET leadership voice any opposition. The TA is ultimately adopted.





A Timeline of Major Events Over the Last Decade

5/17/2011: RWU mails certified letters to the Presidents of both the UTU and the BLET asking them to publicly state their unequivocal support for a minimum two-person crew and opposition to single employee operations.

9/3/2012: RWU announces a stepped up Campaign Against Single Employee Train Crews with a press release, stickers, buttons, bumper stickers, T-shirt, custom cartoon and a special issue of The Highball newsletter. Once again, certified letters are mailed to the leaders of both unions of the operating crafts soliciting their participation in the fight against single employee crews. Neither president responds.

7/6/2013: An MM&A oil train that was under the direction of a single crew member rolls away downgrade into the town of Lac Megantic, Quebec. The crash, explosion and fire kills 47 people, the worst train wreck in Canadian history.

7/9/2013: RWU issues a statement against the slipshod operations of the MM&A, its CEO Ed Burkhart, and its recently implemented practice of single employee crew operations.

7/19/2013: After “maintaining his silence” for three weeks, BLET president Dennis Pierce makes a public comment on the Quebec disaster. He is followed the next week by UTU President Mike Futhy. Both officials condemn single employee train crews and voice support for a new bill introduced by Congressional representatives from Maine.

8/2/2013: HR 3040, the “Safe Freight Act”, is introduced in Congress by two obscure Congressmen from Maine. The bill would provide for a minimum of two crew members on every train, a certified engineer and a certified conductor.

9/20/2013: Engineers and trainmen, represented by BLET #292 strike the Wheeling & Lake Erie (W&LE) over the issue of single employee train operations. RWU adopts a resolution of support and pledges any and all assistance to the besieged W&LE workers. Within 12 hours, a federal judge issues a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) and orders the W&LE rails back to work. (A restraining order is still in effect to this day as the company refuses to negotiate on the issue and bargaining goes nowhere).

4/9/2014: The FRA announces that “safety is enhanced with the use of a multiple person crew – safety dictates that you never allow a single point of failure.” The agency plans to promulgate some regulation in the near future, but is stymied by Congressional challenges.

7/16/2014: SMART-TD GO-001 General Chairman Randall Knutson announces a Tentative Agreement on most former BN properties of the BNSF. The TA would implement utility conductors (“master conductors”) and remove the road conductor from most through freight trains. The TA is hailed by industry mouthpieces and former union “leaders” as innovative and progressive, but is vehemently opposed by the rank and file.

7/19/2014: RWU holds “emergency” Steering Committee



meeting to discuss the TA and agrees to an all-out campaign to defeat the TA with press releases, “Talking Points”, buttons, stickers, rallies, demonstrations, pickets, cartoons, artwork, music and more.

9/10/2014: The TA is voted down by an overwhelming majority (5-to-1) of the 70% of those eligible to vote.

9/11/2014: RWU issues a press release and an official statement congratulating the rank and file of the BNSF for a job well done. (To date, neither the BLET nor the UTU presidents have issued any kind of public statement).

2015 onward: As you can plainly see by the above timeline of events over the course of the preceding decade, the craft union officialdom has a spotty record at best of defending us against single employee crews. At their worst, they have been complicit in facilitating the carriers’ designs for such operations. In the face of rank & file pressure, or when faced with disastrous occurrences, they take action, albeit only in the form of bold proclamations, until the next deal with the rail carriers is cut.

The rank & file on the other hand, including the gallant workers on the W&LE and the BNSF, plus others working through organizations like ROCU and RWU have shown that they are ready, willing and able to win this fight and derail the single employee crew initiatives of the carriers. So what can we expect in the coming decade? That is certainly up to you – the rank & file. Without a doubt, we cannot rely on lawyers, arbitrators, politicians or our union officials to win this for us. While we may have allies and supporters among them, the timeline of events, outlined above, clearly shows that we must first and foremost rely on our own initiative and creativity, our own strength, determination, principle and solidarity to win this fight.



Time to Refocus: The Fight Goes on at the Wheeling & Lake Erie

Now that the BNSF has been soundly defeated, it is time once again to turn our attention to the struggle of our brothers and sisters on regional railroads like the Wheeling & Lake Erie (W&LE) who are just as vulnerable if not more so than those on the big Class One properties. These fellow workers have been waging a heroic fight on behalf of all of us these last few years. In 2013, they went on strike to prevent the carrier from running trains with one crew member (see *The Highball* Fall 2013 and Summer 2014).

As mentioned here in the *Timeline* on Pages 5 & 6, these workers soldier on under a federal judge's restraining order. But negotiations are going nowhere as the carrier refuses to bargain the issue and remains steadfast in their desire to run single crew trains. Now that BNSF has been defeated in its effort to do the same, the focus is once again on regional railroads and shortlines. The carriers know that if they can win a victory here, it will be far easier to make progress in their designs for the nation's Class One carriers.

At the BLET Quadrennial Convention held in Las Vegas at the end of September/early October, the delegates overwhelmingly adopted a resolution of support for these brothers and sisters. Pledging "unwavering support", the resolution was adopted the final day of the Convention to the thunderous applause and standing ovation of the more than 400 delegates in attendance.

"The single employee train crew issue is one of the most important questions facing rail labor, and specifically the BLET," the resolution reads. "It is vital that these brothers and sisters win this struggle and demonstrate to the W&LE — and



Now that we have beaten back the attack by the BNSF, our attention returns once again to regional railroads like the Wheeling & Lake Erie (W&LE) that are intent on running trains with a single employee. They must be stopped!

the other rail carriers as well — that union labor will not accept train operations with a single employee."

The resolution also "encourages all BLET members and all railroad workers — especially those in geographical proximity — to join the picket line, to bring material aid and assistance and otherwise support the workers on the W&LE as necessary in the coming months and years in order to ensure victory.

Railroad Workers Demand: No More Secret Backroom Deals!

On July 16th, the General Chairman of SMART-TD GO-001 dropped a bombshell on the membership. Taken completely by surprise, the members were quick to react, fought back valiantly, and defeated an extremely unpopular tentative agreement. Now that the TA is safely in its grave (for now), we have some breathing room to pause and reflect. One of the first thoughts that comes to mind is this: just why in the hell is it OK for any union to negotiate such a secret deal behind the backs of its members, without their input, without informing them of what is afoot, without consultation with them at any step of the process??

There were no bargaining demand forms sent out, no surveys taken of the membership to determine what they wanted in this contract. No notice was given that bargaining was moving in this direction. No bulletins or updates were issued to inform the members of the progress of bargaining. And of course, there was no attempt to mobilize the rank and file to take action in support of the bargaining committee to win a good contract. The 18 months of bargaining was void of any and all mechanism for feedback, input, education, activation or mobilization. The members

were — plainly and simply — cut out of the entire process.

Is this the way we want our unions to conduct our business? Is this appropriate for an organization that prides itself on being democratic? We expect the rail carriers to keep us in the dark, deny us access to their plans, and then drop bombshells on us. But our own unions? It is time for the membership to demand that we are included every step of the way in contract negotiations. These are OUR contracts. We will have to work under them, in some cases for decades to come. We cannot trust our working lives and our livelihoods to union officials, many of who have not worked in the craft for years and most of whom never will again! They will not have to live and work under these shoddy agreements.

Brothers and sisters, it is time for change. We need direct elections of our officers at all levels of the union including the General Committee level. We need term limits and rules that all officials must return to the craft after a certain period of time away from the property. And we must encodify in our bylaws a means by which we ensure an open and democratic bargaining process, one that informs, involves, and otherwise includes the membership at every step. No more backroom deals!



Railroad Spouses and Families Lead the Way to Victory!

Once spouses and children got past the shocking news that their loved ones were staring at the distinct possibility of working all alone for the rest of their working lives, they did not waste any time. They moved into action. Early on in the campaign, spouses and families in the Seattle area got organized in late July. In the coming weeks, as ratification meetings were held across the former BN property, wives, husbands and children came out to voice their opposition. not just in Washington state, but in places like Gillette, WY, Beardstown, IL, and Creston, IA.

Shawneen Falck, wife of a railroader in Seattle took up the cause without hesitation. "I am not one who can idly sit by waiting for something to happen. While I am well aware that hubby and many of our spouses are not allowed to have a voice and speak up, I sure as hell can." Faulk worked together with RWU members and others in Seattle to set the tone early on in the campaign with a rally and picket outside of the ratification meeting on the south side of town. "It takes two to make a crew, a certified engineer, and a certified conductor. The carrier preaches safety, but they do not practice what they preach!" Faulk made a U-Tube video and reached out to spouses and families with the Facebook Page *Spouses & Families Against One Man Crews*.

In Creston, IA, Tessa Hull and the local UTU Auxiliary in this small town of 5,000 people moved into action. Workers and families there held regular pickets downtown to alert their fellow citizens and the area railroad workers to the crisis. When the ratification

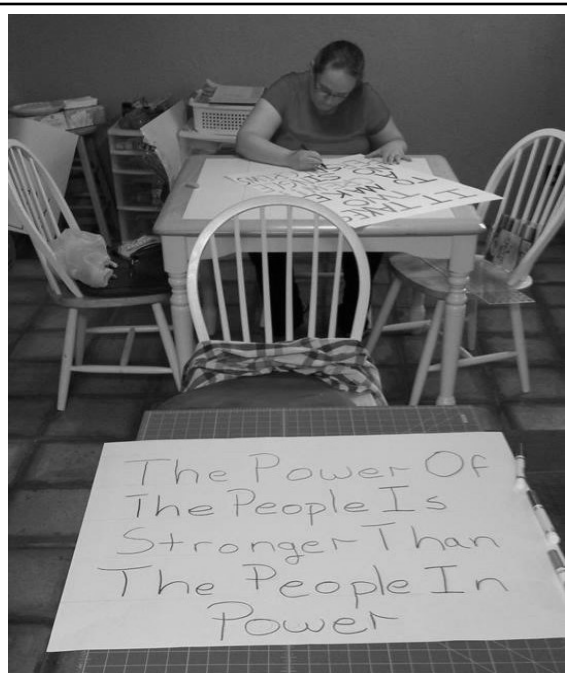


Children of railroad workers stand picket at a BNSF terminal in the Pacific Northwest. Family members played in a key role in galvanizing discontent with the recent tentative agreement on BNSF that would have instituted single employee train crews

meeting came to town, they had a sizable turnout for a spirited protest. "I was proud to see such a unified gathering of the two unions, families, and community", said Hull. "We made our voices heard!"

In the battles to come, family members can be expected to play a key role in defeating single employee crews. Sometimes rails are so beaten down, so defeated, and so tired, they lack the vision and the optimism to mount an all-out struggle. Family members often have a less jaded perspective and are ready, willing and able to fight back

Throughout the history of the labor movement, workers' families have played an often overlooked but key role in major labor struggles. All railroad workers should encourage and assist their family to get involved in the fight. And remember, family members are not employees. As such, they cannot be disciplined, fired or otherwise harassed by the company. They are indispensable allies in the cause and as such, Railroad Workers United welcomes them into the ranks of our organization with full membership rights and privileges.



A railroad conductor's wife prepares picket signs in Wyoming. Family members are vital in the struggle.

Meanwhile in Canada

RWU Steering Committee member Andrew Weir is running for Secretary-Treasurer of the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference (TCRC). Andy has worked for 26.5 years as both an engineer and a conductor on the Canadian National out of Sarnia, Ontario.

"Our Slate's platform is Members First. If elected to the National Office it is my plan to enhance the current training program for GST's, ST's and every other office at the local level! This new training will tremendously help the current ST's and will help keep the Members engaged in their elected duties."



Andy Weir

The nationwide elections will be determined early in the New Year.



Don't be Fooled by Candy-Coated Promises: Fight Back!

In the last several months, the carriers' have intensified their attacks on our jobs, our very livelihoods, with contract proposals, that if implemented, would result in massive reductions of the workforce. Those of us fortunate enough to remain gainfully employed in the industry would face an intensified assault on our dignity, quality of life on and off the job, and the safety of us as workers, as well as the general public.

So far, this assault has been waged on two separate fronts: #1 — The well known attempt by the BNSF to negotiate the infamous single employee train crew agreement, and #2 — The NOT so well known attempt by the Canadian Pacific (CP) Railway to ram through an agreement identical to the "blood money in exchange for anything goes" working conditions that have been in place on Canadian National (CN) properties for over a decade.

The vast majority of rail labor instantly understood the implications of, and the high stakes posed for all of us by the tentative agreement proposed to the members of SMART-Transportation Division (TD) GO-001. Our brothers and sisters at the BNSF on the "front lines" of this battle scored a decisive victory, not only for themselves, but for all of us. While we rightfully salute them and celebrate OUR victory over the BNSF management and the treacherous elements of the SMART-TD leadership, rail labor needs to become concerned about the tentative agreement in play at the CP, as this issue of *The Highball* goes to press.

Truth be told, rail labor needed to be concerned when these devastating changes to our work environment and culture were first introduced on the Illinois Central before the CN acquired it. Just as we rightfully feared the BNSF single crew agreement could spread like wildfire throughout the industry if implemented, the danger of the CN model gaining a stronger foothold in the industry is a threat that all of rail labor will need to take seriously.

The sordid details of the CN model merit a separate column. In lieu of that, the short version of the story goes something like this: In exchange for a substantial raise in the hourly rate (Conductors are being offered \$42.50 per hour for a basic ten hour day) we will give up virtually all agreements governing work rules and conditions that our forefathers fought for and secured for us in decades past.

A ten hour basic day? Space does not allow for a history of the fight for an eight hour day, courageously waged by our forefathers in the labor movement over one hundred years ago. The lives of dozens of workers, their families and supporters, were sacrificed in these historic battles. All of them, especially the Haymarket Massacre martyrs, executed by the city of Chicago, have to be spinning in their graves.

Any union official who signs his name to a ten hour basic day is guilty of ignorance of labor history at best, and treachery and betrayal of the working class at worst. (Sorry, I had to



vent.) In the terminal I work in, the carrier has already eliminated approximately 75% of the regular jobs that we had as recently as three years ago, adding a proportionate amount of the workforce to the extra-board. Without yard bracket start times that protect regular jobs on each shift, they can simply call for work around the clock on an 'as-needed' basis.

They've already implemented this practice, in lieu of any new agreement, flagrantly violating our current one. Being able to say, "Do as you're told, file your grievance later," is a good gig if you can get it, compliments of the Railway Labor Act. There will be no distinctions between the work that road crews or yard crews can perform. A road crew will flat switch if they get into the terminal with time left to work. A yard crew can make up an outbound train, then take it as far as they can. Have a road grip packed at all times as you'll never know if you're going to end up in a hotel or be home for dinner.

Conductors are working and inspecting their trains if a carman is not available. Carmen are rolling by outbound trains because all utility jobs have been eliminated. With only a few regular assignments, seniority becomes less of a factor, especially if system seniority is trashed with the proposed agreement. This is a sneak preview of the future of modern railroad-ing: The maximum amount of production by the least amount of employees (whose benefits are such a costly nuisance).

We can all be very afraid OR we can emulate the example of the workers at BNSF. An educated, organized, mobilized rank & file determined to fight for our safety and dignity by any means necessary CAN prevail over the carriers, treacherous union officials, and the government.

Mark Burrows currently serves as the Organizer for Railroad Workers United. He is a member of UTU Local #1433 and works as an engineer for CP Rail in Chicago, IL. This is the 9th installment in this series.





We Score a Victory at BNSF: Now the Hard Work Begins

The tentative agreement that would have spelled the beginning of the end of the road conductor and the two person crew from trains across North America was trounced. Together, railroaders saved the two-person crew ... for now. On September 10th, when it was announced that the TA had failed to be ratified, railroaders and their families celebrated their hard fought victory and breathed an immense sigh of relief. Chalk one up for the rank and file. Railroaders: 1; Rail Carriers: 0.

The carriers overplayed their cards on this round. They tipped their hand and let the cat out of the bag. Now the word is out: the major rail carriers want single employee train operations and they aim to get them. In fact, BNSF and SMART-TD GO-001 have really done us all a favor in disguise. This rotten TA has lifted the veil from the carriers intentions, and made it clear to railroad workers what BNSF and the rest of them aim to do with us. And the union showed us that we cannot rely on our official leadership to defend and protect us against this scourge. Last but not least, the upsurge in activity that defeated the TA showed us the power of a united, determined, and principled rank and file.

As a result, we are far more prepared for the next round in this fight which is surely to come. Yes, we won round one, but don't think for a minute this war is over. The carriers and the unions already have agreements in place on certain properties that would allow the hoghead to use RCO from the ground out on the road, and others that make provision for "utility conductors" on the road as well. The BNSF played the utility card in the form of the 'master conductor" in this round. Will they or another carrier attempt to play the RCO card in the next? What perks and bribes will they try to buy us off with this time? Which General Committee (or National Division) will be the next weak link to sell us out and settle for some backroom sell-out scab deal?

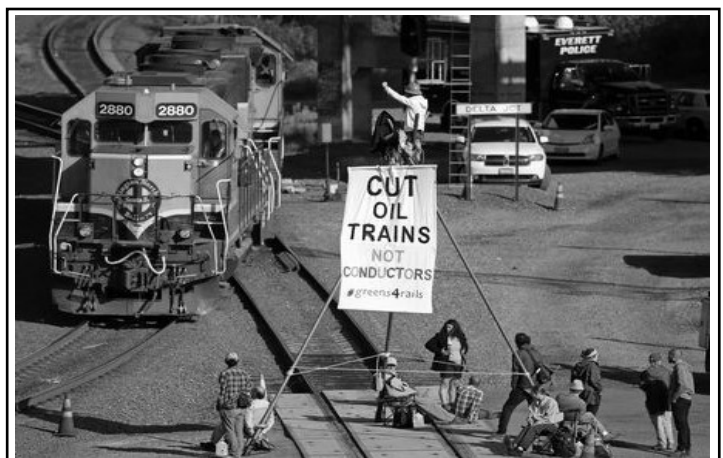
We must not simply sit idly by and wait for the next assault. We cannot expect to weather the storm indefinitely with this defensive posture, allowing the carriers the luxury of the offensive. It is time we get organized and go on the offensive. While the carriers regroup and set their strategy for the next battle, we must use this valuable breathing room wisely. Whether you join Railroad Workers United and help build this emerging network of rank and file rails or whether you opt to network outside of RWU, think about getting yourself hooked up with like-minded railroad workers and family members who want to fight back.

So what can we do between now and the next open confrontation with the rail carriers? Here's a few suggestions:

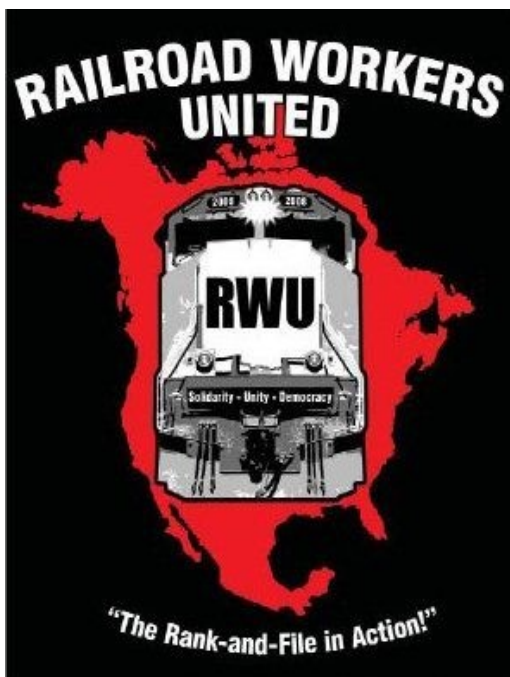
- As mentioned above, build your network. Harvest emails, start a local list serve, build a website, network on Facebook and otherwise get organized.
- Publicize the issue. Write letters to the editor, go on the local radio public affairs show and otherwise make use of the media.
- Bring the issue before your local union meeting. Adopt a resolution committing your local/division to the fight against single employee crews. Forward to your National Division.

- Distribute buttons. Sticker, bumper sticker, T-shirts and other highly visible items that keep the issue in the forefront at the workplace.
- Build alliances with community and environmental organizations. Polls show that the vast majority of Americans stand with us. We need to turn sympathy into solidarity.
- Insist that your general committee engage in democratic contract negotiations and refrain from secret deals with carrier behind closed doors. Demand openness and accountability at every step of the bargaining process.
- Talk to your co-workers about the issue. Make sure that they understand the dangers and pitfalls of single employee train crews.
- Demand that the leaders of the unions of the operating crafts stand united and refuse to back down on this issue. Do not let craft or union parochialism divide and weaken us. Practice solidarity!
- Support federal and state legislative efforts that would outlaw single employee train crews.
- Help build Railroad Workers United in preparation for the next round. We are a small network of labor activists, but we have great potential to win major battles with our group of dedicated activists spread out across North America. Your membership and participation will go a long way to strengthening this network to more effectively fight future battles with the carriers.

We have our work cut out for us brothers and sisters. No more heads in the sand, right? No more denial, no more wishing this issue would just go away. And no more whining and crying that someone should be saving us. As the great rail union organizer Eugene V. Debs advised railroaders way back in 1910, never rely on "leaders" (including him!) to make things right. "You must use your heads as well as your hands, and get yourself out of your present condition." We got us a movement to build fellow workers, let's get to it!



Environmental activists stage a demonstration in Everett, WA. Last summer. Can railroaders build alliances with other groups to more effectively fight our battles with the rail carriers?



Get Your RWU T-shirts & Hats Now!

T-shirts available in Black or Gray in various sizes. RWU logo at left is on the back (or front) of shirt. See the RWU Online Store for sizes/colors.

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Both T-shirts and hats are union made in the USA, 100% cotton and include the RWU 4-color logo.

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I am not a Labor Leader; I do not want you to follow me or anyone else ... I would not lead you into the promised land if I could, because if I led you in, some one else would lead you out. You must use your heads as well as your hands, and get yourself out of your present condition.

Eugene V. Debs, Founder of the American Railway Union

Railroad Workers United

Membership Application

Railroad Workers United needs you! Please keep your membership dues current. If your membership is about to expire or has already expired, please renew today and remain in good standing. And if you are not already a member of RWU, please consider joining; then fill out the application below and mail it in with your dues. Thanks!

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Email Address _____

Union _____ Local # _____ Employer _____

Terminal _____ Craft _____ Years of Service _____

Union Position (if any) _____

I'd like to join for (check one): ___ 1 year \$50.00 ___ 2 Years \$90.00 ___ 3 Years \$120.00

Clip and mail together with your dues to: **Railroad Workers United P.O. Box 2131 Reno, NV. 89505**

OR join on-line at www.railroadworkersunited.org