BLE outraged at remote control decision

Widespread job loss, reduced safety will result, BLE says

A decision issued on January 10 by Arbitrator Gil Vernon, Chairman of Special Board of Adjustment No. 1141, opens the door to the nationwide operation of unmanned remote control trains, a controversial practice that could compromise safety and lead to widespread job losses.

BLE International President Don Hahs expressed outrage at Vernon’s decision, which upholds the assignment of remote control jobs to a newly created position known as “remote control operator,” instead of professional locomotive engineers. President Hahs predicted that between 4,000 and 5,000 members of the United Transportation Union could lose their jobs due to the implementation of remote control trains.

“First and foremost, the decision creates serious safety concerns for railroad employees and the general public,” President Hahs said. “Trains carrying nuclear waste and other hazardous materials will now be operated — at least in terminal operations — by employees who have as little as 80 hours of training.

“Secondly, the decision violates more than 150 years of established practice, ignoring Federally certified locomotive engineers as the only craft responsible for moving and operating trains. The decision also fails to recognize current collective bargaining agreements, local and national agreements, and years of past practice.”

President Hahs also expressed concern that the actions of the Federal Railroad Administration — the nation’s rail safety watchdog — contributed to the magnitude of today’s decision by failing in its duty to protect public safety and the safety of railroad employees.

“In essence, the FRA circumvented its own regulations — 49 CFR Part 240 — by creating a de-skilled engine craft (remote control operator),” he said. “In addition, the FRA has failed to adopt enforceable federal regulations to govern the operation of remote control trains. As of today, it has only issued recommended guidelines to cover limited operations.

“The BLE President also charged that over the past three decades, the United Transportation Union and railroad management have conspired to eliminate numerous railroad positions, usually through attrition and sharing of the savings.

“Today’s decision is illogical and does not conform to years of established practice,” he said. “The BLE’s national agreement, which provides for the forced promotion to locomotive engineer, established the precedent of engineer as the prevailing craft. Eighteen years later, the carriers and UTU have collaborated to change this scenario for self-serving reasons, thereby denying the very people they forced to take promotion access to the remote control work.”

President Hahs stressed that while the loss of engineer jobs is important, the public should be gravely concerned about their safety now that lesser trained and lesser qualified operators will be running trains by questionable remote technology.

“Since September 25, four U.S. cities — Baton Rouge, La., Shreveport, La., Detroit, Mich., and Marysville, Mich., — have cited safety concerns in the adoption of resolutions banning remote control operations and/or calling upon the Federal Railroad Administration to adopt enforceable regulations to govern the use of the technology,” he said.

In addition to safety concerns, these city councils cited the threat of terrorist attacks that specifically targeted U.S. railroads as one of the reasons for banning remote control trains. The U.S. Department of Transportation issued this terrorist warning.

The January 10 news release expressed the UTU President’s opinion of the remote control arbitration and cited several reasons why he entered into the remote control letter of intent and agreement.

Boyd called the outcome of the ruling a “victory” and stated that the UTU “did not seek to negotiate on remote control separately.”

Recent history indicates that the UTU willingly signed the September 26, 2001, letter of intent with the carriers to begin remote control pilot projects, while the BLE’s national convention was still in session and before election of officers was completed.

“If the UTU, as stated, See Questions, Page 2

BLE calls into question statements made by UTU President Byron Boyd

UTU contract gives engineer yard duties to RCOs for 46 minutes extra pay

After reviewing numerous inquiries from BLE members regarding the outcome of the January 10 arbitration ruling on remote control, BLE International President Don Hahs called into question certain statements made by UTU President Byron Boyd in a UTU press release.

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“If the UTU, as stated, See Questions, Page 2

BLE prepares membership survey in IBT merger proposal

Survey to assist committees in ongoing negotiations

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers is making final preparations to mail surveys to all of its members in the next 30 days regarding the proposed merger with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

The purpose of the survey is to assist BLE leadership in structuring the best possible merger agreement.

All BLE members will receive survey information through the mail while approximately 1,000 will also be contacted by phone.

Negotiations regarding the merger are still not complete. Information obtained from the survey will assist BLE and Teamster leaders in the ongoing negotiations.

This is moving forward as expected,” BLE International President Don Hahs
really believed it was important to negotiate together on the issue of remote control, then it appears to BLE that they should have waited at least a few more days to give the newly elected BLE officers an opportunity to participate in remote control negotiations," President Hahs said.

“As you should remember, final resolution of the BLE vote on the UTU merger was still pending on Sept. 26, 2001. We are of the opinion that UTU’s zeal to grab the letter of intent was meant to be used to put pressure on BLE membership to merge or be left out meant to be used to put pressure on us,” President Hahs said. “As the meetings are still in the drafting stage, the President and the Subcom- mittees agreed that all content of discussion should remain confidential.”

“All negotiations are not perfect, but the BLE and UTU will lose one job on every assignment — period — for payment of one hour and 32 minutes. There are no winners today as far as operating crews are concerned. The winners are rail management and the manufacturers of remote control devices.”

President Hahs will promptly send a letter to the N济onal Mediation Board requesting that a new arbitrator be appointed to the case.

A copy of President Hahs’ dissent is on the BLE website at: http://www.ble.org/pr/pdf/rco011003.pdf

For a list of recent remote control accidents and other information, please see: http://www.ble.org/remotecontrol. •

On January 16, BLE President Don Hahs filed his dissent to Chairman Gil Vernon’s decision in the remote control arbitration case, Special Board of Adjustment No. 1141.

Vernon was the “neutral” member of the four-member Board, which also included President Hahs, NCCC Chairman Robert Allen and UTU President Byron Boyd.

The NCCC’s Allen and the UTU’s Boyd voted in favor of Vernon’s decision. President Hahs’ dissent makes the final vote 3-1.

Hahs’s dissent stated that the Chairman’s decision was an “aberration” that was “fundamentally flawed.”

“The carriers’ common agreements with BLE have always been required to apply an engineer on every locomotive that moves cars and freight and to require the carriers to assign the operation of loco- motives, regardless of the means of control, to locomotive engineers,” President Hahs wrote. “As far back as 1944, the carriers and BLE expressed their understanding in the so-called ‘Diesel Agreements’ that a locomotive consist could be operated from one engineer with one set of controls and that the ‘duties and responsibilities of engineers’ regard- less of the size of a consist ‘will not be assigned to others.’ The operation of locomotives to move cars is what is called ‘duties and responsibilities’ have always been.”

President Hahs also disputed Vernon’s opinion that a computer or microprocessor had replaced or eliminated the duties of the engineer. “This is not a situation where an employee’s work has been eliminated by technology,” President Hahs wrote. “The Board has mistakenly compared this situation to advances in radio telemetry and data input. This is a case where the carrier, under the guise of technological advancement, has assigned the actual duties and responsibilities of one craft to another.”

President Hahs also said he was “appalled” at Vernon’s dismissal of the many local agreements that were presented by BLE General Committees of Ad-

justment during the November 18 and 19 hearings. Many of these local agreements were “‘manning’ agreements stipulating that at least one locomotive engineer must be assigned to all train movements. In BLE’s opinion, these agreements proved that the assignment of remote control work to other than en- gineers was a violation of the Brotherhood’s collec- tive bargaining agreements.

“Both BLE and the carriers made extensive fil- ings on these issues and representatives of the General Committees of Adjustment orally argued their respective positions before the Board,” President Hahs concluded. “For the Board to dismiss them (which the Board should not have done in any event) with a checklist of reasons, not even identifying the specific basis for which any agreement provision is being rejected, is both disgraceful and a disservice to the parties.”

A copy of President Hahs’ dissent is on the BLE website at: http://www.ble.org/pr/pdf/dissent.pdf •

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Marysville, Mich., passes remote control safety resolution

The City Council of Marysville, Mich., unanimously adopted a resolution calling for improved federal safety regulations to govern the operation of remote control locomotives. The December 2 resolution asks the Federal Railroad Administration to conduct a comprehensive and thorough review of the safety of remote control locomotives and develop comprehensive regulations for the use of remote control locomotives.

The City Council cited its duty to protect the citizens of its city, as well as the U.S. Department of Transportation warning about possible terrorist attacks on passenger and freight railroads as reasons for adopting the resolution, according to BLE Michigan State Legislative Board Chairman Greg Powell, who worked with the Metro Detroit Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO, to have similar legislation introduced by the City Council of Detroit, Mich.

Like Marysville, city councils in Baton Rouge, La., Shreveport, La., and Detroit, Mich., have adopted similar — but more strict — resolutions, which also ask the FRA to adopt comprehensive regulations to govern the operation of remote control locomotives. The Baton Rouge City Council, and Detroit city councils, however, called for an outright ban of remote control trains and specifically asked railroad companies to refrain from operating remote control trains within city limits until certain safety considerations are met.

The city of Shreveport, La., became the third city in the United States to adopt legislation banning the use of remote control locomotives after a resolution passed by its City Council became effective on November 26. The Shreveport City Council’s resolution is similar to remote control locomotive safety measures already adopted in Baton Rouge, La., and Detroit, Mich. Other U.S. cities — including Greenup, Ky. — are also considering similar public safety regulations.

On December 2, the city of Marysville, Mich., adopted a resolution which did not ban remote control trains, but asked the Federal Railroad Administration to adopt enforceable regulations governing their operation (see article below for more details).

The Shreveport City Council adopted a resolution on November 12 — that became effective November 26 — outlawing the operation of remote control locomotives until certain safety considerations are met.

The Shreveport City Council resolved that those safety considerations are:

• Any railroad operating a remote control locomotive must notify the Office of Mayor before implementing such operations.
• Remote control locomotives cannot be used to transport hazardous materials, switch cars containing hazardous materials, or switch other cars on or near tracks occupied by hazardous materials.
• Remote control locomotives cannot be operated by a public or private highway railroad crossing without a person occupying the cab of the locomotive who has the required skills to stop the locomotive and its attached equipment.

Resolution No. 165 of 2002, introduced by Councilman Roy Burrell and voted Ayes-4, Nays-0, Abstain-1 Adopted by City Council on November 12, 2002, Approved by Mayor on November 18, 2002 and effective on November 26, 2002 at 12:01 O’clock A.M.

A RESOLUTION PROVIDING THAT NO RAILROAD SHALL OPERATE REMOTE CONTROLLED LOCOMOTIVES WITHIN THE BORDERS OF SHREVEPORT UNTIL CERTAIN SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS ARE MET AND TO OTHERWISE PROVIDE WITH RESPECT THERETO.

Whereas: The City of Shreveport has a duty to provide for the public safety of its Citizens; and

Whereas: Railroad operate within the geographic boundaries of Shreveport, over public and private highway rail crossings; over and around Cross Canal and other public water supplies, and on property accessible to persons of all ages and abilities; and

Whereas: Railroad equipment is known to present significant danger to persons and property from collision, derailment, and possible release of hazardous materials; and

Therefore, LET IT BE RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Shreveport, that no railroad shall operate remote controlled locomotives within the boundaries of Shreveport until all of the following safety considerations are met.

1. Any railroad operating a remote control locomotive must notify the Office of Mayor before implementing such operations.
2. Remote control locomotives cannot be used to transport hazardous materials, switch cars containing hazardous materials, or switch other cars on or near tracks occupied by hazardous materials.
3. Remote control locomotives cannot be operated by a public or private highway railroad crossing without a person occupying the cab of the locomotive who has the required skills to stop the locomotive and its attached equipment.
4. A railroad must provide effective and reliable protection at the point of movement in any location accessible to the general public for any remote control operation.

Be It Resolved, that the City of Shreveport requests that in the interest of the safety of the Citizens of the City of Shreveport that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) develop comprehensive regulations for the use of remote control locomotives.

Be It Further Resolved, that all remote control operations in Shreveport cease and desist until such time as the City of Shreveport, its agent, or assignee can study and have a plan in place for evacuation before such remote control is implemented.}

WHEREAS, the City of Marysville has a duty to provide for the public safety of its Citizens; and

WHEREAS, railroad equipment, including the use of remote control locomotives, is known to present significant danger to persons and property from collision, derailment, and possible release of hazardous materials; and

WHEREAS, the United States Government has issued a safety alert against vandalism and terrorist threats to railroads;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Shreveport, that all railroad control trains and switch cars containing hazardous materials, or switch other cars on or near tracks occupied by hazardous materials;

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The Railroad Craft Scholarship Foundation (formerly known as the Joint Craft Scholarship) is now available through the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers to college-bound children of all railroad operating crafts.

“They know this is the only scholarship program that covers all craft lines and is available on any railroad,” said John D. Mullen, a member of BLE Division 500 (Cleburne, Texas). The scholarships are available to children of employees working on any railroad represented by any railroad union currently covered under the Federal Employers’ Liability Act. It provides financial aid to children of active, retired, or deceased railroad employees who would be unable to attend college without financial assistance. Established in 1965 by Brother Mullen and other dedicated BLE members, the Railroad Craft Scholarship Foundation has awarded dozens of scholarships over the past seven years. Intended to provide financial assistance to children who otherwise wouldn’t be able to attend college, the scholarship offers several awards ranging from $500 to $1,000. “There are no stipulations if you are already attending college or are just starting out,” Mullen said. “The Committee focuses more on the applicant’s financial need rather than his or her academic performance.” Completed applications must be received by May 1, 2003. Applications will be reviewed and award winners determined by the Railroad Craft Scholarship Foundation’s Board of Directors at their annual meeting in May of each year.

For an application packet, please contact:
John D. Mullen
Railroad Craft Scholarship Foundation
2609 S. Chase
Burleson, Texas 76028
e-mail: j.d.mullen@worldnet.att.net

The International Western Craft Scholarship Foundation deadline is May 1. For details or an application, write:
J.J. Raia, at 20 East Drive, Edison, N.J. 08820, (732) 396-9076, e-mail: jjr80@ix.netcom.com.
Division 898 honors one of its own, Harry Home

(BLE Editor’s Note: The following letter to the editor and photographs were received by the BLE Interna-
tional Division on January 9, 2003.)

Dear Editor,

I would like to take this oppor-
tunity to celebrate the ca-
reer of one of Division 898’s Honorary members, Harry R. J. Home.

Harry Tellier as CN’s president and chief executive officer. Tellier had been serving as CN’s president and chief executive officer since 2003.

Tellier followed in his father’s footsteps and hired on the Canadian National Railway in the signal department in Boston Bar, British Columbia, in 1949.

In 1953, Harry transferred to the shops department in Jasper, Alberta. It was in Jasper that Harry would eventually become a fireman, locomotive engineer, husband and father.

Harry became a member of Division 898 in 1962. It was soon after that when Harry began to serve the mem-
ber of Division 898. He served as Local Chairman from 1975 to 1985. He finished his service to the division as Vice Presi-
dent in 1987.

During this time Harry also served the commu-
nity of Jasper, holding various positions on the local School Board. He also served as a Board Member on the Alberta Resources Railway (ARR).

But what Harry may be best known for is his efforts and dedication to restore and operate the Mountain-type 4-8-2 steam locomotive, 6060. It was Harry who saved the 6060 from the scrap heap in 1968 when CNR switched over to diesels.

Harry has been frustrated (but has not given up) in his efforts to run the 6060 on regu-
lar excursions out of Jasper. He was able to bring it to Jas-
per for a major overhaul in 1986. He then ran it to Vancouver’s Steam Expo in May 1986, pulling 10 loaded grain hoppers. He ran it back the next year in a trip which also featured the Royal Hudson double heading 14 loaded passenger coaches.

The 6060 made its latest trip to Jasper last year, where it was the main attraction in a celebration of Jasper’s railway heritage put on by Parks Canada. The 6060, owned and operated by The Rocky Mount-
ain Rail Society, continues to run excursions out of Stettler, Alberta. During the summer months, the 6060 runs excursions with Alberta Prairie Steam Tours.

Between trips to Stettler, he can be found in Jasper fass-
ning over the 6060 in prepara-
tion of the next run up to Big Valley. Brother Home retired from CNR in 1998 and contin-
ues to live in Jasper, with his wife Edna.

In October of 2002, Harry was honoured by being in-
ducted into the “Heroes” cat-
egory of the Canadian Railway Hall of Fame. This year he will be honoured further when CNR renames the station “Jasper West” to “Home.”

The members of Division 898 wish to congratulate Harry for his achievements and all take special pride in calling out, “Clear to Home.”

Fraternally,

Brian Neshiét, President, Division 898
Jasper, Alberta, Canada •

Division 898 honore un des siens, Harry Home

Cher Éditeur,

J’aimerais prendre l’occasion de célébrer la carrière d’un des membres honoraires de la Division 898, Harry R. J. Home.

Harry a suivi les traces de son père et fut embauché par le Canadien National dans le Service des signaux à Boston Bar, Colombie-Britannique en 1949.


Harry began to serve the mem-
ber of Division 898 in 1962. It was soon after that when Harry began to serve the mem-
ber of Division 898. He served as Local Chairman from 1975 to 1985. He finished his service to the division as Vice Presi-
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dent in 1987.

Harry is devenu membre de la Division 898 (Lucerne) en 1962. C’est peu de temps après que Harry a commencé à servir les membres de la Division 898. Il a été Président local de 1975 à 1985. Il a terminé son ser-
vice à la division comme vice-

Mais Harry a certainement été reconnu surtout par ses ef-
forts et son grand dévouement à restaurer et manœuvrer le

Le 6060 a effectué son dernier voyage à Jasper l’an passé, où il a été l’attraction principale lors d’une célébration du Jasper’s rail-

Fraternellement,

Brian Neshiét, President, Division 898
Jasper, Alberta, Canada •

NEWS BRIEFS

Paul Tellier leaves CN; Harrison new President & CEO

On December 13, Cana-

ian National’s board of direc-
tors announced the appoint-
ment of E. Hunter Harrison as CN’s new president and chief executive officer, effective Jan. 1, 2003.

Harrison replaces Paul M. Tellier as CN’s president and chief executive officer. Tellier is leaving CN after 10 years to become president and chief executive officer of Bombardier Inc.

Harrison, 58, has served as CN’s executive vice-president and chief operating officer since March 1998 and joined the company’s board of direc-
tors on Dec. 4, 1998. Between 1993 and 1998 Harrison was president and chief executive officer of Illinois Central Corp. and Illinois Central Railroad Co. (ICRR), and a di-

CN re-aligns U.S. divisions

Effective Jan. 1, Canadian National realigned its organi-
zational structure. CN’s Mid-
west Division includes the former Wisconsin Central, all CN Rail operations in Michigan, In-
diana, and Ohio, and the Grand Rapid

Norwalk virus fears stall Via Rail train

A VIA Rail passenger train en route to Toronto was stalled in Winnipeg for hours on Janu-
ary 7 when workers refused to board, fearing they may have been exposed to the highly con-
tagious Norwalk virus.

The train, carrying 143 passengers from Vancouver, made a stop in the city about 1 p.m. and two people got off complaining of symptoms. VIA employees, repre-
sented by CARW, refused to get back on board until the train could be tested for the virus. After officials checked the sick passengers, the train was given a clean bill of health. It pulled out of the station about 6 p.m. local time.
1. When and how are COLAs calculated in railroad retirement and social security benefits?  

2. How did the COLA payable in January 2003 affect most railroad retirement annuities?  

3. Why did the railroad retirement COLA increase from 2.4 percent in 2002 to 3.2 percent in 2003?  

4. What would be a very basic example of how this would work?  

5. What if the widow(er) is also entitled to social security benefits?  

6. What would be a very basic example of how this would work?  

7. When was this provision effective and to which widow(er) did it apply?...

Railroad Retirement annuity increases...
The joint International Brotherhood of Teamsters/Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers Rail Operating Employees’ Council scored its first-ever organizing victory on the Iowa, Chicago & Eastern Railroad (IC&E).

Approximately 300 workers will now enjoy union representation as a result of the IBT/BLE organizing victory, the results of which were announced by the National Mediation Board on December 17.

“We look forward to working with management to obtain a fair and equitable agreement for the employees,” BLE President Don Hahs said. “It’s our goal to develop a positive relationship that will be beneficial to both our members and the company.”

President Hahs thanked the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, IBT/BLE Organizers Tom Miller and Jim Bradfield, and local Teamsters for their efforts in the successful organizing drive. Brother Miller thanked the BLE’s Education & Training Department, the BLE International Division, and the IC&E employees for choosing union representation.

“This victory clearly demonstrates the strength our unions have by working together,” said James P. Hoffa, Teamsters General President. “We look forward to continuing our relationship with the BLE.”

President Hoffa thanked Teamster Local 41 in Kansas City, Mo., and Teamster Local 371 in Rock Island, Ill., for their efforts.

On November 18 in Davenport, Iowa, the joint IBT/IBLE Rail Operating Employees’ Council held its first-ever rally. Two large Teamster trucks—one from Chicago and one from Indianapolis—served as rally headquarters for the IBT/BLE representatives.

Union members were from various trades came to the United States as part of a program conducted jointly by the Solidarity Center, AFL-CIO and the U.S. State Department. Among the nine visitors was a top official of the Russian Railway Workers’ Union, Sergey Linerov. Brother Linerov is the Chairman of the Russian Trade Union of Railway Locomotive Brigades and was a working locomotive engineer before assuming this position.

The other eight participants include top leaders from the airlines and air transport, trucking, teachers, construction and natural gas unions.

They visited the BLE to learn about labor-management relations in the railroad industry and the role of the Federal Railroad Administration. In addition to the BLE, they also visited several other AFL-CIO affiliated unions.

Members of the delegation requested a site tour of a railroad facility while in Cleveland. Brother Larry James of BLE Division 254 arranged a visit to the CSX Collinwood Yard and diesel repair facility. He worked with Brother Mo Morrow of the BLE Executive Staff to coordinate their visit. Brother James also serves as the BLE/CSX System Labor Liaison.

During their time in Cleveland, they took a tour of CSX’s Collinwood rail yard and the Cleveland Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

Make your reservations early for upcoming International Western Convention!

BLE and GIA members looking to get a head start on summer plans may wish to consider making reservations now for the 63rd Annual International Western Convention in Sparks, Nevada (June 1-5, 2003).

Jeffrey Valentine is hosting “IWC, 2003 — Sparks,” which will be held at John A. Setuiga’s Nugget Hotel & Casino in Sparks.

For reservations, call (800) 646-1177 and ask for the IWC room rate, or identify yourself as a BLE member (in Reno/Sparks, please call: 356-3300). A room rate of $89 per night has been secured from May 30 through June 7. For more information, members may also visit the John A. Setuiga’s Nugget website at: <www.janugget.com>.

Activities include a golf tournament at The Resort at Squaw Creek, a Robert Trent Jones designed course in the High Sierras, a bus trip to Virginia City, America’s largest historical landmark, and a dinnertime/sunset cruise aboard the MS Dixie on Lake Tahoe.

Those wishing to contact Chairman Valentine may do so by phone by calling (775) 857-2013, or by e-mail: <jval@accutek.com>.

BLE and GIA members looking to get a head start on summer plans may wish to consider making reservations now for the 63rd Annual International Western Convention in Sparks, Nevada (June 1-5, 2003).

Jeffrey Valentine is hosting “IWC, 2003 — Sparks,” which will be held at John A. Setuiga’s Nugget Hotel & Casino in Sparks.

For reservations, call (800) 646-1177 and ask for the IWC room rate, or identify yourself as a BLE member (in Reno/Sparks, please call: 356-3300). A room rate of $89 per night has been secured from May 30 through June 7. For more information, members may also visit the John A. Setuiga’s Nugget website at: <www.janugget.com>.

Activities include a golf tournament at The Resort at Squaw Creek, a Robert Trent Jones designed course in the High Sierras, a bus trip to Virginia City, America’s largest historical landmark, and a dinnertime/sunset cruise aboard the MS Dixie on Lake Tahoe.

Those wishing to contact Chairman Valentine may do so by phone by calling (775) 857-2013, or by e-mail: <jval@accutek.com>.

• The date you became disabled
• You are covered under the Railroad Employees National Health and Welfare Plan (other than by COBRA) on road Employees National Health and welfare unions.
• You have applied for a disability retirement or SSI
• The date your railroad service ended
• The date you became disabled
• You have applied for a disability retirement or SSI
• Your railroad service ended
• Your railroad service ended
• The date you became disabled
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**BLE NEWS**

Update regarding $2,000 death benefit

New contact information for families of CN/IC-CC&P employees

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**JANUARY 2003 CALENDAR & EVENTS**

JUNE 1-5, 2003...63rd Annual International Western Convention in Sparks, Nevada

Jeffrey Valentine welcomes BLE and AFL members to Sparks, Nevada, for the 63rd International Western Convention. The 63rd annual IWC will be held at John Ascuaga’s Nugget Hotel & Casino in Sparks. For reservations, call (800) 440-1177 and ask for the IWC room rate, or identify yourself as a BLE member. A room rate of $59 per night has been secured from May 30 through June 5. More details to come when available. Those wishing to contact Jeffrey Valentine may do so by phone, (775) 857-2033, or by e-mail, <jvalentine@nugget.com>.

JUNE 15-20, 2003...76th Annual Southeastern Meeting Association in Pigeon Forge, Tenn

Tom Carmen, M.W. “Bill” Doerner and the members of BLE Division 239 (Knoxville, Tenn.) will host the 2003 SMA at the Great Smoky Mountain Resort in the inner harbor area of Pigeon Forge. Early bird reservations can be made by calling (423) 589-1234. Arrangements for this event include a tour of the Dollywood & O’smoky Mountain Museum, a harbor dinner cruise, golf tournament, and a Pigeon Forge baseball game. For more details, contact Brother Carlus at (865) 945-5027 or by e-mail, mcarus4719@hotmail.com.

SEPTEMBER 28-OCTOBER 2, 2003...69th Annual Southeastern Meeting Convention

General Chairman Rick Gibbs, BNSF-SLFP & M&MA, is chairman of the 69th annual SSMC, which will be held in Branson, Mo. Members and their families will be welcome to stay at the beautiful Chateau on the Lake Resort Hotel & Convention Center. Reservations can be made at a rate of $514 per night by calling: (800) 332-2523. A highly popular tourist destination, Branson offers abundant and unique entertainment and dining options for the entire family. Members planning to attend the SSMC are encouraged to visit Branson’s website, <www.branson.com>, to learn more about its diverse entertainment opportunities. More details and registration forms will follow.

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**Advisory Board December Activity**

By action of the delegates at the Fifth Quinquennial Convention, summaries of BLE Advisory Board members’ activities are published monthly.

International President Don M. Hohs, Jr. — International Office: General experience of BLE activity, General office affairs, Special Board of Inquiry; National Legislative Board, Division 197 (Ontario); MetLife Outreach Program. MetLife agreed to initiate an Outreach Program to handle claims for railroad employees, who seek to file a claim on or after June 30, 2002. As a result of the decision rendered on or about October 9, 2002, MetLife agreed initiate an Outreach Program to handle claims for railroad retirees who were unaware of the $2,000.00 death benefit coverage under the RailRoad Employees National Health and Welfare Plan.

**BLE Publications Committee**

Don M. Hohs, Jr., International President
Edward W. Broun, First Vice-President & Alternate President
William C. Wolford, General Secretary-Treasurer
Representatives: Inland Transportation Union, 3500 Wabasso Avenue, Chicago, Ill. 60618 (Chicago, Ill.); John E. Benner, Jr., Editor
Contact: Frank J. Shneider
Contact: (214) 241-3260

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**Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers**

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