BLE, Teamsters discuss merger or affiliation

Advisory Board unanimously approves exploratory talks; Hahs, Hoffa hold first formal meeting on March 6

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers’ Advisory Board unanimously approved a motion on February 26 that allows the BLE’s Executive Committee to explore a possible merger or affiliation with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, in accordance with Section 1(e) of the BLE Constitution & Bylaws.

The proposed merger or affiliation would give locomotive engineers membership in the largest union in the AFL-CIO and the largest transportation union in North America.

“There is still a long way to go, but this is a first step in the right direction,” said BLE International President Don M. Hahs. “We believe this is the best course for our organization and our membership.”

Teamsters officials met with members of the BLE Advisory Board during the last week of February at the AFL-CIO’s winter meeting in New Orleans. Previously, BLE International President Don M. Hahs and Teamsters General President James P. Hoffa met regarding a possible merger or affiliation.

The two presidents held their first formal meeting on March 6 to schedule dates for future meetings.

“Our two unions serve a common purpose of transporting goods from manufacturers to consumers,” Hoffa said. “By joining together, we will create a seamless transportation union. By joining together, we will ensure that all our members maintain power at the national and international levels and aggressive representation at the local level.”

“The strength, size and reputation of the Teamsters would give the BLE an added advantage in lobbying efforts and in negotiating contracts,” President Hahs said.

“Our ability to support each other across industry lines, throughout the transportation industry, will give all of our members the support they need when negotiating contracts or organizing,” Hoffa added.

Section 1(e) of the BLE Constitution & Bylaws governs the process the International Division must follow when considering mergers or affiliations with other labor unions.

“BLE members will be kept fully informed as this process unfolds,” BLE International President Don M. Hahs said in announcing the merger. “We will strictly adhere to Section 1(e) of the Constitution.”

As amended by delegates at the Miami convention, the entirety of Section 1(e) of the BLE Constitution & Bylaws is presented below:

“(e) If the Advisory Board, by a two-thirds majority vote, believes it is in the best interest of the membership to merge or affiliate with another labor organization, or to form a new labor organization, the following procedure shall apply:

“(e)(1) The International Brotherhood shall expeditiously pre-
At its winter meeting in New Orleans, the AFL-CIO Executive Council passed a resolution which condemns the aggressive moves of the non-affiliated United Transportation Union against the BLE.

"This is a major accomplishment for the BLE," said BLE International President Don M. Hahs of the resolution, passed on February 27. "We have pushed some issues forward and it is a good day for the BLE."

The resolution, which urges the UTU to cease its efforts and rejoin the AFL-CIO, has prompted some AFL-CIO affiliates to promise discourse with the UTU, asking that organization to stop its actions.

The resolution passed by the Executive Council, reads as follows:

"Transportation Labor Solidarity with the BLE"

"The labor movement has always unified around the basic principle that the interests of all working men and women are compatible and not conflicting. AFL-CIO-affiliated unions have pooled their energy and resources on the core mission of growing the movement and giving millions of new workers a voice on the job, in their communities and in the political process. During a time when all unions face unprecedented challenges and a politically hostile environment in Washington, the unity of all working people through their unions is more important today than ever before.

"The challenges are indeed serious. Workers in all sectors of the economy are hurting from massive layoffs and tax cuts that are harming people who voted to act. The right to organize and collectively bargain is being undermined and laws constant political interference. America’s industrial base is collapsing due to pervasive trade policies. And a myriad of transportation infrastructure, safety and security issues remain unaddressed. Our response to these challenges must be forceful and unified.

"From time to time some labor organizations have chosen a path of isolation outside the AFL-CIO and have undertaken efforts to raid the membership of the Federation’s affiliates. These tactics violate the very principles on which this movement was founded more than a century ago... From time to time some labor organizations have chosen a path of isolation outside the AFL-CIO and have undertaken efforts to raid the membership of the Federation’s affiliates."

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Sweeney urged UTU leaders to reconsider their position from the rest of organized labor.

"The AFL-CIO has strongly condemned the UTU's efforts to raid the operating craft structure in the railroad industry in an attempt to raid BLE members."

On February 27, the AFL-CIO Executive Council, the Federation's highest governing body, passed a resolution supporting the BLE in this movement to condemn the aggressive tactics of the non-affiliate UTU and reaffirm its commitment to the railway industry, where we have spent our resources on a good contract or safety issues instead of fighting a rogue union."

Thiellen and Mark Hare, President of the Nebraska State AFL-CIO, said they will offer a solution to UTU members so they can remain affiliated with the AFL-CIO.

"We will also send them an offer to start a BLE train service division so they can be a part of the House of Labor," Thiellen said. •
The BLE General Committee of Adjustment for the Gateway Western Railway, a subsidiary of Kansas City Southern, announced the signing of an agreement that gives some locomotive engineers pay increases of more than 49 percent.

General Chairman John R. Koonce said the recently ratified agreement combines the best portions of the Kansas City Southern agreements, the National Agreement, and the old Gateway Western contract. The result is a new agreement that is better than each contract individually, Brother Koonce said.

The contract was ratified on January 15 and is retroactive to January 1, with some retroactive payments to January 1, 2000. Eighty-three percent of the ballots were returned with 100 percent of the membership voting in favor of the new deal.

Highlights of the contract include:

- Under the old agreement, Express Freight engineers were paid one rate for 12 hours of work. Under the new agreement, an engineer working 12 hours on an Express Freight will make almost 44 percent more in wages for the trip.
- Under the old agreement, Local Freight were paid one rate for 10 hours of work. Under the new agreement, a Local Freight works 10 hours on a 100 mile trip, the engineer will make 22 percent more in wages for the trip. In some extreme cases on long mileage locals, the engineer will see pay increases of more than 49 percent.
- Under the old agreement, Yard Assignments were paid overtime by dividing the rate of pay by 12. Under the new agreement, Yard Assignments get true overtime.
- The new Gateway Western contract adopts the National Wages and COLAs, and engineers will receive all wage increases and/or lump sum payments settled in the National Wage Agreement retroactive to Jan. 1, 2000.
- The Health & Welfare plan will be cost-free to employees. It allows employees to retire at age 60 after 30 years of service, and the plan will provide existing employees with free Health & Welfare, just as if they were active employees, until they and their spouses both reach age 65.
- The new agreement increases the engineers’ certification pay to the National Rate of $5.00. It also retains language that the locomotive engineer will be paid $5.00 in additional compensation earned by any other train crew member.

Brother Koonce said that by negotiating to combine the best portions of the National Agreement with the KCS and Gateway Western contracts, BLE engineers will retain the following benefits:

- Regular yard assignments working more than five days will be paid overtime rate on the sixth and seventh days.
- Six personal leave days and six holidays—engineers are qualified for these whether working on the road or in the yard. All engineers qualify from the first day they are hired.
- • A 401(k) plan, which matches 50 cents on the dollar for the first 6 percent of employees’ salary.
- • A health incentive plan, which pays 10 hours straight time pay per quarter, if the engineer stays marked-up. Not reduced for laying off for PLD, vacation, bereavement, jury duty or union business.
- • Annual pay on all regular assignments.
- • A “winner” bonus consisting of one engine on every assignment.
- • Black box agreement.
- • Continuous away from home meal allowance — two the first 12 hours and one every six hours until listed.
- • Brother Koonce also announced the signing of two other contracts with Kansas City Southern subsidiaries — MidSouth Rail and SouthRail. These contracts, like the Gateway Western deal, adopt the national general wage increases and COLAs, along with the early retirement and health & welfare packages. However, they opted for the single rates of pay instead of mileage pay. Other benefits of the MidSouth Rail and SouthRail contracts include daily guaranteed pool assignments and overtime on the sixth and seventh day for regular road switchers.

The SouthRail engineers also received an immediate 6.28 percent raise for Road Switcher assignments and a 20.78 percent raise for Freight Assignments, along with a $6,385 lump sum payment in lieu of back pay.

AFL-CIO adopts resolution condemning UTU raiding attempts against BLE

Executive Council

Continued from Page 2

and the UTU is attempting to convince the National Mediation Board (NMB) to rewrite the rail industry’s craft and class system in order to frustrate the union representation rights of locomotive engineers and thousands of other railroad employees.

“In December 2001, the BLE’s rank-and-file overwhelmingly voted to reject a proposal to merge with the UTU following a vote by UTU members in favor of the proposal. The UTU should honor the wishes of BLE members, suspend raids against the BLE, withdraw the case before the NMB, and reclaim its seat at the AFL-CIO and the Transportation Trades Department. Only then can the orchestrated dispute be addressed responsibly and in the interests of railroad workers. And, the NMB should continue to enforce the craft and class system that has been the cornerstone of representation and collective bargaining in the rail industry, and the recruitment of highly skilled and specialized railroad employees, for more than a century. “Transportation labor is prepared to do what it takes to peacefully resolve these issues. At the same time TTD is prepared to defend the BLE at every turn from any continuing raids on its membership.”

“Therefore, Be It Resolved, That TTD Affiliated Unions Will:

Call on the UTU to withdraw its raids and activities directed at BLE members and its efforts before the NMB to force an unwanted representation election among all railroad operating employees that could result in depriving these workers of any union representation.

Urge the NMB to dismiss any UTU petition seeking to eliminate the class and craft system in the railroad industry and force representation elections among all railroad operating employees.

Urge the UTU to rejoin the AFL-CIO and the TTD and work from within the House of Labor to resolve any disputes with the BLE and aggressively defend the BLE and its members in the event the UTU stays on its present course of raiding the BLE’s members on North America’s railroads.”

He also advised the NCCC that the tentative UTU agreement, reached in 2000, did not adequately address the concerns of locomotive engineers and, therefore, was not acceptable to the BLE. Engineers are the most important and productive employees in the railroad industry and they deserve to be compensated and treated as such by the carriers.”
BLE members in Michigan now have a voice in their state’s political ranks. On February 29, 2002, the Michigan State Legislative Board was founded with the help of BLE members throughout the state and in Canada. The board has already begun making phone calls to state legislators and learning its way around the state legislature. In its first meeting on March 28, the board elected its vice chair, John Banton, a member of BLE Division 920 (Pontiac, Mich.).

First Vice-Chairman David F. Tibble and Secretary-Treasurer Franklin Harris join Brother Powell on the board. One of their first official actions was to begin to affiliate with the Michigan State AFL-CIO.

“The AFL-CIO provides watchdog capabilities,” Powell said. “They can help us to get our voice up and speed up the ratification process. If a separate vote is requested by the Canadian Vice Presidents and a majority request may be made, by both Canadian BLE members in Michigan wishing to exercise the right to vote under the provisions of articles (e)(5) and (e)(6), the International President of this division will set up a meeting with a state senator who is willing to give board members a ‘crash course’ in politics 101,” Powell said. “We are starting to educate ourselves about the political process.”

Powell thanked many individuals for their efforts in getting the board on the ground, including all division officers in the state of Michigan. BLE International President Don M. Hahs, International Vice-President & U.S. National Legislative Representative Raymond Holms, and General Chairman John Karakian, CSX (North Limes) General Chairman Don Menzefric, Norfolk Southern (Northern Limes) General Chairman Larry Sykes, Kansas State Legislative Board Chairman Jim Klee, Pennsylvania State Legislative Board Chairman Ken Kertesz and International Division Executive Staff Member Mo Morrow.

“We had a great deal of difficulty getting started,” said Powell. “Without the help of all these individuals, we could never have gotten it done.”

BLE members in Michigan wishing to contact their new State Legislative Board may mail voting materials to: Frank Powell, mailling Brother Powell at (248) 681-4435, or by e-mailing crow052@aol.com.

MARCH 2002

CALENDAR & EVENTS

JUNE 16-20, 2002… 75th Southeastern Meeting Convention, Virginia Beach, Va. Chairman T.C. Ennis is hosting the 2002 SMC at the Virginia Beach Airport Hotel & Conference Center from June 16-20, 2002. Discount room rates of 99 or 99 plus might have been reserved and the reservation deadline is May 24, 2002. Reservations can be made by calling (800) 488-2722 (in Virginia please call (800) 662-4747). A dinner cruise is being planned as part of the proceedings. Space is available on a first-come, first-served basis, so you must register as soon as possible if you are interested. For preregistration form, please contact Brother T.C. Ennis at 4927 Euclid Rd., Virginia Beach, VA 23462. E-mail requests can be sent to: <ble656@mindspring.com>.

JULY 21-25, 2002… 62nd Annual International Western Convention, Reno, Wash. Hosted by Chairman William Ammon in the Tri-Cities area of Washington State, the 2002 IWC is a convention you will want to miss. Guests will stay at the Westward Tri-Cities Hotel at 1101 N. Columbia Blvd., Kennewick, WA 99336. Registration and Annual Meeting, Sunday, July 21, 2002 at 8:30 a.m., opens at 7:00 a.m. September 24, opening ceremony and barbecue dinner, September 25: workshop and banquet, and September 26: closed meeting and SWCM business meeting. For more details, contact Chairman Banton by phone at (507) 675-2417 or by e-mail at <kcbarton@dallas.gotmc.net>.

SEPTEMBER 23-26, 2002… 67th Annual Southeastern Meeting Convention, Mt. Wach, TX Chairman Mark Bunting and members of BLE Division 250 host the 2002 SWCM, to be held at the Radisson Hotel, 815 Main Street Fort Worth, TX 76102. Reservations can be made by calling (817) 870-2100. The tentative agenda for the meeting will include: Monday, September 23, 2002, at 8:30 a.m., opening ceremony and banquet; Tuesday, September 24, workshop and banquet; September 25: closed meeting and SWCM business meeting. For more details, contact Chairman Banton at (817) 641-4808.

Advisory Board February Activity

By action of the delegates of the Fifth Quinquennial Convention, summaries of BLE Advisory Board members’ activities are published monthly. The board has also set up a meeting with a state senator who is willing to give board members a “crash course” in politics 101,” Powell said. “We are starting to educate ourselves about the political process.”

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