BLET endorses Kerry

The Executive Committee of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen voted unanimously to endorse Senator John F. Kerry for President of the United States. The Executive Committee decision follows an online poll at www.blec.org in which a wide majority of BLET members chose Senator Kerry as their favorite among the Democratic candidates.

The Advisory Board of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and the Teamsters of North America (BLET), an affiliate of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, has to date received 3,412 votes for Senator John F. Kerry in its poll for the Democratic nomination. Super Tuesday is March 2, 2004. The BLET endorsement of Kerry at a rally in Milwaukee.

The BLET endorsement of Senator Kerry is his support for full funding of Amtrak. "For 18 years in the Senate, John Kerry has been a friend of working families," said BLET National President Don M. Hahs. "We believe that he will continue to support working men and women and will provide the best opportunity for Amtrak's long-term survival."

On February 17, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters announced their endorsement of Kerry for the Democratic nomination. Senator Kerry has won 18 of 20 Democratic caucuses and has a commanding lead in the race for the Democratic nomination. He has also won the endorsement of the AFL-CIO and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

The Advisory Board of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, a division of the Teamsters, conducted its first strategic planning session in late February. The Union’s approach for collective bargaining, safety, and security were among key topics at the meeting. A significant point during the three-day session was the structure of the Trainmen Department within the BLET.

On February 27, the BLET Executive announced that it had unanimously endorsed John Kerry for President of the United States. Kerry, center, is flanked by Dick Gephardt (D-MO), left, and Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa, right. (AP photo/Charles Krupa)

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At the time of the BLET's endorsement, Senator Kerry had won 18 of 20 Democratic primaries and caucuses, and has a commanding lead in the race for the Democratic nomination. He has also won the endorsement of the AFL-CIO and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

One of the major factors in the BLET's endorsement of Senator Kerry is his support for full funding of Amtrak. "For 18 years in the Senate, John Kerry has been a friend of working families," said BLET National President Don M. Hahs. "We believe that he will continue to support working men and women and will provide the best opportunity for Amtrak's long-term survival."

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The BLET Safety Task Force was established for the purpose of participating in accident inves- 
tigations conducted by the NTSB with the goal of contributing to both the accident cause-finding 
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the view point of locomotive engineers and train-

Twelve members of the BLET have been killed in on-the-job accidents since 1999.

Anthony C. Rodella, Jeffrey S. Bohler

The deaths of their fellow workers impact the 
hearts and minds of all railroad workers, and I 
know that I speak for all the BLET members when 
I send my sympathies to these families.

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Twelve members of the BLET have been killed in on-the-job accidents since 1999.
The tragic March 11 terrorist attack in Madrid on commuter rail lines must serve as a wake-up call to the United States regarding railroad security. The railroads are not only potentially dangerous to the traveling public but also to communities across the country. Our nation’s railroads, the largest carriers of hazardous materials, continue to route through urban centers, potentially dangerous to the traveling public and the general public.

The federal government terms such high-hazard cargoes “potential weapons of mass destruction” (WMD), and the rail corporations, left to their own initiatives, have implemented potentially dangerous cost-cutting measures that have taken trained professionals off of locomotives, created a fatique crisis among rail workers, and inadequately addressed infrastructure maintenance, rail yard access and other matters of concern to rail workers and the public.

“One of the safety measures we’ve enacted is a program to screen all passengers entering rail stations, and we’ve also improved security at our rail yards. We’ve also taken swift action to standardize heightened security measures throughout our nation’s airports and airlines, but has left our nation’s railroads virtually untouched,” said James P. Hoffa, Teamsters General President.

A 2003 Government Accounting Office (GAO) report concluded that it is unclear as to whether or not the rail company’s own initiatives have effectively deterred terrorism because there are no federal standards.

Since 9/11, the United States has taken swift action to standardize heightened security measures throughout our nation’s airports and airlines, but has left our nation’s railroads virtually untouched, said James P. Hoffa, Teamsters General President.

“We have tried repeatedly to warn the public and the railroad corporations about the potential dangers on the rails,”

— BLET National President Don M. Hahs

Madrid terrorist attacks a wake-up call

Hoffa, Hahs say American rail industry must improve security on passenger and freight trains

The rail corporations, left to their own initiatives, have implemented potentially dangerous cost-cutting measures that have taken trained professionals off of locomotives, created a fatigue crisis among rail workers, and inadequately addressed infrastructure maintenance, rail yard access and other matters of concern to rail workers and the public. The rail corporations, left to their own initiatives, have implemented potentially dangerous cost-cutting measures that have taken trained professionals off of locomotives, created a fatigue crisis among rail workers, and inadequately addressed infrastructure maintenance, rail yard access and other matters of concern to rail workers and the public.
**50th community enacts remote control safety resolution**

As this issue of the "Locomotive En-
engineers and Trainmen News goes to press, 50 recent communities in the U.S. have passed remote control safety resolutions.

A total of 36 cities and 14 counties have enacted the resolution to date, including 16 different AFL-CIO State Federal resolutions, and have passed similar resolutions.

The purpose of these resolutions is to call upon the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to adopt enforceable regulations to make remote control operations safe.

The operation of remote control trains in the United States is virtually unregulated. To date, the FRA has only issued recommended guidelines and not legally binding regulations. The FRA often ignores these guidelines in the day-to-day operation of remote control trains.

Remote control locomotives are safe. The resolutions are: Roanoke County, Va.; Harris County, Texas; and Greeneup, Ky.

Roanoke County, Va.

Roanoke County, Virginia, has enacted a remote control safety resolution on March 9. Jim Ong, Chairman of the Blt's Virginia State Legislative Board, thanked the resolution's sponsors for their work on the resolution, including: Tim Hanely, Vice Chairman of the OSL; Rodney Cutlip, BLET Division 366 (To-

ledo) Local Chairman; Tom Gilroy, BLET Division 3 (Toledo) Legislative Representative; Don Rozick, BLET Di-

vision 366 Legislative Representative; and Bob Tramuto, BLET Legislative Representative of BLET Di-

vision 607 (Toledo). Chairman Ong also thanked Toledo Mayor Jack Ford; City Councilman Robert McCloskey; and Mayoral Chief of Staff Jay Black. He also noted the efforts of Roberta Stout, a resident of Toledo who worked tirelessly on this issue.

The resolution seeks to ban the transportation of hazardous materials by remote control and to prevent them from being operated over public or pri-

vate highway rail grade crossings. Like many of the other safety resolutions, the Toledo measure calls for a ban on remote operations until effective and reliable protection at the point of move-

ment is in place.

Roanoke County Chairmen, the resolution seeks to permit the Board of Supervisors to pass a remote control safety resolution on December 16.

The Board of Supervisors, acting on a request made by BLET Division 301 (Roanoke, Va.), cited the Board's long-standing position of being proac-

tive toward public safety in passing the resolution.

The measure was sponsored by County Supervisor Mike Altizer, who expressed the need to have enforceable federal regulations regarding remote control locomotives.

"I cannot see how the Federal Rail-

road Administration can require a li-

ence and employee (a remote control engi-

neer) to operate a train under manda-

tory regulations, and then allow an-

other employee (a remote control op-

erator) to operate a train under volun-

tary guidelines," Supervisory Altizer said.

"Obviously, we’re very pleased with the Board’s decision for several rea-

sons," said Division 301 Legislative Representative Michael Roop.

Roanoke County becomes the first Vir-

iginia municipality to enact a remote control safety resolution. However, the resolution should help to keep the bor-

ough safe.

"I feel compelled that we as a com-

munity cannot take safety for granted," said County Supervisor Mike Altizer. "I am proud to see this resolution passed by the Mayor and Board Council not to be reactive but proactive. Remote control locomotives should not and can-

not be used in our town.

Brother Enriquez thanked Brother Michel for his assistance in getting the resolution adopted.

"Ken Michel provided me with documents that were really beneficial," Enriquez said. "He provided me letters from Senator Jon S. Corzine and Con-

gressman Frank LoBiondo that support the position on the remote control issue."

Toledo, Ohio

Toledo, Ohio, passed a remote con-

rol safety resolution on March 9.

Jim Ong, Chairman of the BLET's Ohio State Legislative Board, thanked several Board members for their work on the resolution, including: Tim Hanely, Vice Chairman of the OSL; Rodney Cutlip, BLET Division 366 (To-

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Harris County, Texas

Harris County, Texas, unanimously passed a remote control safety resolu-

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BLET Texas State Legislative Board Chairman Terry Briggs reports that the BLET and Harris County Commission-

er Sylvia Garcia (Precinct 2) was on October 31. Also in attendance were: Kenneth Yambra, President of the Harris County AFL-CIO and Dale Wortham, President of the Harris County AFL-

CIO.

The Harris County AFL-CIO has enacted its own remote control safety resolution on September 24.

At the October 31 meeting, the BLET distributed informational packets to all the Commissioners, the BLET and Com-

missioners discussed the issue of re-

mote control and resolutions enacted by other communities and AFL-CIO bodies.

After the initial meeting, Commis-

sioner Garcia and Brother Yambra cor-

responded by telephone, e-mail, fax and in a continual exchange of safety infor-

mation. Ms. Garcia and Brother Yambra met again in person on December 11, at which time she stated that the reso-

lution would be going for a vote in front of the County Commissioners on De-

cember 16.

"It’s all history from that point," Chairmen Briggs said. "The resolution was passed unanimously thanks to the hard work of Herb and Kathy Yambra, Commissioner Garcia, Bob Tramuto, Richard Shaw and Dale Wortham.

Brother Briggs also thanked all BLET members in the Houston area who worked on the project and participated in a remote control safety rally.

Greenup County, Ky.

On January 13, the Greenup County Fiscal Court in Greenup, Kentucky, passed a resolution condemning remote control train operations. The resolution passed after a CSX employee lost part of his leg in a remote control switching accident on December 21. The CSX employee, "Shane" Bishop, 29, was performing rail switching operations by remote control in Russell Yard in Greenup, Kentucky when an accident occurred. One of his feet was crushed by a rail car, causing amputa-

tion above the ankle.

Greenup resolution states, "We, the Fiscal Court of Greenup County, hereby, that we are acutely aware of the recent accident that occurred at the Russell Yards in December and the safety problems associated with the use of this technology. We will aggressively move to mitigate and furthermore, alleviate the use of remote control." Tommey Mayne, Chairman of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen’s Kentuck County Legislative Board, attended the Fiscal Court’s January meeting.

Brother Mayne reported the offi-

cers and members of BLET Division 271 in Russell, Ky., are deserving of praise for their hard work in lobbying for pas-

sage of the resolution. He noted the ex-

cptional efforts of: Eddie Mai, Presi-

dent of Division 271; Tim Braden, Lo-

cal Chairman of Division 271; Randy Sowards, Secretary-Treasurer of Divi-

sion 271; Daniel Maynad, Legislative Representative; and Eddie Stump, Member of Division 271.

The December 15 accident in Russell happened just days after a Union Pacific worker was killed in a remote control switching accident in San Antonio.

On December 7, Union Pacific em-

ployee Jody Herstein, 35, was struck and killed by a locomotive that he was operating by remote control at a rail yard in San Antonio.

On the Internet

For copies of the resolutions passed by all cities and counties, please visit the BLET website at: http://www.btle.org/remotecontrol

**Strategic planning sessions to include General Chairmen, Legislative Chairmen**

The National Division of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) will hold strategic planning sessions with all General Chairmen and all State Legislative Board Chairmen in the coming months.

The General Chairmen’s meeting will be in Las Vegas on April 15-16. The State Legislative Board Chairmen’s meeting will also be in Las Vegas during the week of May 17, which will coincide with the IFT’s Unity Conference.

The meetings will focus on the organization’s approach for collective bargaining, the new Trainmen Department within the BLET, remote control operations, railroad security campaigns, issues, fatigue and safety, and other pertinent issues.

Meetings of this type are ex-

tremely important," BLET Na-

tional President Don Haas said. "They help us to plot the organization’s current and future direction under the newly estab-

lished Rail Conference of the In-

ternational Brotherhood of Train-

sters."

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**BLET NEWS**

Page 4 Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen News: April 2004
Burlington Northern Santa Fe

Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) reported record fourth-quarter 2003 earnings that were 13 percent, higher than fourth-quarter 2002 results.

Freight revenues for the fourth quarter increased $155 million to a record $2.46 billion compared with 2002 fourth-quarter revenues of $2.27 billion. Fourth-quarter freight revenues included fuel surcharges of $51 million compared with $14 million in the prior year.

Consumer Products revenues increased $123 million to a record $909 million reflecting increased volumes in the international, truckload and intermodal sectors. Industrial Products revenues rose $51 million to $542 million reflecting increased business in steel, taconite, clay and minerals in the construction products sector along with military, lumber and paper traffic in the building products sector.

For the quarter, BNSF’s operating ratio was 82.1 percent compared with 80.8 percent for the same quarter in 2002. For the full year, BNSF’s operating ratio was 82.1 percent compared with 81.3 percent in the prior year.

Canadian Pacific Railway

Canadian Pacific Railway said fourth-quarter profit rose nearly 40 percent as freight volumes hit new records and commodity exports in the West saw unprecedented growth helped take the sting out of a rising Canadian dollar.

For the quarter ended December 31, CPR reported net income of $175 million (Canadian), up from $120 millionin the same period a year earlier. For the full year, CP made $599 million compared with $406 million a year ago.

Operating income, excluding a loss on assets transferred to IBM Canada Ltd under an outsourcing agreement, was $225 million compared with $209 million in total. Operating income was cut by $24 million as a result of a stronger Canadian dollar. Revenue rose to $863.5 million from last year’s $850.4 million.

The revenue gains were linked to a recovery in the commodity sector that began late in the third quarter as well as an improved grain crop and strong Canadian dollar. Revenue rose to $863.5 million from last year’s $850.4 million.

It’s fourth quarter 2003 operating ratio was 76.6 percent. For the full year, CPR’s operating ratio was 79.5 percent, compared with 76.6 percent.

CSX Transportation

CSX reported that its fourth-quarter earnings fell about 10 percent, mainly on a restructuring charge stemming from the planned firing of up to 1,000 managers.

In the three months ended Dec. 31, the railroad and transportation company posted earnings of $123 million, compared to $137 million a year earlier.

Excluding the restructuring charge, earnings were $130 million. Revenues for the quarter were $1.85 billion, down from $2.06 billion a year earlier. The prior year included revenue of $138 million from an affiliated company that CSX no longer owns.

CSX said in November that the layoffs will cost $80 million to $85 million, which would be charged over six months. For the full year, CSX reported earnings of $246 million on revenues of $7.79 billion. That compared to earnings of $424 million on revenues of $8.15 billion in 2002.

CSX’s operating ratio, or ratio of costs-to-revenue, was 87.4 percent. That’s an improvement from 88 percent the previous quarter.

Kansas City Southern

Kansas City Southern reported net income of $11.2 million for the year ended Dec. 31, 2003, compared to $5.7 million for the year ended Dec. 31, 2002.

Excluding an adjustment in claims reserves of $21.1 million, KCS improved its operating income from $48.0 million in 2002 to $50.2 million in 2003. Based on preliminary results, earnings at its Mexican railroad (Grupo TFM) were $11.3 million in 2003 compared to $15.8 million in 2002. This decline resulted primarily from a $19 million reduction in the deferred tax benefit associated with $100 million in pre-tax gains from 2002 and a $53 million charge in the fourth quarter of the peso, which resulted in an approximate $34 million decline in Grupo TFM revenues.

For the fourth quarter of 2003, KCS reported a net loss of $6.2 million compared to net income of $20.4 million for the same 2002 period. The decrease in net income was primarily attributable to an increase in claims reserves of $12.5 million. Excluding this adjustment, net income for the fourth quarter 2003 would have been $7.3 million and operating income would have been 2.9% higher than the fourth quarter of 2002.

Union Pacific Corp.

Union Pacific’s profit jumped 46 percent in the fourth quarter, helped by the sale of its trucking business. UP earned $551 million ($12.12 per diluted share) for the quarter ended Decem- ber 31, up from $378 million ($4.41 per diluted share) in the same period a year earlier.

The 2003 quarterly results include $8.84 per diluted share, reflecting the record gain from the company’s sale of its Overnite subsidiary, as well as earnings from Overnite’s October operations. From continuing operations, the corporation earned $12.89 per diluted share in the fourth quarter of 2003 compared with $1.38 per diluted share in the fourth quarter of 2002.

For the year, net income increased to $1.6 billion from $1.3 billion in 2002. Revenue rose to $11.6 billion from $11.2 billion in 2002.

Fourth quarter commodity revenue showed an increase versus 2002. For the fourth quarter of 2003, intermodal revenues were up 13 percent, industrial products were up 9 percent, chemicals and energy were up 3 percent, agricultural was up 2 percent, and automotive was up 1 percent.

Of particular note is the fact that employee productivity at Union Pacific increased 5 percent for the full year, reaching an all-time record high of 22 million gross ton-miles moved per employee.

The railroad also boasted of a 4 percent increase in total operating revenue for the full year, which reached a record of $11.6 billion.

However, railroad Chairman Dillie Davidson told the Fort Worth Star Telegram that its fourth-quarter results were hampered by a lack of enough work- ers. He said delays and other service problems cost the railroad up to $30 million from October through December. He told the paper, “the problem was pure and simple — we didn’t have enough people.” He later told the Fort Worth newspaper that UP planned to hire as many as 3,200 train crew employees in 2004.

Union Pacific’s operating ratio for the fourth quarter was 90.1 percent, which was the same as the 2002 quarter. For the full year of 2003, the railroad’s operating ratio was 81.5 percent, compared to 79.8 percent in 2002.

Norfolk Southern

NS reported a fourth-quarter net income of $52 million compared to $129 million in the fourth quarter of 2002. The net income was reduced by two charges — a $6 million charge for a voluntary separation program and a $53 million charge to recognize the impaired value of certain telecommunications assets. Excluding these items, fourth-quarter income would have been $171 million.

Operating revenues were the highest in the railroad’s history. Fourth-quarter operating revenues were $2.46 billion, up 13 percent over the same quarter of 2002. For the year, revenues rose to $9.65 billion, three percent higher than 2002 re- sults. In the fourth quarter, intermodal revenues were a record $335 million. For the year, intermodal revenues also set a record at $1.2 billion.

The operating ratio was 87.4 percent compared with 87.8 percent in the same quarter of 2002. Without the cost of the voluntary separation program, the operating ratio would have been 80.1 percent for the 2003 fourth quarter and 81.9 percent for the full year.

Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen News · April 2004 Page 5
BLET calls for added freight, passenger rail security

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters Rail Conference responded to a March 22 announcement by Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge to step up security in the passenger rail industry.

“Unfortunately, it underscores this Administration’s failure to address the potentially greater threat posed by hazardous materials routed on rails through high target areas. The rail industry continues to put profits before security.”

Since 9/11, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has focused on heightening security measures in the airline industry while entrusting rail security concerns to railroad companies. Left to their own initiatives, the rail industry has implemented cost-cutting measures that have replaced federally certified locomotive engineers with remote control technology and left the railroad infrastructure - including rail yards, tracks, bridges and trestles vulnerable.

“It is critical for the Department of Homeland Security to re-evaluate its plan for the security of our railroad system — both freight and passenger,” said Don M. Hahn, National President of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET), a division of the Teamsters Rail Conference.

“Rail corporations have taken away the nation’s first line of defense by reducing the number of trained professionals — our eyes and ears — off of locomotives.”

The Department of Homeland Security’s own strategic plan emphasizes employees — stating, ‘Our most valuable asset is not new equipment or technology, but rather our dedicated and patriotic employees.’ However, the agency has yet to devise or implement stringent security measures on the rail corporations.

Caltrain aims for June opening of ‘baby bullet’

Caltrain soon will pull the trigger on the “baby bullet.” The much-anticipated express trains will begin zooming up and down the Peninsula in June after two years of work, $110 million, and some minor delays.

The launch will bring some of the most dramatic changes to the rail line in its 140-year history. Baby bullet service will shave the commute time between San Francisco and San Jose from 90 minutes to under an hour. At the same time, Caltrain will bring back weekend service, increase the number of trains it runs to the highest level ever, and totally rework its entire schedule.

Construction began on the baby bullet in July 2002 and is slated to wrap up in late April or early May. Caltrain will then inspect the work, familiarize its engineers with the new system, and set an exact date for the opening.

Passenger rail to halt at Boston's center will be shut down in the evenings during July’s Democratic Convention as security fears have worsened after the Madrid bombings.

The four-day convention, which starts on July 26, is taking place in the Fleet Center, which sits atop North Station. Boston police and the U.S. Secret Service said the station will be shut down on Friday, July 23 until the end of the convention.

Two subway lines, commuter trains to outlying towns and Amtrak passenger trains all use North Station, which serves about 24,000 commuters daily. Rail passengers will be ferried into the city from other stations by bus.

Interstate 93, a major artery which runs by the Fleet Center on Boston’s northern tip, will be closed to its daily 200,000 drivers in the evenings, although no firm hours have yet been set.

Fear of attacks has grown in the wake the March 11 train bombings in Madrid, which killed 191 commuters and injured 1,500.

Many Boston commuters were unimpressed by the plan and some said they plan to take that week off to avoid delays and gridlock on secondary roads into Boston.

The Republican Party will hold its convention ahead of this year’s presidential elections at New York’s Madison Square Garden. That arena sits above Pennsylvania Station, one of New York’s busiest commuter hubs.

MTA beefs up security

The MTA has nearly doubled its police budget over the last three years in an effort to beef up security at all its sprawling transportation network, guarding against a terror attack.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority will spend $91 million this year on payroll, training and equipment connected with its ever-growing police force — nearly double the $52 million the agency spent before 9/11.

The MTA has increased the total number of officers over the last four years from 521 in 2001 to 721 by the end of this year. The MTA now uses 692 uniformed and undercover officers to perform routine patrols around Grand Central Terminal and Penn Station.

The agency has also increased the number of cops assigned to securing the MTA’s outlying system, which includes transit hubs, two regional rail lines, seven bridges and two tunnels.

To deter potential terrorists from unleashing an attack, the MTA is being helped by New York and Connecticut state cops who have been assigned to ride Metro-North and Long Island Rail Road trains over the past few weeks.

Indiana Harbor Belt

The Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad Company is looking to hire approximately 10 federally certified Locomotive Engineers for current vacancies on its property.

Primary duties, responsibilities and qualifications:
- Must be highly knowledgeable in operating rules, NORAC rules, and Federal Railroad Administration safety standards;
- Must possess locomotive engineer certification in accordance with FRA regulations (CFR Part 240);
- Inspects locomotive before run to verify quantity of fuel, sand, water, flagging equipment, and other supplies, as required by federal regulations and carrier rules and policies;
- Complies with train orders, train signals and railroad rules and regulations to operate locomotive in an efficient manner following safety regulations and time schedule;
- Applies knowledge of territory, including terrain, grades, curves and grade crossings, in order to give prescribed warning signals and to otherwise operate train in a safe and efficient manner;
- Observes track to detect obstructions and to anticipate operating problems as required by federal or company rules;
- Remains constantly alert and maintains a state of readiness in order to respond appropriately to unusual conditions or circumstances;
- Schedule includes both day and night hours;
- Schedule has irregular hours with possibility of extended hours/ overtime;
- Variable hours per week result in variable income level with no set minimum; and
- Work is frequently performed out-of-doors involving exposure to weather conditions.

Indian Harbor Belt offers competitive salary and excellent benefits, including medical, dental, life insurance, 401(k) plan, tuition reimbursement, employee assistance program and credit union.

Send, e-mail or fax resume to:
Employment Officer
Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad
2721-161st Street
Hammond, IN 46323
Phone: (219) 989-4823
Fax: (219) 989-4823
Email: MaryKay.conley@ihbr.com

(Equal Opportunity Employer)
United Healthcare to hold open enrollment

During the month of May 2004, United Healthcare will hold an open enrollment under GA-23111. During this open enrollment, any individual eligible for coverage under one of the GA-23111 plans can enroll and will be accepted for coverage without any medical underwriting or requirement of good health. There are no limitations on pre-existing conditions. Enrollment in May 2004 will be for coverage effective June 1, 2004. Only those applicants who mail their Enrollment Form in May 2004, will be considered for open enrollment.

This open enrollment is being held:

- For persons already enrolled in GA-23111 who want to change their coverage from Plan D to Plan F (which has no prescription drug coverage) or from Plan F to Plan D. The next opportunity to change plans is scheduled for May 2006.
- For any individuals who were covered under any railroad health plan and were represented by a Railway Labor Union.
- For all individuals who are members in accordance with the constitution or by-laws of one of the participating railway labor organizations, when coverage under the employer group health plan which applies to them ends.

If someone you know meets the new GA-23111 eligibility provisions, open enrollment provides an opportunity for them to become covered. You may also enroll your spouse or eligible children if they are not currently covered. In addition, open enrollment under Plans D or F is available for your parent or parent-in-law.

Anyone interested in enrolling should call the following phone number to obtain an Enrollment Form or get additional information:
- For persons eligible for Medicare, call (800) 809-0453.
- For persons not eligible for Medicare, call (800) 542-5252.

The next open enrollment is planned for May 2006.

United Healthcare to issue new ID cards

In the latter part of April, BLET members covered by GA-23111 will be receiving new, laminated ID cards from United Healthcare. The cards will replace the paper card currently issued. In addition to being more durable, this new card has a magnetic strip on the back, which will allow medical providers to access UnitedHealthcare’s systems to determine deductible or co-pay amount. The new card lists all of your covered dependents, so you can use one card for all family members. You will receive only two of these ID cards for your family. If you require more cards, please call the customer service number provided on the card.

There will also be a new identification number on the ID card, replacing the Social Security Number. With the increasing concern about identity theft, UnitedHealthcare has taken this step to maintain your privacy.

They will also see this new ID number on all correspondence and Explanation of Benefits we send you. If you are not eligible for Medicare, you should point out your new ID number to all of your medical providers so they can submit bills to UnitedHealthcare under your new ID number.

If you are eligible for Medicare (covered under Plan D or Plan F), your medical providers will continue to use your current Medicare ID number (and not your new UnitedHealthcare ID number) to submit bills to Medicare.

New website available for health care information

www.myuhc.com

United Healthcare has launched a new website, www.myuhc.com, to help answer membership questions and concerns about their healthcare coverage.

All site features are free once enrollment is completed. BLET members and covered dependents can use www.myuhc.com to conduct a variety of transactions that have traditionally required a phone call or letter.

Features include:
- Verify eligibility, deductible or copay;
- View your benefits;
- Confirm that a claim has been paid or has been received;
- Print a temporary ID card or order a replacement ID Card;
- Search for in-network primary care physicians, specialists and hospitals;
- Compare hospitals based on quality and safety measures for procedures of interest to you;
- Find out the total cost of a treatment or condition in your area so you can plan for your health care costs;
- Take a free online Health Assessment to determine risky health habits and get a personalized action plan;
- Visit Optum Live and chat online with a Registered Nurse;
- Access your pharmacy, dental, or other benefits from the myuhc.com site;
- View and print your Explanation of Benefits instead of receiving mail; and
- Obtain in-depth information on health topics, procedures, and conditions.

Members will need to register at www.myuhc.com in order to have full access to all site features.

Improved vision care benefits now available

The new BLET National Agreement provides an improved vision care plan. Members were formerly covered by the Railroad Employees National Vision Plan, but are now covered by the VSP Standard Plan. This new plan is automatically available for any member working under the National Agreement. Among the improvements, the VSP Standard Plan increases frame allowances from $75 to $115, and pays for lenses up to 61 mm in full. The VSP Standard Plan also offers a more extensive network of providers.

A chart comparing the VSP Standard Plan with the former plan can be viewed on the BLET website at http://www.blet.org/pdf/vsp/vsp.pdf.
UTU evicted in Michigan
Non-affiliate thrown out of AFL-CIO building

Due to its unaffiliated status, the United Transportation Union (UTU) was evicted from its offices in the Michigan State AFL-CIO building in Lansing, Mich.

The Michigan AFL-CIO evicted the UTU’s Michigan Legislative Board effective January 1 after requests from the International Brotherhood of Teamsters Joint Council 43, IBT Local 614, and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen.

Brother Greg Powell, Chairman of the BLT Michigan State Legislative Board, notified the Michigan AFL-CIO of the UTU’s unaffiliated status in late 2003. He and Dave Fernald, First Vice Chairman of the BLT Michigan State Legislative Board, also held meetings with members of the Michigan AFL-CIO Executive Board.

Brother Powell thanked Cecil Powell, President of Teamster Local 614, and his Legislative Representative of Joint Council 43, for their assistance. The two bodies passed a resolution to withhold funds from the Michigan AFL-CIO until the unaffiliated union was evicted from the premises.

In early 2002, the Western Nebraska Central Labor Council voted unanimously to evict UTU representatives from its headquarters in Alliance, Neb., due to the UTU’s status as a non-affiliate.

The UTU withdrew from the national AFL-CIO on March 15, 2000, to avoid potential financial sanctions resulting from its constant raiding activities.

For example, self-reporting gives railroad companies too much leeway in determining what accidents are reported, and the ambiguity of current reporting guidelines will not permit conclusive findings.

In addition, under current reporting guidelines, specific accident and incident reports can be modified by the railroads even after the safety audit is conducted by FRA and the initial report is given to Congress.

TTD represents 35 member unions in the aviation, rail, transit, trucking, highway, longshore, maritime, and related industries.

A copy of the resolution is available on the BLET website at: http://www.blet.org/pr/pdf/remotecontrol.pdf

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