



NEWS

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Rail Labor fights to save Amtrak jobs

House Committee votes on legislation that would provide funding for passenger rail

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee approved two bills on April 27, H.R. 1630 and H.R. 1631, that would provide funding for Amtrak and would improve high-speed passenger rail.

H.R. 1630, also known as the Amtrak Reauthorization Act of 2005, would authorize \$2 billion in appropriations for the benefit of Amtrak for fiscal years 2006 through 2008. It was introduced by Representative Don Young of Alaska, Representative James Oberstar of Minnesota, Representative Steven La Tourette of Ohio and Representative Corrine Brown of Florida.

H.R. 1631, also known as the Rail Infrastructure Development and Expansion Act for the 21st Century (RIDE 21), establishes authority for states or interstate compacts to issue \$12 billion in federal tax-exempt bonds and \$12 billion in federal tax-credit bonds for infrastructure improvements for high-speed rail. It was also introduced by Representatives Young, Oberstar, LaTourette and Brown.

"Chairman Don Young and the committee's ranking Democrat, Jim Oberstar, turned away from all the

sound and fury coming out of the White House and the Amtrak Board and instead acted in the best interests of a nation clamoring for better — not worse — rail transportation. Both the traveling public and rail workers owe them a debt of gratitude for their leadership on today's votes," said Ed Wytkind, President of the AFL-CIO's Transportation Trades Department.

Last week the Amtrak Board of Directors — comprised exclusively of Bush campaign donors — turned on its own passengers and workers by echoing the White House call to break up Amtrak, privatize key routes, and pass along costs to cash-strapped states. The Board called for direct congressional interference in labor-management negotiations at Amtrak and for repeal of pension, disability, unemployment, survivor, and worker injury protections for thousands of Amtrak employees.

AFL-CIO rail unions have demanded the resignations of the Board's members.

"We need Board members who place a greater loyalty toward the traveling public than to the politi-

cians who put them there," Wytkind said.

Transportation labor helped craft H.R. 1630, and it is being promoted by the Amtrak Action Alliance, a task force formed by rail labor unions to save Amtrak.

"These bills go a long way to saving the jobs of our members on Amtrak," said BLET National President Don M. Hahs. "If Amtrak is forced into bankruptcy, our industry will suffer. The President's proposal and the proposal by the Amtrak Board are unacceptable to us, but these bills will provide the necessary financing to make our nation's passenger rail network run."

BLET members are urged to call their members of Congress and urge them to support this vital legislation. Up-to-the-minute information and copies of relevant documents can be found at the BLET Amtrak GCA's website <http://www.bletamt.org>.

Also, the BLET website at <http://www.ble-t.org> will provide regular updates on the unfolding situation as Rail Labor continues its crusade to secure Amtrak funding and to preserve union jobs. •

FRA Safety Advisory issued for reservoir tanks on some GE engines

Members cautioned as 'catastrophic failures' cited in four cases

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen's National Legislative Office in Washington, D.C., is warning its members of potential "catastrophic failures" in main air reservoir tanks of certain General Electric locomotives.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has also issued Safety Advisory 2005-02 to make the rail industry aware of the situation. Reservoir tanks hold compressed air used to charge the brakepipe for the train. Air is pumped to them until they reach a pressure of approximately 140 psi from the locomotive's air compressor.

The defective reservoir tanks were manufactured

by R&R Metal Fabricators, Inc., and installed in approximately 2,700 General Electric Transportation System (GETS) locomotives. A total of 5,826 suspect main reservoir tanks were manufactured from 1988 to 1995.

To date, four of them have failed catastrophically while in service. None of the failed reservoirs has resulted in any injuries. Additional tanks have been removed over the years due to leakage through welded seams.

Members can identify suspect main reservoirs by looking for a nameplate attached to the skin of the tank. They are found at eye to chest level on both sides of freight and passenger locomotives. They range in size of four to six feet in length and approximately

12-18 inches in diameter.

The FRA announced Safety Advisory 2005-02 through a notice in the Federal Register on April 20. General Electric has provided the FRA with a list of the 2,700 locomotives that are equipped with the suspect tanks.

Raymond Holmes, BLET Vice-President & National Legislative Representative, requests that all correspondence and questions regarding Safety Advisory 2005-02 should be sent to his office for handling. Members should call (202) 624-8776 or e-mail: holmes@ble.org.

A copy of Safety Advisory 2005-02 is available on the BLET website at: <http://www.ble-t.org/pr/pdf/safetyadvisory200502.pdf>

RCO claims another victim

UP switchman killed in second day on the job

A Union Pacific switchman was killed in a remote control switching accident in Riverdale, Utah, on April 11, underscoring the dangers of unregulated remote control train operations.

Early reports indicate that a lack of training may have contributed to the fatality, the latest in a string of serious remote control related accidents.

The victim in the accident — a 38-year-old switchman named Anthony L. Petersen — had eight months of total railroad experience at the time of the accident. It was only his second day on the job at Riverdale when he was killed.

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen has lobbied the Federal Railroad Administration for years to implement enforceable regulations to govern remote control train operations. Throughout its lobbying, the BLET has pushed the FRA to increase the amount of training that remote control operators receive.

"Right now remote control operators only get two weeks of training," BLET President Don Hahs said. "That's not enough and sadly, Anthony L. Petersen paid the ultimate price for this lack of oversight."

It is believed that the switchman, who was not wearing a beltpack device, was riding on the side of a rail car when he fell and was run over.

President Hahs said the lack of enforceable safety regulations may have contributed to the fatality.

"Had there been enforceable regulations on the books that required adequate training of remote control operators, then this accident may not have happened," President Hahs said. "It is a terrible tragedy and our thoughts and prayers are with the victim's family."

Remote control operators normally receive only 80 hours of training — 40 hours of classroom training and 40 hours of

See Remote Control, Page 7

BLET NEWS

Me thinks thou dost protest too much (Shakespeare), or

Will the real Paul Thompson please stand up!

Bringing to light many inconsistencies in recent messages from the UTU President

By Ed Rodzicz

First Vice President

Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen

The BLET has no interest or intent in continuing to respond to the UTU over the same old, tired, worn out issues that their leaders continue to bring up. However, on March 3, 2005, UTU International President Paul Thompson issued a letter addressed to All Local Presidents, All Secretary-Treasurers and All Local Chairpersons on the Norfolk Southern property. In this letter, Paul Thompson refers to various issues and makes several allegations in connection with the representation of trainmen on the Norfolk Southern Railroad. His misleading comments and distortion of the truth demand one final response to set the record straight.

Before getting into the details of Paul Thompson's March 3 letter, it should be noted that several years ago the UTU hired a master of spin doctoring, Frank Wilner, in its Public Relations Department. Prior to being hired by the UTU, Wilner was the Director of Information and Public Affairs for the Association of American Railroads (AAR). In 1991, while working for AAR, Wilner made some interesting comments in publications regarding rail labor and the need for carriers to have more flexibility with their employees. Some of Wilner's comments were:

"Not surprisingly, output measurements have soared. However, subsequent increases in wages and fringe benefits to remaining rail workers have dissipated much of the cost savings."

"This handicap might be surmountable were it not for restrictive union-imposed work rules that compel excess employment and impede flexibility in assignment of workers."

"In the railroad industry, where antiquated work rules and distorted levels of compensation are impeding efficiency, reform is urgent."

"Existing restrictive work rules prevent railroads from using those remaining employees more efficiently, which is essential if the rail industry is to prosper during the 1990s."

"Minimum crew size is an albatross for all major railroads. Generally, as many as four workers - most often three - are assigned to each train, when no more than two - sometimes, one - are necessary."

"Carriers should have the flexibility to assign employees any work - regardless of craft or job assignment - for which they are

properly trained so as to maximize utilization of worker skills, expedite freight movements, improve asset utilization and enrich customer service."

"Equity and efficiency demand Congress move to merge railroaders into existing state no-fault workers' compensation plans covering other private sector workers."

"Does Paul Thompson have a creative memory, an absence of memory or a memory void of truth?"

You decide!

— Ed Rodzicz, BLET First Vice-President

Wilner's comments from 1991, do not sound like they come from a man whose interest is in promoting wages, benefits and the rights of railroad workers. Why would an international rail union employ a person such as Frank Wilner when his views are so pro-rail carrier and anti-rail worker?

Turning now to Paul Thompson's letter of March 3rd, he states that UTU general committee offices have received "numerous telephone calls from BLET local chairpersons stating they personally did not support the A-card drive on NS." Who are these BLET local chairmen, Paul Thompson? It is easy to state "numerous BLET local chairpersons" but identifying them, or the divisions which they represent, could possibly add some credibility to his statement, which has no credibility in its current form. Paul Thompson also states that "BLET officers are harassing and intimidating UTU members on NS property." While I doubt the veracity of such a statement, we, in no way, condone such behavior.

In the second page of Paul Thompson's letter, he raises issues such as the Soo Line strike in 1994, the agreement on Montana Rail Link concerning use of remote control locomotives and the VIA Rail issue. He also states that the BLE agreed to work without firemen back in 1964, but he fails to state that the October 31, 1985 UTU National Agreement completely eliminated the craft of firemen.

As far as the Soo Line issue is concerned, in 1994 the UTU went on strike against the Soo Line. There were four issues in the UTU's negotiation demands that would adversely affect engineers. Then-BLET International President Ronald McLaughlin advised UTU International President Tom Dubose that those four issues would have to be withdrawn in order for the BLE to continue honoring the

UTU's strike. President Dubose refused to withdraw those issues which pertained to the exercise of engineer's seniority, exclusive representation, a requirement that engineers pay dues to the UTU to protect trainmen seniority and placing the conductor totally in charge of the train, including the activities of the locomotive engineer. BLE members honored the UTU

Pacific chose Teamsters Canada Rail Conference as their representative over the UTU. The UTU/VIA Rail rhetoric was certainly not a factor in that representation election.

And while we are addressing issues involving Canadian operations, it should be noted that on the Quebec North Shore and Labrador Railway (QNSLR) the UTU represents both engineers and trainmen. The QNSLR operates engineer-only trains through an agreement with the UTU. On November 7, 1996, the UTU signed an agreement with the QNSLR that eliminated all conductors and trainmen. This agreement provided that engineers would assume all duties and responsibilities formerly performed by conductors and trainmen. The implementation of this agreement caused approximately 49 employees to become surplus. These are the facts; yet, Paul Thompson tries to convince people that the UTU is the only union that will protect their jobs. Maybe one should ask some of the surplus employees that lost their jobs on the QNSLR as a result of the UTU agreement, what they think about his claim to fame.

The agreement on Montana Rail Link which Mr. Thompson refers to has resulted in most trains on MRL operating with three-person crews. Each crew must have a certified locomotive engineer. Where are the job losses you refer to on this property, Paul?

In previous articles and letters, UTU officers have stated that the UTU offered the BLE 50 percent of the remote control jobs. They do not tell the readers that this offer would have required the BLE to merge with the UTU. Our membership expressed their desire on the issue of merging with the UTU - 70 percent voted against merging and 30 percent voted in favor of merging. The Letter of Intent dated September 26, 2001, which authorized the use of remote control, signed by the UTU and the carriers states, "Operation of remote control technology pursuant to this Letter with respect to assignments covered hereunder will be assigned to employees represented by the United Transportation Union." Does that sound like the UTU was agreeable to giving the BLE 50 percent of the remote control work?

Another glaring problem for the UTU leadership appears to be its inconsistency. For example, in 1991, Paul Thompson and other UTU officers opposed exclusive representation. In fact, in a letter dated January 21, 1991 addressed to the UTU National Negotiating Committee (G.T. Dubose, J.M. Brunkenhoefer, L.W. Swert and C.L. Little) Paul

strike on that property from July 25th through August 24th when President Dubose refused to withdraw those provisions that were adverse to locomotive engineers. The dispute was ultimately resolved by Presidential Emergency Board No. 12455. Of the four issues President McLaughlin demanded to be removed from the UTU's demands, the Board only granted the UTU the right to implement seniority maintenance fees if the BLE implemented exclusive representation. The Board did not even address the other three issues raised by the UTU in its submission to the Board.

As far as the BLE agreeing to work without firemen in 1964, the elimination of firemen began with the issuance of the infamous 282 Award. This Award allowed carriers to operate some trains without firemen. The BLE merely made an agreement to compensate the engineer for the additional duties and responsibilities that would be required of the engineer when working without a fireman. This provision is very similar to the numerous provisions in UTU agreements that have eliminated brakemen positions, firemen positions, switchmen positions and flagmen positions for additional compensation to the remaining train crew members.

The accusations by Paul Thompson concerning VIA Rail can best be answered by stating that this case is in the hands of the Canadian Industrial Relations Board (CIRB) with the final outcome yet to be determined. However, it is a complete fabrication by the UTU when they state that 230 conductors on VIA Rail will each receive \$230,000. When BLET learns of the final outcome of this case, BLET membership will be immediately informed.

The VIA Rail dispute began in 1997. In 2004, after the VIA Rail issue, 2,800 UTU members on Canadian

An Engineer's reflection on managing fatigue

It will take Labor and management working together in good faith to eliminate problem

By Mark K. Ricci, Ph.D.
Chairman, Washington State
Legislative Board, Brotherhood
of Locomotive Engineers and
Trainmen

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET), the United Transportation Union (UTU) and representatives from all major railroads operating in the United States have joined forces to implement an integrated fatigue management plan for the entire rail industry.

In the past, this Work/Rest Task Force actively employed the good faith efforts of many labor and management representatives. However, the efforts of the last decade did not produce the mitigation of fatigue necessary to foster a desired level of

safe railroad operation and did not address the level of fatigue experienced by operating employees.

On Feb. 16, 2005, railroad officers and labor leaders issued a statement of principles designed to invigorate fatigue management efforts in the US using fatigue management plans. Much of the current work has built on the successes of labor and management in the late 1990's with one major difference: the adoption of a concept of a "continuous improvement process." In scientific terms, this means evaluating existing and new processes and collaborating (management and labor) to design processes that improve fatigue mitigation and provide a safer railroad operation. In a Hoghead's language it means taking the call, setting out the bad

orders, and highballing again.

Like you, I know that the train is not ready to move until the brakes have been checked, the power is ready, and the signal is a high green. This is the same idea that is going to provide a workable fatigue management plan to mitigate unsafe levels of railroad worker fatigue.

The difference in the current attempt to address fatigue is the willingness to evaluate the effects of the fatigue mitigation efforts, get rid of what does not work, and try new strategies that have been shown to work in other locations. Evaluation is the key difference between the effort adopted on February 16, 2005, by labor and management and all previous attempts to address fatigue. Further, since evaluation must be

integrated into the process from the very beginning, engineers do not need to wait five years to determine if this is going to be a success or a failure. Engineers are going to know within months if these strategies are "loading or just idling."

Management and Labor working together in good faith will give individual railroad workers the ability to retain the greatest number of options possible to address their individual experience of fatigue. Unfortunately, given the history of railroad worker fatigue, accidents investigated by the NTSB, and ongoing research, this is perhaps the last best hope for an industry inspired solution before a public call for action imposes a fatigue solution that may not be empathetic to railroad culture. •

BLET News Analysis

DOT report blasts FRA on safety enforcement, inspections

But will railroads continue to receive a free pass when it comes to remote control operations?

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Inspector General issued a report in February ordering the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to overhaul the way it conducts its safety inspections.

According to an article in the February 10 issue of the *New York Times*, the Inspector General ordered the FRA to overhaul its railroad safety inspection program because of "substantial and systemic safety problems" at Norfolk Southern, CSX, Union Pacific, and BNSF Railway.

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the Inspector General's report concluded that the FRA's current railroad safety inspection program is too subjective, and that in the fall of 2005, the FRA will begin placing a greater emphasis on using safety, inspection and enforcement data to decide how and where to inspect. The report also concludes that if the FRA were to fine railroads more heavily, then it might help resolve safety deficiencies.

While BLET applauds the Inspector General's in-

vestigation, we believe that the FRA will continue to give the nation's railroads a free pass when it comes to the questionable practice of operating locomotives by remote control. The problem is the absence of enforceable regulations for remote control.

For example, FRA Safety Advisory 2001-01, which offers recommended guidelines for the operation of trains by remote control, prohibits remote control operators from riding on moving cars. But because this is just a recommendation, some railroads allow their employees to ride on cars while others don't. Some remote control operators have been hurt — even killed — while riding on moving equipment, but there is no way the FRA can prohibit it without an enforceable regulation.

But because the railroads are not violating any Federal safety regulations by allowing remote control operators to ride on moving equipment, an accident or injury caused by such a maneuver would not be recorded as a violation.

FRA safety data is based on investigations at railroads to observe specific violations of the Code of Federal Regulations. Since there is no enforceable regulation in the code to violate, the FRA's safety data will be flawed when it comes to remote control.

The BLET's ongoing opposition to remote control is based on the absence of federal regulations proscribing safety of design, inspection and testing requirements of remote control equipment. Since the equipment and the operations are not covered by regulations, the FRA would likely have no enforcement tools and, subsequently, no data to expose problems with onboard equipment or operator control units or transmitters.

When the FRA begins its new approach to safety investigations in the fall of this year, it will target railroads and operating practices based on statistical information. We can only hope the FRA will not overlook the hazards of remote control switching, in spite of its flawed data collection system. •

Paul Thompson

Continued from Page 2

Thompson, whose signature is the first on this letter, and other UTU officers, chastised the Negotiating Committee members for not opposing exclusive representation. The letter states in pertinent part:

"There can be no explanation for your incompetence.... Why don't you do the only thing you could do as an apology to those engineers and the members of the UTU as a whole, RESIGN. You have proven you are not qualified to hold any office in the United Transportation Union."

However, on November 1, 2004, Paul Thompson signed a Letter of Intent with the carriers that grants the UTU exclusive representation of trainmen and requires BLET members to pay maintenance fees to the UTU in order to maintain their seniority as a trainman. He refuses to allow BLET

members who are working as trainmen to be represented by their chosen representative — the BLET local chairmen. Paul Thompson insists that grievance and discipline matters involving employees working in train service be handled exclusively by the UTU representatives.

Rumors persist that the NCCC granted the UTU exclusivity and seniority maintenance through the November 1, 2004 Letter of Intent (LOI) in exchange for the UTU agreeing to open national negotiations on the issue of a reduction in crew consist requirements. Allegedly, UTU leaders acted in a retromingent manner after the LOI was implemented by taking the position crew consist would have to be negotiated with the individual general committees rather than through national negotiations. Hence, the lawsuit filed by UTU in U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Illinois to "defend crew consist and FELA."

If this rumor is not true, it would be very easy to put it to bed. Paul Thompson could request a letter from NCCC Chairman Robert Allen and the

vice presidents of labor relations from the railroads represented by the NCCC, stating that this is not true.

By the way Paul, at the CRLO meetings in February of this year, you notified all of the rail labor union presidents in attendance the UTU would submit a proposal to the NCCC that would "eliminate frivolous FELA lawsuits." The BLET believes there is already a system in place to determine if a FELA lawsuit is frivolous — it's called the judicial process. Nonetheless Paul, why not share the "proposal" with all of rail labor.

In summary, the March 3, 2005 letter issued by Paul Thompson can only be described as artful rhetoric. In fact, the subject which led to his letter — a possible A-card drive on Norfolk Southern property — has arisen at the request of UTU represented employees on that property.

Does Paul Thompson have a creative memory, an absence of memory or a memory void of truth? You decide! •

BLET NEWS

Fund established to help son of BLET member

Jonathan Miller has suffered for years after injury in Marine Corps after 9-11

One month after September 11, 2001, 20-year-old Jonathan Miller was in the United States Marine Corps.

The son of a BLET member, Jonathan was training to help defend his country. But in October of 2001, he stopped to help a fellow recruit pick up his gear. Little did he know that that simple act of kindness would have a profound impact on his health and could possibly lead to paralysis.

As Jonathan picked up the gear, he felt a sharp pain in his neck that shot all the way down to his lower back. At first, his military superiors simply told him to "drink more water." But as many BLET members know, a neck and back injury should never be taken lightly.

Jonathan progressed through the Corps in spite of the pain, but as his back injury became worse and worse, he was reassigned to a medical rehab platoon where he received medical, sports medicine and physical therapy treatment from the Navy.

But due to the severity of the injury and his lack of improvement, he was

given an honorable discharge in September of 2002.

Upon discharge, Jonathan was instructed to seek medical treatment through the Veterans Administration (VA). What followed was nearly three full years of getting the run-around, misdiagnoses, and the deterioration of his health.

"I don't have to tell too many people the VA system is grossly mismanaged," said Brother James Kinsman, chairman of the BLET's Wisconsin State Legislative Board. He is friends with Jonathan Miller as well as his father, Tommy Miller, the BLET's Director of Organizing.

Jonathan has been unable to find a decent job because of his injury, and he does not qualify for his father's medical plan through the railroad. However, Brother Miller has used money from his own pocket to pay for his son to see civilian doctors and specialists in back and neck injuries.

Brother Kinsman has stepped in to create a fund for Jonathan to help with

his mounting medical bills.

"Tommy Miller is a proud man who doesn't like asking for help," Brother Kinsman said. "He hates for this to happen, but a Brother shouldn't go bankrupt taking care of his kids."

His civilian doctors have confirmed at least one herniated disk in addition to the deterioration of other disks. The doctors are recommending immediate treatment, therapy and medication for Jonathan. However, the VA is balking at the diagnosis and has come up with its own treatment plan.

"The VA continues to ignore and neglect my case even after vast amounts of medical evidence have been presented," Jonathan Miller wrote. "They continue to ignore this even after a re-evaluation has been requested."

"One example of their negligence is mailing harmful psychotropic drugs to me such as Amitriptyline, which is used for the treatment of depression. I have never complained of such symptoms and I feel it is dangerous to treat my physical injuries with unrelated

medications. I am not depressed, but I am in danger of paralysis."

Brother Kinsman is hoping BLET members, as well as our Teamster Brothers and Sisters, will support the Miller family as they seek proper treatment for Jonathan.

"The pain has long been unmanageable and my need is not to manage pain, so much as to immediately repair the injury," Jonathan said. "The VA has refused to fill prescriptions given by my civilian doctor. As a result, to obtain proper prescriptions when financial means are available, I have had to pay out of pocket, and suffer when I have not had the means to fill the prescriptions."

Brother Kinsman has established a fund for those willing to help Jonathan and the Miller family. Donations may be sent to:

**Jonathan Miller Relief Fund
Northwest Georgia Bank
5063 Alabama Highway
Ringgold, GA 30736**

Annual Western General Chairmen's meeting concludes

The annual BLET Western General Chairmen Association's meeting concluded in Las Vegas on April 6.

The annual meeting is designed for the general sharing of information and planning the future direction of the Brotherhood. Its members are the General Chairmen who represent railroads in the western United States, but General Chairmen from eastern railroads and officers of the BLET National Division are often invited to participate.

The BLET Executive Committee represented the National Division at this year's WGCA meeting, including National President Don Hahs, First Vice-President Ed Rodziewicz, and National Secretary-Treasurer Bill Walpert.

Brother Dennis Pierce, General Chairman from the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe/MRL, is the Chairman of

the Western General Chairmen's Association.

President Hahs led a roundtable discussion on the Brotherhood's participation in the Rail Labor Bargaining Coalition (RLBC). President Hahs discussed the general makeup of RLBC, which consists of six other unions and the IBT, and the ongoing negotiating process.

President Hahs also discussed the uncertainty regarding Amtrak funding and emphasized the need for a strong source of funding for the national passenger railroad. "We need to end the yearly budget crisis that plagues Amtrak," he said. "Our nation needs rail transportation to be on solid footing."

The General Chairmen also heard a presentation from John Murphy, Director of Teamsters' Rail Conference.

He generally described the Procedure by which General Committees would elect delegates to the upcoming 2006 IBT Convention.

Cheryl Johnson, special assistant to General President Jim Hoffa brought greetings from the General President and gave an overview of the services and staff available to BLET members (i.e. communications, research, education, organizing) as part of the merger. "We welcome our rail members and invite you to attend our meetings, especially our upcoming Unity Conference in Las Vegas May 8-9," Johnson said.

Also as part of the meeting, Western General Chairmen's Association officers were elected. General Chairman Pierce was re-elected as Chairman of the Association, General Chairman Gil Gore (UP Southern Region) was re-elected as Vice Chairman and General

Chairman Mike Priester (CP/Soo Line) was re-elected as Secretary Treasurer.

Following the meeting, Brother Pierce reported that the Association discussed many serious issues confronting BLET while they were convened and that those discussions were conducted in a manner that allowed all General Chairmen present to participate in direct and candid conversations with the officers of the National Division and the officers representing IBT.

"While the items we discussed were certainly serious, our open and honest discussions provided the kind of fellowship that can only strengthen BLET as we move ahead," Chairman Pierce said. He also offered his thanks on behalf of the Association to all of the officers and staff of the National Division and IBT that were able to attend and join in the meeting. •

BLET mourns loss of dedicated member, Division 404's Ted Myhre

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen lost one of its own in December when Brother Theodore "Ted" Myhre Sr., a retired member of BLET Division 404 (Chicago), died while performing his duties as a volunteer fireman for the Bishop Hill, Ill., fire department.

Brother Myhre joined the BLE on July 1, 1967. He worked as a locomotive engineer for the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad for 30 years and retired in 1995. During his time with the railroad, he served as an engineer trainer who helped many trainees on the road to becoming locomotive engineers, including BLET Vice-President

Rick Radek. He also served for a few years as a Road Foreman at Altoona, Wisconsin.

"Ted always took pride in his craft, and he was always a patient instructor and mentor to the young engineers assigned to him," said Vice-President Radek. "Whether it was the railroad, his church, the civil air patrol or, after his retirement, the volunteer fire department, Ted was most about helping others. He will sincerely be missed."

He had been a volunteer fireman for about five years when he was killed in December. Brother Myhre and his fire company responded to an auto accident, and were then told that they were not needed. However, Brother

Myhre got out of the fire truck to help direct traffic and was struck by a passing motorist.

"He loved retirement and keeping busy," wrote his wife, Lynne, in a letter to Vice President Radek. "He absolutely loved being a volunteer firefighter here in Bishop Hill. One reason is that he got to drive the big pumper truck and he certainly knew a lot about being called out at all hours!"

About 40 of his fellow firefighters from various departments turned out to honor Brother Myhre at his funeral in Galva, Ill. The funeral was held the day before Christmas, but the firefighters braved the five degree

weather to honor Brother Myhre.

"He was a good member, very active in the community, a very nice fellow and was always on the go," said Bishop Hill Fire Chief Jack Hawkins.

Brother Myhre served in the Iowa National Guard during the Korean War. He was a member of the Bishop Hill Heritage Association, serving on its board and as its treasurer, and he was also active with the Galva Arts Council.

Brother Myhre is survived by his wife, Lynne; three sons, David, Michael and Theodore Jr.; two step-children, Deborah Boyle and John Van Arsdall; six grandchildren and two step-grandchildren. •

BLET completes Secretary-Treasurer training

The BLET's Education & Training Department recently completed a series of educational workshops throughout the United States to demonstrate the Brotherhood's new dues reporting system for Secretary-Treasurers.

Changes to the reporting system became necessary following implementation of the BLET's new constitution

after its merger with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

It is now one of the most sophisticated and advanced reporting systems used by a labor union today. Gone are the days of tedious paperwork and hardcopy files. The new system is completely Internet-based. Money is transferred electronically and instantly

from one bank account to another.

Dozens of Secretary-Treasurers attending the intensive workshops to gain first hand experience using the new software. The workshops were conducted by Bill Walpert, BLET National Secretary-Treasurer; Dr. Elaine Reese, Director of the BLET's Office of

Tax Compliance; Bob Broka, BLET Director of Records; Walt Schmidt, BLET Director of Online Services and Webmaster; and Ken Kroeger, Coordinator of the BLET's Education & Training Department.

More information on the new ST filing system will appear in the next issue of the *Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen Journal*. •

Chicago



Seated, from left: James Carlson, ST, Div. 77; Brian Hackett, ST, Div. 458; Edward Patterson, S-T, Div. 36; Brett Rohlfis, ST, Div. 251; Bill Walpert, National Secretary Treasurer; Ken Kroeger, Coordinator of Education and Training; and Kevin Van Linden, ST, Div. 683

Standing, from left: Gene Imler, Special Representative, Div. 74; Ralph Schall, ST Div. 1; Bob Broka, Director Records Department; Walt Schmidt, Director of Online Services and Webmaster; James Alcorn, ST, Div. 270; Jim Gibson, ST, Div. 520; Mark Webb, ST, Div. 391; Caroline Kaser, ST, Div. 474; Jack Huddleston Jr., ST, Div. 602; Gary Zahorchak, ST, Div. 757; Dr. Elaine Reese, Director, Office of Tax Compliance; Aaron Lindner, Alternate ST, Div. 682; Gary Myers, ST, Div. 301; Forrest Kirkman, ST, Div. 850; Curtis Hockman, ST, Div. 266; Rachel Everson, ST, Div. 13; and Bill Bowen, ST, Div. 343

Denver



Seated, from left: Marlon Taylor, President, Div. 214; Bill Walpert, National Secretary Treasurer; and Ken Kroeger, Coordinator of Education and Training.

Standing, from left: John Bove, ST, Div. 269; Tom Brewer, ST, Div. 103; Daniel Sisneros, ST, Div. 142; Ian Lydic, ST, Div. 624; Walt Schmidt, BLET Webmaster/Director of Online Services; Greg Sherry, ST, Div. 488; Cory Carroll ST, Div. 117., Edwin Hernandez, Alternate ST, Div. 505; Eric Eckart, ST, Div. 160; Bob Broka, Director Records Department; Dr. Elaine Reese, Director, Office of Tax Compliance; James Thompson, ST, GCA and Div. 115; Chris Lamden, Alternate ST, Div. 430; Tom Beardslee, ST, Div. 430; Jon Stokes, ST, Div. 213; Chris Russell, ST, Div. 115; Steve Owens, ST, 133; Martin McCune, ST, Div. 623; Kenneth E. Pearson Jr., ST, Div. 505; Daniel Lyon, ST, Div. 44, and Max Noel, ST, Div. 940. (Not Pictured: Jim Wilmesher, ST Colorado SLB, Div. 256).

Kansas City



Seated, from left: Bob Broka, Director Records Department; Ken Kroeger, Coordinator of Education and Training; Bill Walpert, National Secretary Treasurer; Jeff Vogt, ST, Div. 98 and Nebraska SLB; Kevin Leyerle, ST, Division 81.

Standing, from left: Richard Conner, ST, Div. 578; James Loucks, ST, Div. 721; David Battle, ST, Div. 62; Bob Helling, ST, Div. 587; Steve Diamond, ST, Div. 491; Elmo Hansen, ST, Div. 6; Ray Cornelison, ST, Div. 64; Rick Winters, ST, West Virginia SLB; Rich Dame, ST, Kansas SLB; Cheryl Isom, ST, Div. 930; Michael Zenner, ST, Div. 130; Jayson Hess, ST, Div. 86; John Mullen, BLET Shortline Director; James Ussery, ST, Div. 834 and Texas SLB; Leonard Scheufler, ST, Div. 344; Charles Lacy, ST, Div. 135; James Evans, ST, Div. 527; and Tony Brown, ST, Div. 857. (Not Pictured: Dr. Elaine Reese, Director, Office of Tax Compliance; Walt Schmidt, Webmaster/Director of Online Services; Phil Myers, ST, Div. 777; Mark Whitchurch, ST, Div. 24 and IC GCA; Steve Jackson, ST, NS Northern Lines GCA.

San Francisco



Seated, from left: Tom Voelker, ST, Div. 104; Curtis Houston, ST, Div. 415; Daniel Klitzing, ST, Div. 65; Bill Walpert, National Secretary Treasurer; and Ken Kroeger, Coordinator of Education and Training

Standing, from left: Alan Newton, ST, Div. 660; P.L. McDaniels, ST, Div. 794 and Nevada SLB; Dr. Elaine Reese, Director, Office of Tax Compliance; Stan Porch, ST, Div. 446; Michael Conner, ST, Div. 692; Richard Hess, ST, Div. 5; Michael Mulkeen, ST, Div. 71; Jeffrey Valentine, ST, Div. 158; David Davenport, ST, Div. 309; Walt Schmidt, Webmaster/Director of Online Services; Jose Rivas, ST, Div. 214; Bob Broka, Director Records Department; Dave Ditzel, Special Representative; and William Byrd, ST, Div. 398.

BLET NEWS

How other pensions impact Railroad Retirement

Railroad Retirement Act employee annuities are subject to dual benefit reductions when social security benefits are also payable; and, they may be subject to reduction when certain public, non-profit or foreign pension payments are also due a retired employee.

The following questions and answers describe how railroad retirement annuities are affected when retired rail employees are also entitled to pensions from employers not covered by railroad retirement or social security.

1. When was the noncovered service pension reduction in employee annuities legislated and how did it come about?

The noncovered service pension reduction in railroad retirement benefits was introduced by 1983 social security legislation which also applied to the tier I benefits of railroad retirement employee annuities.

Social security and railroad retirement tier I benefits replace a percentage of a worker's pre-retirement earnings. The formula used to compute benefits includes factors that ensure lower-paid workers get a higher return than highly-paid workers. For example, lower-paid workers could get a social security or tier I benefit that equals about 55 percent of their pre-retirement earnings. The average replacement rate for highly-paid workers is about 25 percent. Before 1983, such benefits for people who worked in jobs not covered by railroad retirement or social security were computed as if they were long-term, low-wage workers. They received the advantage of the higher percentage benefits in addition to their other pension. The modified formula eliminated this advantage.

2. In general terms, which employees are affected by this reduction and what types of benefits would cause a reduction?

For employees first eligible for a railroad retirement annuity and a Federal, State or local government pension after 1985, there may be a reduction in their tier I benefits for receipt of a public pension based, in part or in whole, on employment not covered by social security or railroad retirement after

1956. This may also apply to certain other payments not covered by railroad retirement or social security, such as from a non-profit organization or from a foreign government or a foreign employer. It includes both periodic payments, as well as lump-sum payments made in lieu of periodic payments. It does not include military service pensions, payments by the Department of Veterans Affairs, or certain benefits payable by a foreign government as a result of a totalization agreement between that government and the United States.

3. If a noncovered service pension reduction is required in a railroad retirement employee annuity, how would it be applied?

Unlike the dual benefit offset for social security entitlement applied by deducting the amount of the social security benefit from the annuitant's tier I railroad retirement benefit, an alternate factor is used in the tier I benefit computation of annuitants with such pensions.

A tier I benefit is calculated in the same way as a social security benefit. In computing a tier I benefit, an employee's creditable earnings are adjusted to take into account the changes in wage levels over a worker's lifetime. This procedure, called indexing, increases creditable earnings from past years to reflect average national wage levels at the time of the employee's retirement. The adjusted earnings are used to calculate the employee's "average indexed monthly earnings" and a formula is applied to determine the gross tier I amount.

This benefit formula has three levels. Each level of earnings is multiplied by a specified percentage. The first level of earnings is multiplied by 90 percent, the second by 32 percent, and the final level by 15 percent. The results are added to obtain the basic benefit rate. For those first eligible in 2005, the gross tier I benefit is equal to: 90 percent of the first \$627 of average indexed monthly earnings, plus 32 percent of the amount of those earnings over \$627

up to \$3,779, plus 15 percent of those earnings in excess of \$3,779.

Beginning with 1986, a reduction in the 90 percent factor was phased in until, for employees subject to the noncovered service pension reduction and who became eligible in 1990 or later, the 90 percent factor is reduced to as low as 40 percent. For example, an employee born in 1943 is eligible for a noncovered service pension and has 20 years of railroad service. Her

railroad retirement annuity begins with the first full month she is age 62 and her average indexed monthly earnings are \$1,800. She would receive, after the reduction for early retirement, a tier I benefit of \$472.11, rather than the \$708.17 otherwise payable.

However, for employees with relatively low noncovered service pensions, there is a guarantee that the amount of the reduction in tier I cannot be more than 50 percent of the pension.

4. Are there any provisions exempting retired railroad employees who also receive noncovered service pensions from this reduction?

Railroad retirement employee annuitants also receiving a noncovered service pension who attained age 62 before 1986, or who became entitled to a railroad retirement disability annuity before 1986 and remained entitled to it in any of the 12 months before attaining age 62 (even if the employee attained age 62 after 1985) are not affected by the noncovered service pension reduction.

Railroad retirement employee annuitants who received, or were eligible to receive, their noncovered service pensions before 1986 would not be affected. They are considered eligible if they met the requirements of the pension plan before January 1986, even if they continued to work.

The reduction also does not apply to:

- Federal workers hired after December 31, 1983;
- Persons employed on December 31, 1983, by a nonprofit organization

that was exempt from social security and became mandatorily covered under social security on that date;

- Railroad employees whose pensions are based entirely on noncovered employment before 1957; and

- Railroad employees eligible for a noncovered service pension who have 30 or more years of "substantial railroad retirement and/or social security earnings." They are generally exempt from the reduction. Also, employees with 21 to 29 years of substantial earnings may be subject to a lesser reduction. In such cases, the 90 percent factor is reduced in increments of 5 percent, providing factors ranging from 85 percent for employees with 29 years of substantial earnings to 45 percent for those with 21 years.

5. What is considered a year of "substantial earnings" for purposes of exempting a person from the reduction for a noncovered service pension?

A year of "substantial earnings" is not the same as a year of service. For 1951-78, the amount of earnings needed for a year of coverage is 25 percent of the annual social security maximum creditable earnings bases in effect for those years. For years after 1978, the amounts are 25 percent of what the maximum earnings bases would have been if the 1977 social security amendments had not been enacted. For example, in 1975, earnings of \$3,525 would be considered a year of substantial earnings; in 1985, earnings of \$7,425 would be needed; in 1995, earnings of \$11,325; and in 2005, earnings of \$16,725.

6. Are any reductions made in railroad retirement spouse or widow(er)s' benefits if a public service pension is also payable?

Yes. The tier I portion of a spouse or widow(er) annuity may also be reduced for receipt of any Federal, State or local pension separately payable to the spouse or widow(er) based on her or his own earnings. The reduction generally does not apply if the employment on which the public pension is based was covered under the Social Security Act throughout the last 60 months of public employment. (This 60-month requirement is being phased in over a 5-year period ending March 1, 2009, and there are some exceptions.) Most military service pensions and payments from the Department of Veterans Affairs will not cause a reduction. For spouses and widow(er)s subject to the public pension reduction, the tier I reduction is equal to 2/3 of the amount of the public pension.

7. Where can more specific information on how noncovered pensions affect railroad retirement benefits be obtained?

For more information, individuals who may be affected should contact the nearest office of the Railroad Retirement



2005 Railroad Retirement Board Informational Conferences

The U.S. Railroad Retirement Board will offer free informational conferences for elected officers of all rail labor unions throughout 2005.

Registration for all informational conferences begins at 8 a.m. The programs begin promptly at 8:30 a.m. and end at 12:30 p.m.

May 13 • Smyrna, Ga.
Holiday Inn Express Vinings/
Smyrna
1200 Westchester Dr.

May 13 • Denver, Colo.
Radisson Hotel
Denver Stapleton Plaza
3333 Quebec St.

May 20 • Billings, Mont.
Billings Hotel and Convention Center
1223 Mullowney Lane

May 20 • Kings Island, Ohio
Holiday Inn Express, Kings Island
The Conference Center, 5589 Kings
Mills Rd.

June 3 • Fargo, N.D.
Ramada Plaza Suites
1635 42 Street, SW

June 9 • Tinley Park, Ill.
Holiday Inn Select, Tinley Park
Convention Cntr
18501 S. Harlem Ave.

June 10 • Wichita, Kan.
Holiday Inn Select, 549 South Rock
Rd.

June 16 • Indianapolis, Ind.
Holiday Inn Southeast
5120 Victory Drive
I-465 & Emerson Ave.

September 16 • Ft. Worth, Texas
Holiday Inn South
100 East Alta Mesa Blvd.

November 4 • Pineville, N.C.
Holiday Inn Express
9825 Leitner Dr.

Montana highway named in honor of late BLET member

The governor of Montana has signed a bill renaming a portion of Montana Highway 3 east of Helena after former State Representative and BLET Member Patrick Galvin.

Brother Galvin, who passed away in September of 2004 at the age of 78, served as a Democratic representative from 1991-1998, representing the western district of Great Falls.

Political activism runs in the Galvin family. Brother Galvin's daughter Kathleen Galvin-Halero followed in her father's footsteps and is now the Democratic representative for the same district as her father.

Brother Galvin joined the BLET on Nov. 1, 1972, and was a member of Division 499 (Whitefish, Mont.).

"He was without a doubt what every member of this organization should strive to be," said Craig Gilchrist, Chairman of the Montana State Legislative Board. "He was a fine union man and an upstanding family man. My life is richer having known him."

The Patrick G. Galvin Memorial Highway will be a 22-mile stretch of Montana Highway 3 from Great Falls to Armington Junction. Highway 3 runs from Great Falls to Billings, through Harlowton and Lavina. Signs marking the highway with its new name should be going up within six weeks, according to the Mon-

tana Department of Transportation.

The governor of Montana, Brian Schweitzer, signed the bill into law on April 10 during a Capitol ceremony with more than a dozen members of the late Galvin's family.

The idea for the honor came from the Great Falls delegation, Galvin-Halero said, "to recognize all that (he) gave to the community of Great Falls and the state of Montana."

"It's just a way to give back to him one last time," she said.

(With reporting from the Associated Press.) •

Chuck Yenni, former Ohio State Legislative Board Chairman, 1924-2005

Charles W. "Chuck" Yenni, 80, former Ohio State Legislative Board Chairman of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, died on April 12 from complications following a series of strokes.

Brother Yenni was a member of BLET Division 526 in Willard, Ohio, but spent many years as a member of Division 296 where he served as Local Chairman. He also served as Secretary-Treasurer of the Baltimore & Ohio General Committee of Adjustment and S-T of the Ohio State Legislative Board. However, Brother Yenni is best remembered for his years as Chairman of the Ohio State Legislative Board from 1978-1987.

"He was one of the most dedication

officers in the Brotherhood," said Jim Ong, current Chairman of the Ohio State Legislative Board. "He absolutely loved the BLE. He was and still is very well thought of. He was an effective politician who made things easier for Bill O'Brien and myself. Chuck always had a twinkle in his eye. He was a good man."

Bill O'Brien succeeded Brother Yenni as Chairman of the OSLB.

Born Aug. 29, 1924, in Dover, he was a son of the late Walter and Beulah Latto Yenni. Chuck graduated from Dover High School and went on to serve honorably with the U.S. Army during World War II. He retired as a locomotive engineer from CSX and its predecessor, the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad,

after 45 years of service. Chuck also owned and operated the Columbia Tree Farm near Dover, which was truly one of the joys of his life.

Chuck was a member of the National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees (NARVRE) and a 32nd Degree Mason, belonging to the Dover Lodge. He was a member of the Dover post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Disabled American Veterans.

Survivors include his wife, Wanda Smith Yenni, whom he married on April 18, 1970; two daughters, Barb (Bob) Schilling and Betty (Dan) Keener, both of Ashland; a son, Ron (Nancy) Yenni of Mansfield; a stepson, Terry Prater of Dover; nine grandchildren; numer-

ous great-grandchildren; four brothers, Jim (June) Yenni and Rich (Carol) Yenni, both of Nova, Bob (Grace) Yenni of Lorain and Ralph Yenni of Mansfield; and many nieces and nephews.

In addition to his parents, Chuck was preceded in death by his first wife, Wilma Wilder Yenni, on July 2, 1969; a sister, Mary Louise Yenni; and a brother, George Yenni.

He was buried on April 15 in Ashland County Memorial Park where military rites were conducted.

Memorial contributions may be made to Hospice of Tuscarawas County, 201 W. 3rd St., Dover, O. 44622.

(With reporting from the Dover, Ohio, Times Reporter.) •

BLET gets tentative pact at CN/IC

Members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen who work on CN's former Illinois Central properties will vote on a tentative contract proposal on May 23.

The tentative agreement, announced on April 12, provides for more flexible work rules and an hourly wage structure. Specific details of the agreement are being withheld pending ratification.

The BLET negotiating committee consisted of National Vice-President Richard K. Radek, General Chairman John Koonce, and GCA First Vice-General Chairman and S-T Mark Whitchurch.

"We succeeded in getting what we believe are better than average general

wage increases on the table," Brother Koonce said.

He said the Brotherhood also secured more paid time off in the tentative agreement as well as other improvements, including better life insurance benefits.

Brother Koonce said the BLET took an aggressive approach toward negotiations, initiating early contract talks with the carrier prior to the expiration of the existing contract. He said that early, unofficial talks began in mid-2004. As a result, BLET members will see wage increases on June 6 if the new contract is ratified in May, as opposed to August 1 under the old agreement. The tentative agreement covers approximately 400 BLET members.

UP switchman killed in remote control accident

Remote Control

Continued from Page 1

on the job training.

"These remote control operators are replacing engineers, who are the most experienced member of the train crew," President Hahs said. "Basic training to become a federally certified locomotive engineer is anywhere from eight months to a full year. To replace certified engineers with employees who have just two weeks of training clearly lowers the bar when it comes to safety."

The April 11 fatality is at least the second serious remote control accident in the United States this year. On January 22, a remote control locomotive struck a CSX employee in the Waycross Hump Yard in Waycross, Ga., resulting in the amputation of his right leg just above the knee.

Other victims of Class 1 remote control include operations include: Jody Allen Herstine, who was killed in a remote control accident on Dec. 7, 2003, at a Union Pacific yard in San Antonio, Texas; John W. Sneddon, who died in

a remote control accident at a CSX yard on Feb. 16, 2003, near Syracuse, N.Y.; and Glen A. "Skip" York, who died in a remote control switching accident on Sept. 2, 2004, at a Burlington Northern-Sante Fe rail yard in Clovis, N.M.

In their zeal to implement the new remote control technology, it appears rail carriers and the union representing remote control operators failed to make safety their top priority and did not take adequate steps to train new workers in handling heavy moving equipment. •

NEWS BRIEFS

NJ Transit training 'inadequate'

BLET General Chairman Bob Vallochi criticized NJ Transit for not doing enough to retrain its engineers.

After six trains went through stop signals within five months, NJ Transit began what it called an "aggressive plan" to retrain all 419 engineers over 30 days by sending supervisors to ride with them.

"This is absolutely not aggressive training," he said. "What they're doing is just a stop-gap measure. It's not go-

ing to stop another stop signal violation."

Six engineers allegedly went through stop signals between November and March and were suspended without pay for 30 days.

The incidents occurred at New York Penn Station and Secaucus Junction.

Vallochi said NJ Transit has been relying on engineers with too little experience to provide training to their co-workers.

"That's the training — they tell us, 'Be careful,'" he said.

(From the Newark Star-Ledger) •

Ex-TSA official faults rail security

A former TSA official says the government didn't have adequate plans to secure hazardous rail shipments when he was with the agency. Former Deputy Administrator Stephen McHale was the TSA's second-ranking official from 2002 to 2004. He says he was disappointed at the pace and the amount of resources the government directed to secure chemicals, explosives and other dangerous materials on the nation's rails.

(The Associated Press) •

Railroad Retirement

Continued from Page 6

ment Board. Most Board offices are open to the public from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on Federal holidays.

Persons can find the address and phone number of the

Board office serving their area by calling the automated toll-free RRB Help Line at (800) 808-0772. They can also get this information from the Board's Web site at www.rrb.gov.

BLET NEWS

A message from IBT General President James P. Hoffa

Amtrak: An essential transportation mode



Amtrak is an essential transportation mode for thousands of people across the country. In some towns, Amtrak is the only way for people to get to major metropolitan areas, and the Amtrak lines have lessened highway traffic in many large cities. We are committed to seeking a long term funding solution for Amtrak, as opposed to the yearly struggles for survival funding we have experienced. Now with President Bush's zero-funding proposal, the future of Amtrak appears to be in greater jeopardy than ever. It is a shame that the White House is so out of touch with the needs of the general public. We deserve a safe, reliable and affordable way to reach major metropolitan areas, or even take vacations.

Our Amtrak members also deserve a good contract. As you know, for the past five years both your Amtrak BLET brothers and sisters and the members of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division have been working without a contract. This is due to the refusal of Amtrak's chief negotiator to bargain. We support the Transportation Trades Division's Amtrak task force and the work of our BLET/BMWED Amtrak task force in exploring ways to get negotiations moving again.

Engineers Cannot Be Replaced

We anticipate that the Federal Railroad Administration will issue a report about remote control locomotive opera-

tions in May. We oppose the use of remote control without the issuance of comprehensive rulemaking to insure the safety of this technology. The security of railyards and equipment is still woefully inadequate. Very few of our members have received first-responder training and trespassers access railway property daily. The current use of remote control has resulted in countless accidents and fatalities whether it is hauling hazardous materials or not. No type of technical device can replace the eyes and ears of trained locomotive engineers.

I recently appointed John Murphy as the director of the Teamsters Rail Conference. Brother Murphy, also a Teamsters International Vice President, spent countless hours at member meetings throughout the country in preparation for the BLET merger vote in 2003. He continues to provide leadership and direction as part of the Rail Labor Bargaining Coalition and he is committed to bringing Teamster unity, power and strength to all of our rail members.

In Solidarity,

James P. Hoffa
General President

APRIL 2005 CALENDAR & EVENTS

JUNE 5-10... Hazmat Training Workshops, National Labor College, Silver Spring, Md.
Weapons of Mass Destruction awareness training is now part of the five-day hazardous waste/chemical emergency response training offered at the Geroge Meany Center/National Labor College. The workshop also covers OSHA and DOT required procedures and different levels of response and worker protection in case of a hazardous materials emergency or release. Training includes advanced classroom instruction, intensive hands-on drills and a simulated hazmat response in full safety gear. To register, call (301) 439-2440 or e-mail: croddgers@georgemeany.org.

JUNE 12-17, 2005... 78th Annual Southeastern Meeting Association, Montgomery, Ala.
Hosted by Brother David Bowen and the members of BLET Division 740, the 78th annual SMA will be held at the Embassy Suites Hotel, 300 Tallapoosa St., Montgomery, Ala. The room rate is \$114 per night and reservations can be made by calling: (334) 269-5055.

JUNE 26-30, 2005... 67th Annual Eastern Union Meeting Association, Saratoga Springs
Hosted by Arrangements Chairman Bill Kearsing and the members of Division 46, 67th annual EUMA will be held at the Prime Hotel Saratoga Springs, 534 Broadway, in Saratoga Springs. Brother Kearsing reports that the hotel is now accepting early-bird reservations by calling (518) 584-4000 or (888) 999-4711. Members should ask for the EUMA rate when making reservations, which is \$126 per night. Brother Kearsing can be contacted at (518) 869-2297 or <BKearsing@aol.com>.

JULY 3-8, 2005... 65th Annual International Western Convention, Calgary, Alberta
Hosted by Mike Linkletter and the members of BLET Division 355, the 65th annual IWC will be held at the Fairmont Palliser, 133 9th Ave. SW, in Calgary. Room rates are \$144 per night (Canadian). For details, contact Brother Linkletter at <ble355leg@yahoo.com>.

JULY 10-15... Hazmat Training Workshops, National Labor College, Silver Spring, Md.
See above. To register, call (301) 439-2440 or e-mail: croddgers@georgemeany.org.

OCTOBER 2-6, 2005... 70th Annual Southwestern Convention Meeting, Oklahoma City
Hosted by John Salisbury and the members of BLET Division 141, the 70th annual SWCM will be held at the Renaissance Oklahoma City Convention Center Hotel, (405) 228-8000 or (800) 468-3571. More details to come when available.

Advisory Board February Activity

In accordance with the BLET Bylaws, summaries of BLET Advisory Board members' activities are published monthly.

National President Don M. Hahs—National Division office: General supervision of BLET activities; General office duties; Cooperating Rail Labor Organizations (CRLO) mtgs., health and welfare, Miami; BLET Advisory Board mtg.; TTD Winter Executive Committee mtg.; IBT General Executive Board mtg.; Rail Labor Bargaining Coalition mtgs.
First Vice-President & Alternate President Edward W. Rodzwick—Assisted President in general operation of National Division Office; Vice President assignments; Special Representative assignments; Organizing department; Shortline department; Passenger department; Various correspondence & phone calls; South Buffalo RR contract negotiations; CRLO mtgs., Rail Labor Division mtg.; TTD mtg.; AFL-CIO mtgs.; Metro North mtg.; Norfolk Southern General Chairmen mtgs.; Rail Labor Bargaining Coalition mtg.
National Secretary-Treasurer William C. Walpert—General supervision of BLET financial, record depts.; ND office; BLET Education & Training Dept.; Internal Organizing, Mobilizing & Strategic Planning Dept.; Safety Task Force; Meetings with vendors and financial institutions; Secretary-Treasurers Workshops in Denver and Chicago; Local Chairman's Workshop, University of Illinois, Champaign, Ill.
Vice-President Paul T. Sorrow—Performed office inventory; Reviewed cases for Public Law Boards; Attended meeting of Division 498; Assisted CSX, NS, GTW committees with the handling of various issues; Meeting with Local Chairman of Division 598; Performed general office duties.
Vice-President Richard K. Radek—ND Office; BLET Decertification Helpline services; Director of Arbitration Dept.; National Railroad Adjustment Board (NRAB); Illinois Central; Wisconsin Central; Indiana Harbor Belt; METRA; Belt Rwy. of Chicago; Paducah & Louisville; Chicago Central & Pacific; Various NRAB arbitration, Chicago; Preparation of CN/WC Section 6 notices; EJE general assistance (ID service notice-screening) and negotiations (Art. IX ID service mtg.); Valpo, Ind.; BRC arbitration prep. (manning dispute declarations), Crestwood, Ill.; Section 3 Committee, Advisory Board, Miami; General assistance, negotiations, CN/WC, CN/IC; BRC/Metro FRA safety complaint, remote control FRA complaint, section 6 work, Chicago; FRA Part 240.409 dockets this month: EQAL 03-31, 04-14, 01-16.
Vice-President Dale McPherson—CP Rail; Port. Term. RR; Longview Portland & Northern; Longview Switching Co.; Indiana RR; Utah Railroad; UP Eastern Dist.; UP former CNW; BLET National Bargaining Cmte.; Public Law Boards 5604, 5681, 5721, 6040, 6281, 6589; UP work/rest projects; RSAC positive train control cmte.; General office duties, telephone, correspondence; Indiana RR contract mtgs. w/ GC Roy, Indianapolis; UP GC MacArthur mtgs., claims issues, St. Paul, Minn.; Advisory Board mtg., Miami; PLB 6558 hearings, CP Rail; Mtg. w/ NMB mediator & GC Priestler, CP Rail; UP GC Young mtgs., mileage regulation issues, Phoenix.
Vice-President & U.S. Nat'l Legislative Representative Raymond A. Holmes—BLET Washington D.C. office; General office duties, telephone, correspondence; Cooperating Rail Labor Organizations (CRLO) mtgs., Miami; AFL-CIO Executive Council mtgs., Las Vegas.
Vice-President Merle W. Geiger Jr.—Assigned to: BLET Trainmen's Department; Kansas City Southern; Gateway Western; Midsouth Rail; Southrail; Texas-Mexican Rwy.; Springfield Terminal, Delaware & Hudson; Indiana & Ohio RR; Louisville & Indiana RR; St. Lawrence & Atlantic RR; Indiana Southern RR; Implementing agreement negotiations w/ GC Twombly (D&H), Clifton Park, NY; Advisory Board mtg., Miami; Contract negotiations on Louisville & Indiana RR, Jeffersonville, Ind.; Research, correspondence and general office duties.
Vice-President Stephen D. Speagle—Assigned to Burlington Northern Santa Fe, Montana Rail Link, Pacific Harbor Line; Missouri & Northern Arkansas (M&NA); Advisory Board mtg., Miami; Wabash Hospital Assoc mtg., Decatur; Mtgs. w/ Divisions 75, 107, 130, 502, 777, Kansas City, Mo.; Section 6 mtg., Missouri & Northern Arkansas, Springfield, Mo.; Wabash Hospital Board mtg., Decatur.
Vice-President E.L. "Lee" Pruitt—Assisted general chairmen & members of: UP-Western Lines; UP-Western Region; UP-Central Region; UP-Southern Region; UP-Tacoma Belt; General office duties, telephone paperwork; Arbitration Board 6729, 6730, 6731, 6732, Las Vegas; Assisting GC Donnigan, GCofA mtgs., West Yellowstone, UPWR GCofA; Assisting General Chairman Gore, New Orleans, UPRR GCofA; Trip Rate mtgs., Dallas/Fort Worth, UPRR GCofA.
Vice-President Paul L. Wingo Jr.—Assigned to NS-Southern Lines and Eastern Region GCofAs; Iowa, Chicago & Eastern GCofA; Meridian Southern; New York Susquehanna & Western; New England Central; BLET Rail Security Officer; Special issue of Division 786, Macon, Ga.; Advisory Board mtg., Miami; PLB 6728, Atlanta; Mtg. of Norfolk Southern Local Chairmen, Atlanta; IBT/Rail Labor vigil service for Graniteville, S.C., train crash; Office work and PLB preparation.

SAFETY TASK FORCE HOTLINE

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Report major accidents when they happen



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