At a special meeting of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Motive Engineers (BLE) Advisory Board held in Cleveland on June 11, a resolution was passed that opens the possibility of renewing unification talks with the United Transportation Union (UTU) contingent on both unions immediately stopping all solicitation of each other's members.

In essence, the 120-word resolution says that the 13-member Advisory Board is reconsidering its May 8, 1999, resolution that ended unification talks with the UTU because of serious financial concerns.

The Advisory Board’s June 11 resolution says that “the negotiations between the BLE and UTU be reinstated as of their status on May 8, 1999, subject to both UTU and BLE updating and providing the financial information necessary...”

In addition, the resolution says that upon the favorable conclusion of discussions that any agreement reached by the parties shall be immediately submitted to the memberships of the BLE and UTU for ratification and approval.

“The Advisory Board stepped up and made a tough decision under the circumstances, in the hope that this is a positive step forward,” said BLE International President Edward Dubroski.

“We did what we thought was right for the BLE on May 8, 1999, and we are doing what is right for the BLE today. By this decision, the future will be in the hands of the members, where it rightly belongs.”

The reasoning behind the Advisory Board decision is explained in a letter that was mailed to all active BLE members the week of June 18.

Leaders of the UTU welcomed the possibility of renewed unification talks with the BLE. “(We) are happy to resume the unification process because it is the right thing to do for the membership of both unions,” said UTU President Byron A. Boyd Jr.

The complete resolution reads as follows:

“THAT upon favorable conclusion of said discussions that any agreement reached by the parties shall be immediately submitted to their respective member-boards for ratification and approval; and

THAT said discussions are contingent upon both parties immediately terminating solicitation of members from one another and ceasing any organizational efforts against each other on all railroads currently represented by either UTU, BLE or both.”

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BLE announces formation of Retired Members Association

At the International Western Convention held in Denver, BLE International President Edward Dubroski on May 31 announced the formation of the union’s Retired Members Association (RMA).

“The Retired Members Association will provide retired BLE members an organized voice on the key issues of the day, and will work with the AFL-CIO and its new Alliance of Retired Americans,” said Dubroski. “But, most importantly, the BLE Retired Members’ Association will be composed of, by and for retired BLE members.”

In order to get the RMA up and running, Dubroski has asked former BLE International President Ron McLaughlin to act as Interim Chairman of the group.

“There are more than 20,000 retired BLE members in the United States and Canada,” said McLaughlin. “Up to this point, we haven’t had the ability to speak with a single, unified voice on the issues that concern us. The Retired Members’ Association will enable us to join together and — as an active part of the BLE — fight as a unified force to advance our common interests.”

Recently, the AFL-CIO announced the formation of the Alliance of Retired Americans (ARA) in an effort to organize all retired union members.

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BLE member wins Hammond safety award

A.R. “Rudy” Bilka, a locomotive engineer and member of BLE Division 730 (Altoona, Pa.), was awarded this year’s Harold P. Hammond rail safety award on May 2.

Two other locomotive engineers and BLE members were also honored for their commitment to safety: Brother Randy C. Caldwell of Division 636 (Silsbee, Texas) and David K. Roth of Division 232 (Laurel, Mont.) were two of five finalists presented with Certificates of Commendation for their work in enhancing safety.

“BLE members should be proud of the accomplishments of Brothers Bilka, Caldwell and Roth in enhancing safety,” Dubroski said. “It is especially gratifying to see a friend, like Rudy Bilka, so honored. Rudy served the membership of Division 730 with distinction as a Local Chairman for many years.”

See Retired Members, Page 3

See Hammond Award, Page 8
H.R. 1024 would repeal carrier diesel fuel tax

Congressman Kenny Hulshof (R-MO) introduced H.R. 1024, the Transportation Tax Equity and Fairness Act, which would repeal the 4.3-cent diesel fuel tax on railroad and inland waterway transportation. H.R. 1024 currently has 40 cosponsors. The Senate bill, S. 661, has 12 cosponsors. If the diesel fuel tax is repealed, railroad industry profits would increase by $170 million annually. However, momentum for this legislation has been slowed somewhat as a result of a letter sent to all Senators by the Rail Labor Division of the Transportation Trades Department of the AFL-CIO, opposing the repeal.

Senate bond bill could generate $12 billion for Amtrak over 10 years

Legislation to allow Amtrak to raise $12 billion over the next 10 years by issuing high-speed rail bonds was introduced in the Senate. The bill, S. 250, provides Amtrak federal assistance by providing tax credits to bondholders instead of Amtrak paying interest. Local governments would be required to provide a 20-percent match for rail service improvements in their states. Currently, S. 250 has 57 cosponsors.

Railroad Retirement Board trust funds get stronger, report says

The RRB released its 2000 Annual Report which covers the fiscal year ended September 30, 1999. Benefits of $8.3 billion were paid during the year, essentially the same as the previous year. Payments were made to 748,000 beneficiaries during the year, down from 727,000 the year before. Equity in the Trust Funds at year-end was $17.96 billion, a new high and an increase of $1.48 billion from the previous year.

Grants available for rail station renovations

The Great American Station Foundation is accepting applications for its 2001 cycle of grants for train station revitalization projects. The Las Vegas-based group provides grants to help jump-start community efforts to restore rail stations as active intermodal transportation facilities and ensure that they contribute to community economic development. Full details on the grant program are available on the Foundation’s web site at: www.stationfoundation.org.

Bush transportation budget shorts Amtrak

President Bush’s FY 2002 transportation budget proposal provides Amtrak with an authorization of $521 million, $400 million below its authorization level. In addition, it proposes to reinstate railroad safety user fees. Congress has eliminated these fees in the past. However, the Administration’s budget proposal contains revenue of $75 million in so-called “transportation user fees.” Including fees to support FRA’s railroad safety inspection program, and fees to offset costs associated with regulating transportation of hazardous materials.

That’s a Lot of...

Apparently, U.S. Senate Minority Leader Trent Lott (R-MS) thinks men and women who safely pilot plane-loads of passengers through clear, turbulent or stormy skies are vastly overpaid. At a February 13 hearing on airline industry problems, Lott said, “I think labor is a large part of the problem... What do they make? Look at those salaries.”

While some captains do earn better than $100,000 a year (after years of experience), according to the Air Line Pilots Association, $18,000 a year is the average salary for pilots. That salary puts you behind the curve. Sure, the economy’s doing better than okay. But don’t they have a shame?

PAC contributors will receive lapel pins soon

BLS State Update

News and notes regarding our State Legislative Boards

Editor’s Note: The following information is compiled, written and submitted by the BLCS’s National Legislative Office in Washington, D.C.

Alabama: Brother Tommy Hudson was re-elected unanimously as Chairman of the Board for another term. Our congratulations to Brother Hudson and the Officers and Delegates of the Alabama State Legislative Board.

Arkansas: Brother Tim Young, SLBC-AR, reports that legislation that would have mandated a two-person crew on trains operating in Arkansas was defeated.

Colorado: Brother George Laut, SLBC-CO, reports that the Colorado Legislature adopted a Resolution urging the U.S. Congress to enact the Railroad Retirement and Survivors’ Improvement Act of 2001.

Georgia: Brother Raymond Taylor, SLBC-GA, reports that the Georgia Legislature adopted a Resolution urging the U.S. Congress to enact the Railroad Retirement and Survivors’ Improvement Act of 2001.

Illinois: Brother Ed Way, SLBC-IL, advises that the Governor will sign into law legislation to regulate contract carriers transporting rail-road crews in the State of Illinois.

Louisiana: Brother Mike O’Brien, SLBC-LA, advises that the Louisiana Legislature adopted a Resolution urging the U.S. Congress to enact the Railroad Retirement and Survivors’ Improvement Act of 2001.

Michigan: Legislation that will increase the funding for maintenance of active traffic control devices at highway/railroad grade crossings, such as flashing lights and automatic gates, was signed into law by Governor Engler. The bill increases the contributions from road authorities to railroads for the devices from $760 to $1,630 per year per crossing. In addition, the act requires the Department of Transportation to complete a study to determine the cost of maintaining such devices by the beginning of 2010 and every ten years following.

Missouri: Brother Gilchrist, SLBC-MO, advises that the Missouri General Assembly adopted a Resolution urging the U.S. Congress to enact the Railroad Retirement and Survivors’ Improvement Act of 2001.

Montana: Brother Gilchrist, SLBC-MT, reports that legislation has been introduced in Montana that would bring back passenger rail travel to Butte. The Montana AFL-CIO testified in support of the bill. And thanks to a grassroots campaign involving hundreds of union families and friends, the Paycheck Deception bill was defeated this session.

Oklahoma: Brother Rondra, SLBC-OK, reports the State Senate approved putting a so-called “right-to-work” measure on the November 2002 ballot.

Oregon: Brother Doug Horstman was unanimously re-elected as Chairman to the State Legislative Board. Congratulations.

The Oregon Legislature adopted a Resolution urging the U.S. Congress to enact the Railroad Retirement and Survivors’ Improvement Act of 2001.

Utah: Brother Walt Webster, SLBC-UT, has won the UTA’s Dennis G. Beacher Grade Crossing Safety Award in recognition of his involvement in preventing grade-crossing collisions and advancing the company’s grade crossing safety goals. Congratulations!

West Virginia: Brother Blake, SLBC-WV, reports the West Virginia Legislature adopted a Resolution urging the U.S. Congress to enact the Railroad Retirement and Survivors’ Improvement Act of 2001.

Wisconsin: By unanimous action, Keith Lucke, was elected to another term as Chairman of the Board. Congratulations, Brother Lucke.

The pins are given to members who contribute to the BLE’s PAC fund at a minimum of $60 per year. Members who do not receive their pins by August 1 should contact the BLE’s National Legislative Office by phone at (202) 347-7930 or via the Internet at: <blede@aol.com>. The BLE thanks all PAC contributors!
NASLBC concludes annual meeting in Austin

The National Association of State Legislative Board Chairman held its annual meeting from April 29-May 2 in Austin, Texas. Thirty-Five states were represented and various International Officers and staff members of the BLE’s National Legislative Office in Washington, D.C. were in attendance. Representatives from ORBA Financial, BRCF Insurance, LCMPA Insurance, and Designated Legal Counsel also attended.

“At the present time we have 36 states that have either full or part-time Legislative Chairman,” said Raymond Holmes, Texas State Legislative Board Chairman and NASLBC. “We meet annually to discuss common issues, state initiatives, to hear reports from our International Officers, to lay the framework for future legislation, and to decide what legislation should be handled on the national level.”

The focus of this year’s meeting was to review the BLE Constitution & Bylaws concerning Legislative Boards. The Chairman drafted and prioritized seven resolutions for the upcoming convention. Elections were also held at this meeting and Brother Holmes was reelected Chairman. Other officers elected were: Vice Chairman — J.T. Norris, Va.; 2nd Vice Chairman — Ed Way, Ill.; Secretary-Treasurer — Perry Renfro, Okla.; and Alt. Secretary-Treasurer — Ken Kertesz, Pa. Regional Chairman election results were as follows: Area 1 — George Newman, Mass, Area 2 — Tommy Mayne, Ky.; Area 3 — Jim Keele, Kan.; and Area 4 — Mike Musco, N.D.

Next year’s meeting will be held in Minneapolis, Minn.

First row, from left: Jim Keele, SLBC-Kan. and NASLBC Regional Chairman (Area 3); Leroy Jones, BLE Vice-U.S. President & National Legislative Representative; Edward Dubroski, BLE International President; J.L. McCoy, BLE First Vice-President & Alternate President; and Russell W. Bennett, BLE General Secretary-Treasurer.

Second row, from left: Perry Renfro, SLBC-Okla. and NASLBC Secretary-Treasurer; Ken Kertesz, SLBC-Pa. and NASLBC Alt. Secretary-Treasurer; J.T. Norris, SLBC-Va. and NASLBC First Vice Chairman; Raymond Holmes, SLBC-Texas and NASLBC Chairman; Betty Child, BLE National Legislative Office Executive Assistant; Mike Musco, SLBC-N.D. and NASLBC Regional Chairman (Area 4); Tommy Mayne, SLBC-Ky. and NASLBC Regional Chairman (Area 2). Third row, from left: George Last, SLBC-Colo.; Chuck Hintz, SLBC-Iowa; Jimmy Brittain, SLBC-Tenn.; George Newman, SLBC-Mass. and Regional Chairman (Area 1); Ed Way, SLBC-Ill. and NASLBC 2nd Vice Chairman, Jim Chappeille, SLBC-N.J.; and Jim Bradford, BLE Special Representative.

Fourth row, from left: J.F. Ong, Ohio SLB 1st Vice Chairman; Mickey Goge, SLBC-Mo.; Mike O’Brien SLBC-La.; Tom Parkovich, SLBC-Minn.; Bruce Hayes, SLBC-N.M.; Bill Verduey, SLBC-Ind.; James Ussery, TSBL-2nd Vice Chairman; Keith Lusby, SLBC-Wisc.; Randy Meek, SLBC-Nebr.; and Ron Huff, NDSL-1st Vice Chairman.

McCann to serve as Vice-Chairman of TTĐ’s Rail Labor Division

Congratulations to Brother Leo McCann, President of the American Train Dispatchers Department of the BLE, who was recently selected to serve as Vice-Chairman of the Rail Labor Division, Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO.

The new chairman of the Rail Labor Division, TTĐ is Mark Filipovic, Railroad Coordinator of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers. Brother Filipovic had served as Vice-Chairman of the ILD. He replaces BLE International President Edward Dubroski, who most recently held the position of Chairman of the Rail Labor Division, TTĐ. Both will serve one-year terms through July of 2002. Congratulations again to Brother McCann.

BLE delegates attend Montana AFL-CIO convention

Three members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers served as delegates to the Montana State AFL-CIO convention last month in Butte, Montana.

Pictured to the left are C.A. Gilchrist, Chairman of the BLE Montana State Legislative Board (left), as he talks with Randy D. Smith, Legislative Representative of the BLE Division 262 (Missoula, Mont.) The third BLE delegate was K.E. Hentges (not pictured), President of BLE Division 289 (Glasgow, Mont.).

“The convention this year was held for the purpose of electing officers to the state federation and considering resolutions to change the by-laws of the Montana AFL-CIO,” Gilchrist said.

In addition, Brother Smith said the three-day convention served as a strategy session for members of the Montana labor movement as they plan for an upcoming state-wide election.

“I feel that the contacts made here at the convention are valuable down the line,” he said. “especially during the state-wide election cycle when we are trying to elect candidates who will be responsive to the need of working families.”

Gilchrist said next year’s convention will focus even more closely on the state-wide election.

“Next year, (we will) interview and endorse candidates for state-wide and national office, and that is always an important convention for us,” he said.

Gilchrist said the three BLE delegates to the convention made important contacts with other AFL-CIO affiliates.

“It is valuable for our BLE members to attend the state AFL-CIO conventions as it gives them an opportunity to mix with the broader labor movement, and educate others about the problems we face working daily on the railroads here in Montana,” he said.

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney addressed the convention on the opening day.

Next year’s convention will be held in Great Falls, Mont.

Ble forms Retired Members Association

Retired Members

Continued from Page 1

...and mobilize retired union members and their families so that they can be an effective political force on issues of concern to retired and working Americans.

McLaughlin said that when President Dubroski first asked him to lead RMA he was eager to say do so.

“I recognized the promise that the RMA could bring this message back to your division, and urge you to do so. “I feel that the contacts made here at the convention are valuable down the line,” he said, “especially...
INTERNATIONAL WESTERN CONVENTION

GIA President Ruth Pillman-Windham addresses the delegation. Seated is GIA Vice-President Onita Wayland.

BLE members during one of the many educational workshops.

From left: D.W. Hannah, Union Pacific-Western Lines First Vice-Chairman, and Larry Law, Legislative Representative of BLE Division 56 (W. Colton, Calif.).

International President Dubroski delivers his report to the membership.

From left: Mike Young, Union Pacific-Eastern District General Chairman; Ron McLaughlin, former International President Emeritus and interim Chairman of the BLE's Retired Members Association (see page 1 article); and Dennis Simmerman, BLE Alternate General Secretary-Treasurer.

Playing the bagpipes during the opening ceremony is D.J. Anderson, Alberta Provincial Legislative Board Chairman.

From left: T.J. Carter, Legislative Representative of BLE Division 158 (Sparks, Nevada); and Union Pacific-Western Lines General Chairman E.L. Pruitt.
DENVER, COLORADO

IWC Chairman Skip Colyer, center, receives a congratulatory plaque for his work in organizing the convention from International President Edward Dubroski, right, and First Vice-President & Alternate President Jim McCoy.

Wisconsin Central General Chairman Jeff Bochman

North Dakota State Legislative Board Chairman Mike Muscha, left, collects a door prize from Mike Weston, Legislative Representative of BLE Division 186 (Denver, Colo.). Brother Weston served on Skip Colyer’s IWC arrangements committee.

BLE Division 404 (Chicago) Local Chairman Paul Fessenbecker, standing, asks President Dubroski a question during the IWC’s closed session. Seated to the right is Ray Hanck, President of BLE Division 31 in Bill, Wyo.

Conducting a workshop for delegates to September’s International Convention is International Division Staff Attorney Tom Brennan.

Amtrak Vice-General Chairman C.A. McDowell
New benefit year for unemployment, sickness benefits

A new benefit year under the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act begins July 1, 2001. Administered by the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board, this Act provides two kinds of benefits for qualified railroad employers: unemployment benefits for those who become unemployed but are ready, willing and able to work, and sickness benefits for those who are unable to work because of sickness or injury. Sickness benefits are also payable to female rail workers for periods of time when they are not able to work because of pregnancy and childbirth.

The following questions and answers describe these benefits, their eligibility requirements, and how to claim them.

1. What is the daily benefit rate payable in the new benefit year beginning July 1, 2001? Almost all employees will qualify for the new maximum daily benefit rate of $30, which increased from $28 under previous provisions reflecting the increase in average national wages. Benefits are generally payable for days of unemployment or sickness in excess of four in a benefit week. Earnings must exceed the base yields $500 for each two full weeks of unemployment or sickness. However, sickness benefits resulting from other than work related injuries under the Federal Railroad Unemployment tax payments will be based on first tier I railroad retirement payroll taxes.

2. What are the eligibility requirements for railroad unemployment and sickness benefits in the new benefit year? To qualify for normal railroad unemployment or sickness benefits, an employee must have had railroad earnings of at least $2,512.50 in calendar year 2000 and be entitled to receive normal weekly benefits of $1,005 for any month. Those who were first employed in the rail industry in 1990 must also have at least five months of creditable railroad service in 2000.

Under certain conditions, employees with 120 or more months of railroad service who do not qualify on the basis of their 2000 earnings may still be able to receive benefits in the new benefit year. Employees with 120 or more months of service who received normal benefits in the benefit year ending June 30, 2001, may be eligible for extended benefits, and employees with 120 or more months of service who qualify for accelerated benefits if they have railroad earnings of at least $2,625 in 2001 not counting earnings of more than $1,050 a month.

3. How long are these sickness benefits payable? Extended benefits are payable for up to 130 days (26 weeks) in a benefit year. The total amount of each kind of benefit which may be paid in the new benefit year cannot exceed the employee’s railroad earnings in calendar year 2000, not counting earnings of more than $1,296 per month.

4. What is the waiting-period requirement for unemployment and sickness benefits? Benefits are normally paid for the number of days of unemployment or sickness over four in 14-day claim periods. However, during the first 14-day claim period in a benefit year, benefits are payable only after the employee has worked during each day of unemployment or sickness in excess of seven which, in effect, is a two-week waiting period.

5. Are there special waiting-period requirements if unemployment benefits are due to a strike? If a worker is unemployed because of a strike and is not ready or willing to return to scheduled runs or they missed a turn in pool service. There are no two-week waiting period requirements if unemployment or sickness continues into a subsequent benefit year.

6. Can employees in train-and-engine service receive unemployment benefits for days when they are standing by or laying over between scheduled runs? No, if they are standing by or laying over between regularly assigned trips or they missed a turn in pool service.

7. Can extra-board employees receive unemployment benefits between jobs? Yes, if only the miles and/or hours they actually worked were less than the equivalent of normal full-time work in their class of service during the 14-day claim period. Entitlement to benefits would also depend on the employee's earnings.

8. How would an employee’s earnings in a claim period affect his or her eligibility for unemployment benefits? If a claimant’s earnings for days worked, and/or great excess or vacation or other leave, in a 14-day claim period are more than a certain indexed amount, no benefits are payable for any days of unemployment in that period. That claim, however, can be used to satisfy the waiting period.

9. How does a person claim unemployment benefits? In order to receive unemployment benefits, claimants must obtain an application from their labor organization, employer, local Railroad Retirement Board office or www.rrb.gov. The completed application should be mailed to the local Board office as soon as possible and, in any case, must be filed within 30 days of the date on which the claimant became unemployed or the first day for which he or she wishes to claim benefits. Benefits may be lost if the application is filed late.

The local Board office reviews the application and sickness in a claim period are more than the equivalent of normal full-time work in their class of service during the 14-day claim period. Entitlement to benefits would also depend on the employee's earnings.

10. How does a person claim sickness benefits? An application for sickness benefits can be obtained from railroad labor organizations, railroad employers, any Board office or the Board’s Web site. An application and a doctor’s statement of sickness are required at the beginning of each period of continuing sickness or injury.

The Board suggests that employees keep an application on hand for use in the 14-day claim period. If a family member knows where the form is and how to use it. If an employee becomes unable to work because of sickness or injury, the employee should complete the application and take or send it to his or her doctor for completion of the statement of sickness. If the employee is too sick to complete the application, another person may do so. In such cases, a family member should also complete the “Statement of Authority to Act for Employee,” which accompanies the statement of sickness.

After completion, the forms should be mailed to the Board’s headquarters in Chicago by the seventh of the following month for benefits to become payable. Benefits may also be claimed for periods of time when the claim form is mailed to the Board, after the Board has received the application and sickness benefits are claimed. After the Board receives the application and sickness and determines eligibility, biweekly claims forms are mailed for completion and return to a Board field office for processing. The claim forms must be received at the Board within 30 days of the date the form was mailed to the claimant, whichever is later. Benefits may not be paid if an application or claim is filed late.

11. Is a claimant’s employer notified each time a biweekly claim is filed for unemployment or sickness benefits? The Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act requires the Board to notify the claimant’s base year employer each time a claim for benefits is filed, and to give that employer an opportunity to submit information relevant to the claimant’s eligibility. The employer has the opportunity to appeal the determination on the claim. In addition, the claimant’s current employer is also notified. The Board must also notify the claimant’s base year employer each time benefits are paid to a claimant. The base year employer may appeal the decision to pay benefits. The appeal does not prevent the timely payment of benefits. However, a claimant may be required to repay benefits if the appeal is successful. The Board also checks with other Federal agencies and all 50 States to detect fraudulent benefit claims; and it checks with physicians to verify the accuracy of medical statements supporting sickness benefit claims.

12. How long does it take to receive payment of benefits? Persons who file an application for benefits may expect to receive a claim form, or a decision on their application, within 15 days of the end of the claim period. When they file biweekly claims, they may expect to receive a payment, or a decision on a claim, within 5 days of the date a Board office receives the claim form. However, claims for some benefits may take longer to handle than others if they are more complex, or if a Board office
Each year, the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board prepares a "Certificate of Service Months and Compensation" (Form BA-6) for every railroad employee who received creditable railroad compensation in the previous calendar year. The forms will be mailed to employees by the Board during the first half of June.

While the Board has made every effort to compile and correct a full list of the addresses of all active railroad employees, employees for whom compensation was reported in 2000, but who have not received a Form BA-6 by late June, or need a replacement, should contact the nearest Board office serving their area.

Form BA-6 provides employees with a record of their railroad service, compensation. While the form has cash value, the information shown is used to determine whether an employee qualifies for benefits and the amount of those benefits.

It is important that employees review their Form BA-6 to see whether their own records of service months and creditable compensation agree with the figures shown on the form. In checking the 2000 compensation total, employees should be aware that only annual earnings up to $76,200 were creditable for railroad retirement purposes in that year, and that $75,200 is the maximum amount shown on the form.

To assist employees in reviewing the form, the form itself shows service credited on a month-by-month basis for 1999, 1998 and 1997, when the creditable compensation maximum was $75,200, $86,400 and $95,400, respectively. In addition, the form identifies the rail employer reporting the employee’s 2000 service and compensation.

Besides the months of service reported by rail employers, Form BA-6 shows the number of any additional service months deemed by the Board. Deemed service months may be credited under certain conditions for an employee who did not work in all 12 months of the year, but had creditable tier II earnings exceeding monthly pro-rata of the creditable tier II earnings maximum for the year.

However, the total of reported and deemed service months may never exceed 12 in a calendar year; and no service months, regarded as deemed, can be credited after retirement, severance, resignation, discharge, or death.

For employees who received separation or severance payments, the form, in the section designated "Taxable Amount," shows the amount of any separation allowance or severance payments that were subject to railroad retirement tier II taxes. This information is shown on the form because a lump sum, approximating part or all of the tier II taxes deducted from such payments, was paid due to railroad retirement. However, this tier II credits, may be payable by the Board upon retirement to employees with 120 months of service, or to survivors of employees who died before retirement.

An amount of allowance included in an employee’s regular compensation is shown under "Compensation Amount." The Form BA-6 also shows, in the section designated "Employee Contributions," the cumulative amount of U.S. Railroad retirement payroll taxes paid by the employee over and above tier I social security equivalent payroll taxes. While there are no payroll taxes on contributions to the Federal Railroad Retirement tax, the Board computes this amount from its compensation records in order to adjust the tier II benefits of employees who pay payroll tax contributions for Federal income tax purposes.

BBLE Senior Report

New Benefit Year for Unemployment, Sickness Benefits

New Benefit Year

Continued from Page 6

has to get information from other people or organizations. If this happens, claimants may expect an explanation and an estimate of the time required to make a decision.

Claimants who think a Board office has made the wrong decision about their benefits have the right to ask for review and to appeal. They will be notified of these rights at the time an unfavorable decision is made on their claims.

13. How are payments made?

Railroad unemployment and sickness benefits are paid by Direct Deposit. With Direct Deposit benefit payments are made electronically to an employee’s bank, savings and loan, credit union or other financial institution. New applicants for unemployment and sickness benefits will be notified of the availability of Direct Deposit enrollment. Waivers are available to individuals who do not want to participate in the program. Employees of government agencies and other institutions that do not participate in Direct Deposit or who cannot be credentialed for the program are provided an option to receive payments by mail. Payments are mailed by the Board at least 24 days a month.

14. How can claimants receive more information on railroad unemployment or sickness benefits?

Claimants with questions about their unemployment or sickness benefits should contact the nearest Board office. Most Board offices are open to the public from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday-Friday.

The RRB Help Line at 1-800-808-0772 is a toll-free telephone service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Callers to the RRB Help Line will receive information about their unemployment or sickness claims, including the amount of their benefit payments, as well as see the old building destroyed. The Board will begin monthly payments to the Board office serving their area.

In general, annuitants are affected by this adjustment if the employee was age 62 or rated disabled by the Railroad Retirement Board before 2000. The Board will, in any case, notify all beneficiaries whether or not their benefit payments are affected by the adjustment.

Annuitants who have questions about this adjustment should contact the nearest field office of the Railroad Retirement Board. They can find the address and phone number of the Board office serving their area by calling the automated toll-free RRB Help Line at 1-800-808-0772 or by checking the Board’s Web site at www.rrb.gov. Most Board field offices are open to the public from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.
Bilka wins safety award

Hammond Award

Continued from Page 1

years, and I’m pleased to see him gain such high recognition for his devotion to the BLE and the cause of safety.”

Brother Bilka remained humble about the honor, saying he had never even heard of the award until he had been nominated. “I’m a small town boy who never expected anything like this,” he said. “I’m just a locomotive engineer who’s interested in safety, but it’s nice to get a pat on the back every once in a while.”

The numerous examples of Brother Bilka’s commitment to safety were cited. As a member of the Altoona Safety Committee, he helped establish a simple goal for 2000: zero incidents and zero injuries. The Altoona District was the only operating district on the division to meet that goal. While chairing various subcommittees for the Al
gen Labor and Management Orga

inization and with an eye toward enhancing safety, Brother Bilka also worked tirelessly to improve yard lighting, road paving, dismounting pads and locomotive design.

He credits his co-workers for helping create a safe work environment. In fact, after winning the award, he took it to work and hung it up to share with them. “It belongs to my co-workers as much as me,” he said.

While operating a locomotive in 1974, Brother Bilka saw a group of children crossing under trains. Alarm

ed at what he saw, Bilka became “Engineer Rudy.” Clad in bib overalls, a red bandana and a pin-striped engineer’s cap, Rudy “talks about safety ,” he said.

Bilka’s commitment to safety were:

— Employee member SBA 1063 (NS); Employee member PLB 6104 (CSX); Prepared case for executive session, PLB 6104 Award #8; Met with COO & GM for GTW Division of CN/IC; Vacation to attend IWC; Visited w/ Div. 239; travel to Cleveland, Memphis, Chicago; Presented at IWC; Correspondence; Represented April 3-6, 1999.

— Employee member SBA 1063 (NS); Employee member PLB 6104 (CSX); Prepared case for executive session, PLB 6104 Award #8; Met with COO & GM for GTW Division of CN/IC; Vacation to attend IWC; Visited w/ Div. 239; travel to Cleveland, Memphis, Chicago; Presented at IWC; Correspondence; Represented April 3-6, 1999.

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