Mark-up was expected on July 19 for H.R. 4844 — the long-awaited legislation to provide tax and benefit changes in the Railroad Retirement Act — in the House Transportation and Infrastructure and Ways and Means Committees.

The bill would provide the following benefits for railroad workers: improvement of widows’ and widowers’ annuities; elimination of the actuarial reduction for railroad workers with 30 or more years of service who retire between age 60 and age 62; a reduction in the number of years required to vest in Railroad Retirement from 10 to five; and elimination of the Railroad Retirement maximum benefit.

Savings for the industry would come from the elimination of the Supplemental Annuity Tax and a reduction of three percentage points in employer Tier II tax rates, which will be phased in over three years. The bill also would create a “ratchet” for Tier II tax rates beginning in 2003, which is designed to ensure that funds are available in a range between four and six times that required to pay benefits in any given year.

While the BLS has been supportive of the benefit improvements contained in a deal reached earlier this year between 11 unions and the Class I carriers, it has been critical of the tax aspects of the agreement, which would provide the industry with a windfall of over $400 million annually. The BLE also has opposed any private investment of Tier I taxes.

The benefits provisions of H.R. 4844 deserve favorable consideration and the BLE supports them; however, the language of H.R. 4844 contains a number of new provisions that did not appear in previous drafts and, therefore, are a source of concern.

First, the bill appears to privatize Tier II, because the Railroad Retirement Investment Trust — the entity that will manage and invest the assets of the Railroad Retirement Board and all Railroad Retirement Trust Fund, which will contain all Tier II revenues not needed to pay current administrative expenses of the Railroad Retirement Board and all Tier I revenues not needed to pay current benefits — is not subject to Title 31 of the United States Code. Thus, the Trust will not be a government agency, as the Railroad Retirement Board currently is, and it is uncertain whether the Trust’s sta-
ARIZONA — After serving as Chairman of the Arizona State Legislative Board for 16 years, Don Bergman chosen not to seek re-election. Robert S. Swob, Jr., is the newly elected Chairman. However, Brother Bergman will continue to serve the BLE on the issues of fatigue and work/rest cycles.

CALIFORNIA — Tim Smith, SLBC-CA, reports that Governor Gray Davis has proposed a $3.4 billion, one-time funding campaign to ease transportation congestion. Nearly $3 billion will be used for items related to intercity rail or rail transit.

GEORGIA — Raymond Taylor, SLBC-GA, reports that Georgia is taking steps to make passenger rail an increasingly important part of its transportation future. The state legislature approved $250 million to study a connection between Atlanta Airport and the Atlanta-Macon rail line. The legislature also provided $1.2 million to continue engineering work on the Atlanta-Albany rail corridor.

IDAHO — Jeff Ramage, SLBC-ID, reports that New York State has approved $1.2 million to continue engineering work on the Atlanta-Athens rail corridor.

ILLINOIS — Through the efforts of Ed Way, SLBC-IL, Illinois enacted a new State Law that exempts Locomotive Engineers and train crew members from being required to show a driver’s license to any law enforcement officer in connection with the operation of a locomotive ortrain within the State. As a result, the Illinois State Legislative Board is having wallet-size cards printed with this information on one side and information from 49 CFR 219.201(b) on the reverse side.

KANSAS — The Kansas Young Democrats (KYD) has chosen to honor the Kansas Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers with their KYD Service Award. This award is reserved for individuals or groups whose service and support provided to KYD is unmatched. Congratulations to James Keefe, SLBC-KS, and all BLE members in Kansas.

NEW YORK — John Collins, SLBC-NY, reports that the New York State Department of Transportation has announced the issuance of this Safety Advisory. This advisory is reserved for employees and the general public compels employers to act. The U.S. Department of Transportation (January 2000) issued a technical conference on the use of remote control locomotives, focusing on the current status of remote operation and possible developments of guidelines for remote operations.

STUDY OF TRAIN IDLING HAZARDS — Included in a $34.7 billion transportation appropriations bill approved by the U.S. Senate is language directing the National Academy of Sciences to conduct a study of the adverse effects of idling train engines. The bill would initiate a one-year study of the noise impacts of railroad operations, including idling train engines on the quality of life of nearby communities (consideration of air pollution) and safety… The report shall include recommendations for mitigation to combat rail noise, standards for determining when noise mitigation is required, needed changes in federal law to give federal, state and local governments flexibility in combating railroad noise, and possible funding mechanisms for financing mitigation projects.

TRAIN CONTROL PROJECT — The U.S. Department of Transportation has awarded a $34 million contract to a team led by Lockheed Martin Corporation to develop and deploy a Positive Train Control (PTC) system on a 120-mile segment of the Chicago to St. Louis high-speed rail passenger corridor. The system will enable UP's Omaha Center to monitor real time location of trains. The contract award is being made through the North American Joint Positive Train Control Program, a partnership between FRA, Illinois DOT, and AAR.

SAFETY ADVISORY (roadtrain trailers) — FRA has issued Safety Advisory 90-03 to modify and update previously issued Safety Advisory 90-03 which addressed securement of floor beam cross-members on Roadtrain trailers. The revision addresses securement of cross members to prevent the high tandem wheels on these trailers from falling to the rails on moving trains.

SAFETY ADVISORY (Model B1 Relays) — FRA has issued Safety Advisory 2000-1 addressing safety concerns involving Model B1 relays manufactured by General Railway Signal between the years 1980 and 1985 and their potential to stick and remain in the energized condition. FRA determined that the safety of railroad employees and the general public compels the issuance of this Safety Advisory.
Members should closely review Form BA-6

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 latter half of June. While the Board has made every effort to contact and to notify a file of the addresses of all active railroad employees, workers for whom compensation was reported in 1999, but who have not received a Form BA-6 by mid-July, or need a replacement, should contact the nearest Board field office.

Form BA-6 provides employees with a record of their railroad retirement service and compensation. While the form has no 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 1999 compensation total, employees should be aware that only annual earnings up to $72,600 were creditable for railroad retirement purposes in that year, and that $72,600 is the maximum amount shown on the form.

To assist employees in reviewing their service credits, the form also shows service credited on a month-by-month basis for 1998, 1997 and 1996, when the creditable compensation maximums were $68,400, $65,400 and $62,700, respectively. In addition, the form identifies the rail employers responsible for an employee’s railroad retirement service and compensation. While the Board does not collect or maintain payroll tax information, the form computes this amount from its compensation records in order to advise retired employees of their payroll tax contributions for Federal income tax purposes.

For employees who received separation or severance payments, the form, in the section designated “Taxable Amount,” shows the amounts 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 made after 1984 who did not provide additional tier II credits, may be payable by the Board upon retirement to employees with 120 months of service, or to survivors if the employee dies before retirement. The amount of an allowance included in an employee’s regular compensation is shown under “Compensation Amount.” An employee who receives Form BA-6 with an incorrect name, address, date of birth or social security number can have the information corrected by contacting the nearest Board field office. If there is a name difference, an employee should be aware that the form may not show his or her full surname if the surname exceeds 10 letters. “Junior” or “Senior” was used by the Board upon retirement to employees for whom compensation was reported in 1999. Employees may also contact a Board field office to request a detailed breakdown, by year, of all railroad service and compensation credited to them.

Employees can locate the nearest field office by visiting the Board’s Web site at www.rrb.gov, looking in the telephone directory under “United States Government.” In addition, a toll-free automated Help Line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at (800) 808-0772. Any other discrepancies in Form BA-6 should be reported promptly in writing to: Protest Unit-ESTC, U.S. Railroad Retirement Board, 844 North Rush Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611-2092. The employee must include his or her social security number in the letter.

The Form BA-6 also explains what other documentation and information should be provided. The law limits to four years the period during which corrections can be made. •
From left: The late Wayne Connor, Louisiana State Legislative Board Chairman; Tommy Mayne, Kentucky State Legislative Board Chairman; and J.L. Saunders, Local Chairman of BLE Division 321 in Charleston, S.C. Brother Connor attended the SMA convention just days before his fatal collision involving a log truck (see page 1 for obituary).

Kentucky State Legislative Board Chairman Tommy Mayne welcomes convention attendees to his home state and introduces keynote speaker Scotty Baesler (see page 5).

From left: Flag bearers during the GIA processional included Kathy Rupp; Brenda Mears; Mary Lee Kennedy, GIA Sentinel; Delaine Morris, president of GIA Auxiliary 7 in Atlanta; and Jewell Graben, GIA Vice-President.

73rd annual SMA

The 2000 Southeastern Meeting Association was held June 18-21 in Louisville, Ky., at the Galt House East hotel.

Several hundred BLE members and their families attended the convention, which included a keynote address by Democratic congressional hopeful Scotty Baesler, a one-time member of the U.S. House who is seeking reelection this fall. Members also visited the Louisville Slugger baseball bat factory and the famous Churchill Downs race track.

Next year, the 74th annual SMA will be held in Pine Mountain, Ga., at Callaway Gardens. Chairman W.J. Spriggs Jr. and members of BLE Division 779 (Manchester, Ga.) are hosting the event. The convention is tentatively scheduled for June 24-28, 2001. More details to come when available.
The keynote speaker at the convention’s opening ceremonies was Scotty Baesler, a former member of the U.S. House of Representatives for Kentucky who lost a tightly-contested race for the U.S. Senate in 1998. Baesler, a Democrat, is now locked in a tough race to win his Sixth District House seat back from incumbent Republican Ernie Fletcher of Lexington. Seated to the right is SMA Convention Chairman Jim Goodman.

John Conklin, Operating Practices Specialist for the Federal Railroad Administration, gives members a brief presentation on the changes to locomotive engineer certification regulations. The new regulations became effective at the beginning of this year.

From left: Grand International Auxiliary President Ruth E. Pillman-Windham; GIA Guide Janie Wallace; and GIA Vice-President Jewell Graben, preparing to march down the aisle as part of the SMA’s annual flag presentation ceremony.

From left: International Vice-President William C. Walpert; International Vice-President & U.S. National Legislative Representative Leroy D. Jones; International Vice-President Paul T. Sorrow; General Secretary-Treasurer Russ Bennett; and First Vice-President & Alternate President James L. McCoy.

From left: Rick Skidmore, Local Chairman of BLE Division 782 in Etowah, Tenn., and John Norman, BLE Division 239 in Knoxville, Tenn.

The ballroom was filled with members who turned out for the opening ceremonies.
Three BLE local chairmen recently celebrated milestones in their lives by graduating from the National Labor College in Silver Spring, Md.

On June 24, R.J. Darcy of Division 373 (Trenton, N.J.), Mike Thiellen of Division 622 (Alliance, N.E.) and Bob Shaw of Division 292 (Beach City, Ohio) received Bachelor of Arts degrees from the National Labor College, which is on the campus of the George Meany Center. All three received their degrees in labor studies.

“These three local chairmen are to be commended for their hard work and dedication to their studies,” said BLE President Edward Dubroski. “They combined this dedication to their studies with their dedication to their members. This is an admirable feat!”

Mike Thiellen, who submitted senior projects that were received with honors by the college administration, said, “It was an excellent course of study. Brother Shaw said: “The environment was nurturing but intense.”

Shaw said there’s increasing interest among the administration of the National Labor College in information pertaining to the Railway Labor Act. His senior project highlighted this interest and presented new curriculum material under the Railway Labor Act, which covers both the airline and railroad industries.

Shaw is a Wheeling & Lake Erie locomotive engineer. He began his railroad career in 1971 and earned his promotion to engineer in 1974. The BLE organized the W&LE property in 1992, and Shaw first joined the BLE in 1984. He left the railroad to start his own business, and then hired on with the Penn Central. He was promoted to engineer in 1976 and has spent the past 15 years running passenger trains for New Jersey Transit.

Darcy was elected to office of local chairman of Division 373 in December 1997. On July 11, of 1998, he attended the BLE Local Chairman’s Workshop at the George Meany Center in Silver Springs, Md. Upon returning to his duties as Local Chairman, he enrolled in the National Labor College Bachelor’s Degree program at the George Meany Center. After two years of working full time, studying nights and weekends, Darcy finally completed all course requirements for a Bachelor’s Degree in Labor Studies.

“It is rare in today’s society for employees to spend so many years with one employer,” said BLE President Edward Dubroski. “The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers is truly blessed to have such an employee in Aud Balogh. On behalf of the 59,000 men and women of North America’s largest rail labor organization, I thank Brother Balogh for his loyalty and dedication.”

Brother Balogh was overwhelmed with the honor of being named as an honorary member of the BLE. He thanked the college administration for organizing the W&LE property, and presented new curriculum material under the Railway Labor Act. His senior project highlighted this interest and presented new curriculum material under the Railway Labor Act, which covers both the airline and railroad industries.

Thiellen said he was proud to be a member of the BLE because the union is so heavily involved in the AFL-CIO. "It is rare in today’s society for employees to spend so many years with one employer," said BLE President Edward Dubroski. “The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers is truly blessed to have such an employee in Aud Balogh. On behalf of the 50,000 men and women of North America’s largest rail labor organization, I thank Brother Balogh for his loyalty and dedication.”

The B&LE Advisory Board granted Balogh honorary membership in the B&LE on October 16, 1989. Balogh is one of only 14 honorary members in the 137-year history of the B&LE. He was nominated for honorary membership by B.G. Crawford, a member of the B&LE Division 507.

"Notwithstanding his love for our industry, he possesses an unparalleled knowledge of the railroad, its operation, rules, regulations, and much of its physical plant," wrote Crawford in a letter nominating Balogh for honorary B&LE membership. "He is a collector of railroad memorabilia and belongs to not less than three railroading historical societies. His knowledge of the ‘past’ Engineers Building and the ‘present’ Standard Building, their construction, design, costs, materials, use and history are beyond comprehension.”

Balogh was overwhelmed with the honor of becoming an honorary B&LE member. “I have three loves of my life,” he said. "My God, my wife and family, and this great Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers.” Balogh said.

Nominations for division officers begin in September; election in December

As outlined in Section 7(a) of the BLE Constitution & By-laws (page 64), nominations for BLE division officers will be held at the first regular meeting in September.

The Secretary-Treasurer of each division will post a notice stating the date, time and location of the September meeting (the notice may also be mailed). A member may be nominated for office whether he/she is at the meeting or not, but he/she must be a member in good standing at the time of nomination. The election of officers will be held at the first division meeting in December. Another notice will be posted stating the date, time and location of this meeting. At least 15 days before the meeting, the S-T will mail the printed ballot along with envelopes to each division member. After voting, the ballot can be mailed to the post office box for the division. The ballots will be counted at the December division meeting.
New UP GCA structure now in place

General Committees of adjustment reduced from 11 to six in streamlining move

Earlier this year, BLE members working for North America’s largest railroad voted to change their General Committee structure to reflect the impact of recent mergers involving the Union Pacific Railroad. The new structure is now in place, and general committee officers have been elected.

Union Pacific gained its tri- tantic status through various mergers and acquisitions over the past few years, most nota- bly the 1995 take-over of Chi- ego & NorthWestern and the 1997 acquisition of Southern Pacific. Prior to UP’s merger mania, BLE members on UP’s predecessors were repre- sented by 11 separate general committees of adjustment.

The resulting GCoA struc- ture was cumbersome and not cost effective. In approving the various UP mergers, the U.S. Surface Transportation Board used its “crum down” policy to force consolidation of various seniority districts and the elimination of a number of col- lective bargaining agreements. This “crum down” re- sulted in overlap- ping jurisdiction for several general committees.

In a December 30, 1999, letter to all BLE members on the UP, International President Dubroski proposed a modification to improve the UP general committee structure. The President’s proposed changes were approved by an overwhelming 52.54 percent of the rank-and-file UP members.

“While no one likes change— it creates much pain—we simply have to restructure our general committees for rea- sons of economy, efficiency, sound business principles and effective represen- tation,” the BLE President wrote.

“The maintenance of 11 separate committees, or even more as some suggest, is too costly and would require in- creases in dues or even debt. Furthermore, the committees must be formed in a fashion that can provide strong adequate and unsplintered representation for all members within their geographic jurisdiction.

“Only through...change...could we be reasonably as- sured of a financially stable, healthy organization on Union Pacific that will meet the present and future needs of you, the members, in negotiat- ing agreements and enforcing them.”

The new structure consists of six different general commit- tees of adjustment. The gen- eral chairmen who lead these six restructured committees are as follows:

- UP Northern Region GCoA (former CNW) is chaired by Bruce D. MacArthur;
- UP Eastern District GCoA is chaired by Michael Young;
- UP Western Region GCoA is chaired by Marv Mitchell;
- UP Western Lines GCoA is chaired by Lee Pruitt;
- UP Southern Region GCoA is chaired by Gil Gore; and
- UP Central Region GCoA is chaired by Charlie Righter.

Brother Gore is the only newly-elected general chair- man. The other five were in- cumbents from former GCoAs.

The six restructured GCoAs were formed from the following:

- Denver & Rio Grande Western Railway, the St. Louis Southwestern Railway, the Southern Pacific Transporta- tion Co. (Eastern Lines), the Southern Pacific Transporta- tion Co. (Former PE Lines), the Southern Pacific Transporta- tion Co. (Western Lines), the SPUSL, Union Pacific Southern Region, UP Eastern Region, UP Central Region, UP West- ern Region, and the former Chicago & North Western Transporta- tion Co.

Dubroski addresses British locomotive engineers union

BEL International President Edward Dubroski addressed the Associated Society of Lo- comotive Engineers and Firemen at the union’s 129th annual convention in London, England, on June 15.

The BLE’s British counterpart, the ASLEF, represents locomotive engineers and firemen in Great Britain. Dubroski was invited to speak as a guest of the ASLEF after a delegation of ASLEF representatives visited the BLE’s International Division in Cleveland late last summer.

Dubroski’s speech fo- cused on the challenges facing rail labor, such as new technology, in the wake of international railroad mergers and multi-national railroad ownership.

“A number of U.S. railroads are heavily in- vested in railroads out- side the States. As an example, I would point to the Wisconsin Central Railroad, which has own- ership interests in New Zealand, and in the En- glish, Welsh and Scottish Railway.

“Because labor laws pertaining to union rep- resentation in New Zealand differ from the United States, the Wis- consin Central is using that country as a proving ground for remote control locomotive and engi- neer-only crew opera- tions, for introduction in the U.S. when the bugs are worked out.

“The challenge be- fore us today is to expand our horizonsto meet the employees on the new, enlarged field of battle they have created. That means building ties among unions represent- ing railroad workers that span the world. Through international solidarity we can strengthen our- selves at home.

“We must build rela- tionships and exchange information and views, for the betterment of North American engi- neers and British drivers alike.

“During the past year, we have begun to forge those bonds.”

“The best defense against the tyranny of in- ternational capital is through international la- bor solidarity, and I thank you for accepting the BLE as a partner in this endeavor.”

PRE-REGISTRATION FORM
65TH S.W.C.M.

NAME _________________________________
SPOUSE ________________________________
COMPLETE ADDRESS ____________________________ ZIP ______

RAILROAD & DIV. NO. _______________________
UNION TITLE _______________________________
GIA DIV. NO. & TITLE __________________________

CONVENTION FEE: $75.00 PER PERSON ______ PERSONS= ______

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: 65th S.W.C.M. TOTAL= ______

SEND PRE-REGISTRATION TO: J.A. KEELE, REGIONAL TREASURER, 28420 OLD KANSAS CITY RD., PAOLA, KS 66071.

PRE-REGISTRATION IS DUE BY SEPTEMBER 5, 2000.

REGISTRATIONS RECEIVED AFTER THAT DATE AND ON SITE AT THE CONVENTION WILL HAVE AN ADDITIONAL $25.00 PER PERSON CHARGE FOR A TOTAL OF $100.00 PER PERSON

CONVENTION FEE, IF YOU DO NOT ATTEND THE CONVENTION YOUR MONEY WILL BE REFUNDED UPON WRITTEN REQUEST TO THE TREASURER.

CHECK THE EVENTS YOU WISH TO ATTEND:

Monday: ___ Old St. Charles/Station Casino or ___ Museum of Transportation ___ Designated Counsel Reception

Tuesday: ___ BRCF Luncheon ___ BLE-GIA Banquet

Wednesday: ___ Designated Counsel Luncheon ___ Cardinals Baseball Game

Thursday: ___ Designated Counsel Luncheon ___ GIA Trip ___ Reception
Bill to alter Railroad Retirement introduced

Railroad Retirement
Continued from Page 1

The U.S. Railroad Retirement Board will conduct a free informational conference in Fort Worth, Texas. On-site registration begins at 8 a.m. with sessions starting promptly at 8:30 a.m. All sessions end at 12:30 p.m. To be held at the Holiday Inn South, 100 Alta Mesa East Blvd.

JUNE 24-28, 2001… 7th Southeastern Meeting Association in Pine Mountain, Ga. At the beautiful Callaway Gardens resort. See page 4 of this issue for details.

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THE LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEER NEWSLETTER
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers
Since 1863, a Tradition of Forward Thinking

THE Locomotive Engineer Newsletter (ISSN # 0899-8620) is published monthly for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. Main office: 1919 E. 97th Street, Chicago, IL 60620. Periodicals postage paid at Chicago, OH and additional mailing offices.

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