Members of Congress focus on Rail Security Day

Rail security funded less than airline security

BLET and Teamster members joined members of Congress on June 21 to speak out about the state of rail security in the nation at rallies across the country. Among those holding press conferences or rallies were Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) at Grand Central terminal in New York City and Congresswoman Sherrerd Brown (D-OH) at the Amtrak station in Akron, Ohio. "I thank Congresswoman Maloney and Congresswoman Brown for taking leadership roles on rail security," BLET National President Don Hahs said. "I thank all members of Congress for focusing on rail security as well as all BLET members who participated in the rallies on June 21.

"The Bush administration is failing to address the threat posed by hazardous materials routed on rails through high target areas. Since 9/11, the government has been focused on airline security while leaving the rails virtually unprotected," said Jim Hoffa, Teamsters General President. "While more attention has been paid to passenger train security in the U.S. after the Madrid bombings, freight rail security has been ignored. With the nation's elevated threat level, much more needs to be done to secure our rail system." Unlike the airline industry, the rail industry has been left to its own devices to protect against potential terrorist attacks. In fact, the rail industry has introduced cost-cutting measures that have replaced federally certified locomotive engineers with remote control technology, leaving locomotives unmanned.

See Rail Security, Page 2

See Don Hahs Letter, Page 2

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BLET responds to UTU President

BLET is a member of the IBT Rail Conference and that any discussion would now have to include the IBT. I offered to set up a meeting between UTU and IBT representatives to determine if any common ground for additional discussions could be found. BLET did not request to be a part of the proposed meeting. You refused to meet.

In the same discussion, you related several concerns about IBT, to which I said that a meeting may allay what appeared to be personal concerns you have with IBT. I also suggested you survey the UTU membership to determine if they are interested in UTU opening discussions with IBT. A suggestion you also refused. At that time, while you were not receptive to a meeting with IBT, I did not believe you had drawn a line in the sand on the issue.

Now I find at the end of your July 14, 2004, web page post titled “UTU responds to BLET letter,” that the UTU’s failure to join together with other rail unions has seriously undercut the collective strength of all rail labor at the bargaining table. Your members know that the Teamsters Union has a well-deserved reputation for getting good contracts for its members in the transportation sector, from United Parcel Service to the major freight companies, to air freight, to car haul, and elsewhere. And your members know that the Teamster’s commitment is to re-establishing strength and solidarity in rail labor through the recent merger with the BLET, the pending merger with the BWEB and IBT’s overtures to other rail unions. IBT has guaranteed to preserve the autonomy of these proud organizations while supporting them in their fight to regain strong contracts for their members. BLET members overwhelmingly approved the merger with the Teamsters. A recent poll shows the vast majority of BWEB members support a similar merger. When you tried to raid the Teamster/BLET General Committee at
of the leadership of the UTU to destroy the BLET, you should remember the most recent effort of your Legis- lative Department to get a bill introduced in the House of Representatives which would require the National Mediation Board to conduct a survey of all railroad employees described in Subsection A of that rail car- rier, the labor organization with the greatest number of members who were surveyed under this proposed bill. I am enclosing a copy of this proposed bill for your reference.

• And last but by far not least, UTU, after com- mitting more than once to work with the BLET on re- moted control, entered into a letter of intent with the other union of raiding in view of the fact that the last several months more than 1,500 former UTU mem- bers have seen the wisdom in joining the BLET and recognizing the strength that the Teamsters bring to rail labor.

• Do you remember the petition filed by former UTU President Charles Little in January 1988 with the National Labor Board attempting to get the Board to rule that a single craft existed on the Union Pacific Railroad and force a representation election on that property? The bill would require the NMB to cer- tify for each rail carrier as a representative of the membership of those employees in any labor or- ganization? The bill would require the NMB to cer- tify for each rail carrier as a representative of the employees described in Subsection A of that rail car- rier, the labor organization with the greatest number of members who were surveyed under this proposed bill.

• Do you remember the petition filed with the National Mediation Board by the UTU in 2001 for a single craft determination and a representation elec- tion on the Kansas City Southern Railroad?

• Do you remember the “war chest” created at the 1986 UTU convention to destroy the BLET?

• If you do not remember those efforts on the part of the leadership of the UTU to destroy the BLET, you should remember the most recent effort of your Legis- lative Department to get a bill introduced in the House of Representatives which would require the National Mediation Board to conduct a survey of all railroad employees described in the first division of Section 3 (h) of the Railway Labor Act to determine the membership of those employees in any labor or- ganization? The bill would require the NMB to cer- tify for each rail carrier as a representative of the employees described in Subsection A of that rail car- rier, the labor organization with the greatest number of members who were surveyed under this proposed bill.

• I find it outlandish that the UTU would accuse any other union of raiding in view of the fact that the last several months more than 1,500 former UTU mem- bers have seen the wisdom in joining the BLET and recognizing the strength that the Teamsters bring to rail labor.

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CSX transportation

According to recent articles by the Associated Press and the Huntington Dispatch, CSX Transportation has put up for bid or lease two major routes in West Virginia and western Maryland, potentially affecting as many as 250 union jobs. Don Hahs, National President of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, said the BLET is opposed to such a sale or lease. The UTU spokesman also attempted to downplay the significance of nonunion shortlines by stating that, “the BLET holds more than nearly labor contracts with all other unions combined.”

As devastating as this sale or lease could be to CSX employees, United Transportation Union spokesman Frank Wilner said that the UTU “would not necessarily oppose” the lease or sale of the line. The UTU spokesman also attempted to downplay the significance of nonunion shortlines by stating that, “the BLET holds more than nearly labor contracts with all other unions combined.”

BLET short-term disability insurance available in October

As a result of the last national contract, many members of the BLET will soon be able to take advantage of a short-term disability program obtained by the National Division through MetLife. The effective date of the plan is October 1. However, those who become disabled after July 1 will be able to go under this “Bosnian Amendment” the UTU attempted to make sure it is defeated if introduced. The BLET is at it again, seeking backdoor takeover of BLET membership

The United Transportation Union is at it again, seeking another backdoor attempt to raid membership of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen. Right now, the UTU is looking for someone to sponsor legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives that would force the BLET into an all-out war on the nation’s railroads. The proposed bill would allow the National Mediation Board (NMB) to conduct a survey of all locomotive engineers, conductors and trainmen who work for Class 1 railroads. Based on this survey, the NMB would certify a single union to represent all the workers.

According to the proposed legislation, the single surviving union would be the union with the most members at the time the election. Currently, the UTU has slightly more members than the BLET. The bill does not have a sponsor and has not been assigned a bill number. However, BLET and IRT lobbyists in Washington, D.C. are working to make sure it is defeated if introduced. This backdoor attempt is similar to the “Bosnian Amendment” the UTU attempted to pass in 1997 and the single operating craft idea introduced in 1998.

The UTU News is at it again, seeking backdoor takeover of BLET membership

The UTU News is at it again, seeking backdoor takeover of BLET membership. “The UTU is at it again,” said BLET President Don Hahs, “trying to take by force what it cannot have any other way.” When given the opportunity to voluntarily merge with the UTU in 2001, our membership overwhelmingly voted no. Apparently, some people just can’t take “no” for an answer.

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Three General Chairmen win reelection bids

Austin Morrison, Tom Roberts and Dennis Pierce were all reelected to their general chairman offices in recent months, according to reports received by the BLET Public Relations Department.

BNSF (former C&S, CH&IP, FWD)

General Chairman Austin Morrison won reelection by acclamation at the Burlington Northern Santa Fe General Committee of Adjustment’s triennial meetings in Amarillo, Texas, from June 15-16. He is a member of BLET Division 574 in Amarillo, Texas.

Brother B.J. Brown of Division 574 was also reelected by acclamation to his post as First Vice-Chairman of the BNSF GCofA, which represents the former C&S, CH&IP and FWD properties.

Also winning elections were: Terry D. Sutton of Division 186 (Denver, Colo.), who will serve as Second Vice-General Chairman; and T.R. Williamson of Division 430 (Trinidad, Colo.), who will serve as Secretary-Treasurer.

National Vice-President Stephen D. Spangle attended the meetings and addressed the delegates on a number of issues of national importance.

CSX Northern District (Conrail Shared Assets)

Brother Tom Roberts of BLET Division 601 (Newark, N.J.) has been reelected General Chairman of the CSXT Northern District (Conrail Shared Assets) General Committee of Adjustment.

Reelected to the office of General Vice-Chairman was W.J. Lyons of Division 46 (Albany, N.Y.). Reelected to the office of Assistant Secretary-Treasurer was R.E. Smale of Division 851 (Philadelphia).

A July 9 remote control accident in Pine Bluff, Ark., underscored a number of concerns the BLET shared with the Federal Railroad Administration during recent safety meetings in Washington, D.C.

BLET National President Don M. Hahs recently visited Capitol Hill for top level meetings with Betty Monroe, Acting Administrator of the FRA, and Congressman James Oberstar, Ranking Democrat on the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee.

A Union Pacific remote control job (6545 VT 738 EERR) went through a control point on the Jonesboro Subdivision, crashing into the side of a train on a mainline track that was carrying hazardous materials. The remote control unit hit the freight train on the mainline track that was carrying hazardous materials, and this accident could have resulted in a major spill.

Hazardous Materials

The train on mainline track was carrying hazardous materials, and this accident could have resulted in a major spill. The accident highlighted several of the safety concerns the BLET has raised regarding the unregulated operation of remote control locomotives, including:

1. **Lack of Training**
   - Both employees were deemed "qualified" to operate remote control locomotives by Union Pacific but had relatively little railroad experience.
   - One employee had only nine paid trips under his belt.

2. **Inexperience**
   - In spite of their inexperience, Union Pacific managers assigned a trainee to work with the crew.

3. **Safety Overridden**
   - The accident happened on a mainline track. The Union Pacific’s failsafe method to allow remote control movement without proper point protection is an automatic train stop system. Transponders known as a "puck," cause remote control trains to slow or stop as they approach mainline tracks. In this case, the puck system was disabled — per instructions from Union Pacific management — allowing the remote control train to enter mainline track.

4. **Efficiency Over Safety**
   - According to reports from the field, the automatic train stop system was overridden in an effort to increase productivity of the remote control job.

5. **Lack of Accountability**
   - According to reports, the Union Pacific did not originally report this accident to the National Transportation Safety Board as a remote control accident. Nor was remote control reported to the local newspaper, which carried a story on the incident.

6. **Remote Control Wreck Reinforces BLET’s Safety Concerns**

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The accident happened in Pine Bluff, Ark., where the City Council had passed a safety resolution seeking to ban remote control train operations in February of 2003.

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Remote Control

Continued from Page 4

Remote Control Ban

The city of Pine Bluff, Ark., was one of the first cities in the nation to pass a resolution banning remote control train operations. Citing many of the safety problems involved in the July 9 accident, the Pine Bluff City Council passed a resolution banning remote control train operations on February 18, 2003.

Conclusion

“This situation is absolutely disgraceful,” said BLET National President Don M. Hahs. “That remote control job was attached to over 100 cars; it was operated by raw recruits; safety controls were purposely overridden for productivity’s sake; hazardous materials were involved; and all of this happened in a city that had passed a safety resolution seeking to ban remote control train operations in the name of public safety.

“The BLET will continue in its pursuit of safe train operations throughout the United States, and will endeavor to ensure that accidents such as this are not swept under the rug.” Hahs concluded. •

Delegates and invited guests attending recent Montana State Legislative Board meetings pose on the pilot of a remote control train operations on February 18, 2003. Pine Bluff City Council passed a resolution banning remote control train operations in the name of public safety.

Montana State Legislative Board marks 100th anniversary

The month of May marked the 100th anniversary of the founding of the BLET Montana State Legislative Board, and was acknowledged at a meeting of the Board held in Billings, Montana, May 21-22.

In addition to BLET Division Legislative Representatives from Montana, several invited guests attended, including: Edward W. Rodzwicz, BLET First Vice President; Raymond Holmes, BLET Vice President & National Legislative Representative; Dale McPherson, BLET Vice President and a founding member of Division 180 in Glendive, Mont.; Dennis Pierce, BNSF-MRL General Chairman, and Mike Muscha, Chairman of the North Dakota State Legislative Board.

The Guest of Honor was Brother Calvin Burr, former Montana State Legislative Board Chairman and oldest surviving past Chairman. Brother Burr is a long-time member of Division 392 (Havre, Mont.) and started his railroad career on the Great Northern railroad in the days of the steam engines.

During the business meeting, Montana State Legislative Board Chairman Craig Gilchrist read aloud out of the original hand-written journal containing the minutes from the meeting when the Board was first formed on May 17, 1904.

The journal, which has been preserved over the years, is now a keepsake of the Board.

He noted with interest, that in reviewing the old journal, it reflects discussions as many as 40 years ago about the matter of locomotive engineer licensing.

“The Board has a long history of activism and involvement in the political process in Montana in defense of working men and women, a past of which our members can be proud, and one of which I am honored to continue,” said Chairman Gilchrist.

He noted that Montana was the first state to have every Division in the State affiliated with the Montana AFL-CIO and counts that as another means by which the cause of railworkers can be advanced.

In addition to the anniversary celebration, the Board members attended a Railroad Retirement informational conference, met with officials of the Federal Railroad Administration, heard reports from several BLET officers attending, and held a business meeting.

The attendees gathered May 21-22 in Billings to mark the 100th anniversary of the Board and to conduct their quadrennial business meeting.

Front row, from left: Evan Schroedel, Division 504 (Great Falls, Mont.); BLET National Vice-President D.L. McPherson (Division 180, Glendive, Mont.); BNSF-MRL General Chairman Dennis Pierre; and Montana State Legislative Board Chairman Craig Gilchrist, Division 298 (Glasgow, Mont.).

Middle row: Barry Green, Division 180 (Glendive, Mont.); BLET Vice-President & U.S. National Legislative Representative Raymond Holmes; Retired Montana State Legislative Board Chairman Calvin Burr, Division 392 (Havre, Mont.); BLET First Vice-President Edward W. Rodzwicz; and MSLB Alternate Secretary-Treasurer Dave Torgerson, Division 499 (Whitefish, Mont.).

Back row: North Dakota State Legislative Board Chairman Mike Muscha; MSLB Secretary-Treasurer Duane Wetch, Division 195 (Forsyth, Mont.); Jim Cowan, Division 262 (Missoula, Mont.); and MSLB Vice-Chairman Murray Hurlburt, Division 392 (Havre, Mont.).

Present but not pictured is former MSLB Chairman D.B. Ditzel, Division 232 (Laurel, Mont.).

On June 19 in Davenport, Iowa, employees of the Iowa, Chicago and Eastern (IC&E) Railroad represented by the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) held a rally to kick off a campaign to win a first contract with the short-line railroad.

The BLET members are looking to secure a labor agreement that establishes better working conditions that will allow them to spend quality time with their families, pay parity with employees at IC&E parent company Cedar American Rail Holding’s other short line railroads, and affordable family health insurance.

“It’s time for Kevin Schieffer, CEO of the IC&E, to respect the hard work of the employees who have helped make this railroad a success,” said Dustin Heichel, General Chairman, ILET-Iowa, Chicago and Eastern Railroad. •

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In addition to the anniversary celebration, the Board members attended a Railroad Retirement informational conference, met with officials of the Federal Railroad Administration, heard reports from several BLET officers attending, and held a business meeting.

Election of officers also took place during the meeting. Chairman Gilchrist was re-elected as Chairman. He is a member of Division 298 in Glasgow, Mont. Murray Hurlburt of Division 392 (Havre, Mont.) was elected to the office of Vice-Chairman; Duane C. Wetsch of Division 195 (Forsyth, Mont.) was elected Secretary-Treasurer; and Dave Torgerson of Division 499 (Whitefish, Mont.) was elected Alternate Secretary-Treasurer.
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General Chairmen

Continued from Page 4

include: Don L. Helander of Division 499
(Whitfield, Mont.), First Alternate Vice-Chairman; Rick A. Olson of Division 746
(Manaud, N.D.), Second Alternate Vice-Chairman; and Charlie E. Sheets of Division
13 (LaCrosse, Wisc.), Third Alternate Vice-Chairman.

The meetings began on June 28, with 44 delegates in attendance. The delegates have considered numerous issues, including some amendments to the General Committee bylaws.

Delegates also heard a detailed financial report by GCoA Secretary-Treasurer Jim Nelson.

BLT National President Don M. Hahs expressed his deepest sympathy to the Pape family on behalf of all the members of the BLT.

He is the sixth member of the BLT to lose his life in an on-the-job accident in 2004. On May 19, BLT Division 172 (Fort Worth, Texas) member E.M. "Mike" Rogers, 49, was killed in a head-on train collision near Gunter, Texas. On May 18, BLT Division 196 (Muscle, Miss.) member Jeff C. York, 35, was killed in a Norfolk Southern switching accident in Elwood, Ind. On February 21, Anthony C. Bodekia, 57, and Jeffrey S. Bohler, 32, were killed in a collision of two Union Pacific trains in Carrizozo, N.M. Both Brothers belonged to Division 192 in El Paso, Texas. BLT Division 230 (Meridian, Miss.) member Dennis Vinson was killed in a collision between his Norfolk Southern train and a gasoline tanker on June 25. He was 58 years old.

Brother Heath Pape, a member of BLT Division 197 in San Antonio, Texas, was killed in a collision between a Union Pacific train and a BNNSF train on June 29. Brother Pape had just joined the BLT. He was 23 years old.

Brother Pape's father, E.G. Pape, has been a member of BLT Division 197 since 1962.

Brother Pape had served as a yard official and a road foreman, and had previously been a yard supervisor.

The collision unleashed a cloud of chlorine gas and ammonium nitrate. The wreck derailed 48 cars in a rural area southwest of San Antonio. Fire officials say as many as 50 people suffered minor respiratory irritation.

Funeral services were held on July 2 at the United Methodist Church in LaVernia, Texas.

Don Hahs Letter

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Don Hahs Letter

Continued from Page 1

The driver of the truck caused the accident by disregarding safety signals. Shortly before the crash, Blount had picked up more than 8,000 gallons of gasoline at the Chalmette Refining plant. The billowing black smoke resulting from the explosion hung in the air and could be seen across the metro New Orleans area.

BLT National President Don Hahs extended deepest sympathy to the Vinson family on behalf of the 50,000 members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen. He ordered the flag at National Division headquarters in Cleveland, Ohio, to be flown at half-mast in honor of our Brother who lost his life in the line of duty.

Brother Vinson joined the BLT on June 1, 1960.

Services for Brother Vinson were held on June 29 at the Fielding Funeral Home in Covington, Louisiana. *
Important advisory to all active members

The Federal Railroad Administration recently held a meeting in Jacksonville, Fla., with representatives of rail labor and all Class I railroads in mid-June to discuss an alarming trend in employee drug and alcohol testing results. The FRA expressed concern over a recent increase in the number of positive drug and alcohol results in post-accident testing as well as an increase in the number of positives in random testing.

The rate of testing in the industry is dictated by the percentage of positive tests. The Code of Federal Regulations reads as follows: “219.608 (b) The (Federal Railroad) Administrator’s decision to increase or decrease the minimum annual percentage rate for random alcohol testing is based on the violation rate for the entire industry. “219.608 (c)(1) “(1) When the minimum annual percentage rate for random alcohol testing is 25 percent or more, the Administrator may lower this rate to 10 percent of all covered employees if the Administrator determines that the data received under the reporting requirements of §219.800 for two consecutive calendar years indicate that the violation rate is less than 0.5 percent. “219.608(c)(2) “(2) When the minimum annual percentage rate for random alcohol testing is 50 percent, the Administrator may lower this rate to 25 percent of all covered employees if the Administrator determines that the data received under the reporting requirements of §219.800 for two consecutive calendar years indicate that the violation rate is less than 0.5 percent.

In a similar way, the Administrator determines the drug testing rate. “219.602(c) When the minimum annual percentage rate for random drug testing is 50 percent, the Administrator may lower this rate to 25 percent of all covered employees if the Administrator determines that the data received under the reporting requirements of §219.800 for two consecutive calendar years indicate that the reported positive rate is less than 1.0 percent but equal to or greater than 0.5 percent.”

The FRA has allowed for carriers to develop programs for employees, such as Operation Redblock and Operation Stop. It was noted at the meetings in Jacksonville that some carriers are no longer supporting these self-help programs. The employee assistance programs are extremely important, and BLET members can play a key role in reversing this alarming trend by taking a more active role in these self-help programs.

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BLET response to UTU President

Don Hahs Letter

Continued from Page 6

The IIBT fought Overnite for three years until the IBT was betrayed by a federal court decision that came out of Overnite’s home town in Richmond, Virginia. Even so, Overnite had to spend hundreds of millions of dollars opposing IBT. And, because of IBT’s aggressiveness, Overnite employees saw their wages increase by more than $5 per hour and now enjoy many other improvements.

It is interesting that you raise Central States Pension Fund, since nothing at Central States could affect rail employees who are, as you point out, covered by Railroad Retirement. The problems at Central States are no different from those affecting hundreds of other pension funds as a result of the adverse equity markets in 2000-2002. IBT is working hard with the government, employers and pension experts to preserve good Teamster pensions and to solve these problems.

Mr. Thompson, it’s easy to throw stones and spread disinformation to mislead, but that will not help rebuild Rail Labor. The reality is that everyone knows that Rail Labor is in crisis and that unity and solidarity are the only way forward. We call on you to put aside the rancor and look at what is best for the members of UTU and Rail Labor as a whole.

Very truly yours,

[Signature]
Don M. Hahs
President
New FRA rule proposal targets hearing loss in train crews

A new rule proposed by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) seeks to prevent hearing loss by railroad employees who spend most of their working hours inside the cab of a locomotive.

The FRA entered the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) into the Federal Register on June 30. The new rule would require train crew members to use hearing protection and would establish regulatory standards through a collaborative process with all segments of the rail industry.

The NPRM is available at http://dms.dot.gov/. The DOT Docket Number is FRA-2002-12557. The 90-day comment period will be followed by a meeting of the Railroad Safety Advisory Committee (RSAC). RSAC will review those comments before the Final Rule is published.

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