Good afternoon. This is an historic day. I join my brother Andy Stern and the great SEIU in a joint announcement. I am here today to announce that the General Executive Board of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters has unanimously voted to withdraw our membership from the AFL-CIO. This decision has been reached through a lengthy and thoughtful process. It has been a difficult decision to make and we do not take this step lightly.

The Teamsters General Executive Board is directly elected by our 1.4 million members to chart the course of our great union. And after months of discussion and deliberation, we have made our decision as a matter of principle and have decided on a new course of action.

We submitted, in good faith, proposals to dramatically change the direction of the AFL-CIO to stem the losses that we have endured over the past decade. We proposed that the AFL-CIO embark on a new course of action that would not only protect our existing Teamster members and their families, but also encourage thousands of new working men and women having the opportunity to organize into a strong union that would give them the chance to achieve the American dream — to own their own home, send their kids to college and plan a strong retirement.

In our view, we must have more union members in order to change the political climate that is undercutting workers' rights in this country. The AFL-CIO has chosen the opposite approach. (The July 25) decision means that we have chosen a course of growth and strength for the American Labor Movement based on organizing new members. We have partnered with seven strong and progressive unions in the Change to Win coalition to organize the unorganized and create real power for the working families of America.

Earlier (on July 25) the leadership of the Change to Win coalition met with our respective organizing directors to set in motion a process of building larger scale strategic organizing capacity. This is just the beginning of a new era for America’s workers. And let me be clear, the Teamsters will remain the bulwark of the labor movement. Striking workers, no matter what union they belong to, can always count on the Teamsters for support and assistance. That is our history and tradition and we will never waiver from our proud role as defenders of America’s working families.

We will continue to work with our brothers and sisters in the Building Trades, in State Federations and Central Labor Councils to achieve justice for all working people. But let me be clear; our coalition will not allow corporate America to pit one union against another to the detriment of our members and their families.

We wish our brothers and sisters that remain in the AFL-CIO the best of luck in their efforts. We pledge cooperation with the AFL-CIO on all the fronts that affect working families. •

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**Don Hahs statement on disaffiliation — Page 8**

By a vote of 17-4, the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation approved S. 1516, the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2005, on July 28.

The Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act is a six-year reauthorization bill (FY 2006-2011), which provides for Amtrak’s capital and operating needs to maintain current operations, upgrade equipment, and return the Northeast Corridor (NEC) to a state of good repair. Over the life of the bill, Amtrak’s operating subsidies are reduced by 40 percent through cost cutting, reengineering, and reform while capital funding is increased. The bill creates an intercity passenger rail capital grant program for the States.

Senator Trent Lott (R-MS), Chairman of the Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine Sub-committee, sponsored the bill along with Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Committee Chairman Ted Stevens (R-AK), Co-Chairman Daniel Inouye (D-HI), Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) and Senator John D. Rockafeller IV (D-WV).

“This is a new, innovative option for Amtrak funding,” Senator Lott said.

The proposal would use Amtrak’s operating subsidies, but would increase the amount the federal government gives Amtrak to maintain its infrastructure. Other Senators said that this bill was proof that this Congress is committed to Amtrak funding.

“Every other country gives their passenger railroad subsidies,” Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) said.

Senator Conrad Burns (R-MT), an Amtrak supporter, said that there had never been a Congress that has had a commitment to the rail carrier. Senator Burns also made a commitment to the locomotive engineers on Amtrak.

“We need a commitment to the public, right down to the people who drive the trains,” Senator Burns said.

“This is the first time in a long time that Congress has made a commitment to long-term funding,” said BLET National President Don M. Hahs.

It would be hard for Amtrak to attract enough private financing to make up for all the subsidies, and it would be very difficult to win private investment in the company’s long-distance routes. This passenger railroad reauthorization bill centers around three themes: reform and accountability, adequate funding for intercity passenger rail, and passenger rail service improvement.

The bill would restructure Amtrak’s debt, now about $1.7 billion. It also would require the company to provide periodic performance reports on some of its long-distance lines.

While introducing an amendment to the bill, Senator Hutchison noted the need for a commitment to a national railroad system and hoped for further cooperation of the freight railroads.

Senator Inouye noted that even though Amtrak does not run in his state, he still supports funding for the carrier.

“In Hawaii, we have a narrow gauge railroad that runs for a mile and a half, and in spite of this, I continue to support Amtrak,” he said.

The details of bill, consisting of over 110 pages, and including more than two dozen amendments that were introduced during mark-up, are being reviewed by the BLET’s National Legislative Department. •

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**Members vote on Division size initiative**

As part of the merger document with the Teamsters, BLET members will consider a constitutional provision this month that may impact the size of local divisions.

In question is Section 37(b) of the Brotherhood’s bylaws, which calls for a membership vote on whether they want to keep divisions at their current size or merge them with other divisions if active membership in the division falls below 25.

Divisions that have less than 25 members are protected by a grandfather clause contained in Section 37(b), identified as Note 1. If members vote to remove this protection, then divisions with less than 25 members may be merged with other divisions on the same seniority district or a division under the same general committee of adjudication. Currently, there are 54 divisions that have less than 25 members.

The BLET National Division is required to put this question to a membership vote by Note 2 of Section 37(b).

Section 37(b) reads as follows:

> “37 (b) If the membership of any di-

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**War for Amtrak funding not over**

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“We need a commitment to the public, right down to the people who drive the trains,” Senator Burns said.

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President Hahs letter to all NS trainmen

Looking toward the future will benefit members more than dwelling on the past

(ULET Editor’s Note: The following is the text of a letter sent to all Norfolk Southern conductors and trainmen by BLET National President Don M. Hahs on June 16.)

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Over the past month or so, outlandish and outrageous statements, web-postings, DVDs and mailings from the UTU concerning the BLET’s Award campaign on the Norfolk Southern property have rained down on you. Let’s be clear, this campaign started because many of you approached the BLET and said you no longer wanted UTU representing you. You wanted what we got when we merged with the BLET, the largest and most powerful transportation union in the world.

The communications you have received from UTU have largely dealt with the issues in the past. Look, we can debate and burden you with correspondence concerning the BLET’s issue on the Norfolk Southern in 1994 or the UTU’s signing of the infamous Halloweeen Agreement of 1985, from now until doomsday.

The point of the matter is the past is the past and there is not a tinker’s damn to be done about it. We are concerned about the future. The BLET has a tradition of forward thinking. That tradition will continue.

You are looking for better representation by a union that will fight for a more secure future rather than one that engages in syndicalist maneuverings about the past. The BLET/Teamsters ARE IN THIS UNION.

If you sign an Award for representation by the BLET/Teamsters and elect the BLET/Teamsters as your representative, will it solve all your problems? The answer is: IT WOULD BE a DISASTER FROM FINE START.

When the BLET begins representing you as conductors and trainmen, you will decide whether you want to have your own general committee of adjustment and your own divisions or whether you want to be a part of the existing structure of the BLET. That decision will be up to you.

Regarding existing crew consist agreements, those agreements remain in full force and effect when the BLET becomes your representative. ONLY NEGOTIATIONS AND MEMBERSHIP RATIFICATION CAN CHANGE THOSE AGREEMENTS.

Only conductors and trainmen will vote on the ratification of an agreement that affects conductors and trainmen. Therefore, if there is any change in crew consist agreements, only your votes on ratification will change.

So union, especially in the rail industry, can guarantee you everything you desire. However, the BLET/Teamsters have already provided you a new approach to bargaining with the carriers through the development of the Rail Labor Bargaining Coalition (RLBC) agreements. The BLET/Teamsters represent nearly 85,000 rail workers.

Since the 1980s, the NCCC has assumed master contract bargaining on behalf of the majority of the carriers. For the first time in decades, rail unions are joining in a coalition to make sure our members get a fair contract. By presenting a unified front at the bargaining table, members of the Rail Coalition have taken an important step in combating rail management’s divide and conquer bargaining strategy.

The BLET/Teamsters are using every resource of the nation’s largest and most powerful transportation union in this round of bargaining to continue to do so in all future endeavors on behalf of our members. Everything the BLET has asked of the Teamsters, they have provided to the BLET.

Now, the central question for you, as a UTU member, is: ARE YOU STRONGER STANDING ALONE OR ARE YOU STRONGER STANDING UNITED WITH OTHER RAIL UNIONS IN THE TEAMSTERS RAIL CONFERENCE? The Teamsters have the most powerful negotiating skills and the most effective political power. Rail labor needs to stand together, protecting each other rather than bickering over the real enemy – the Carriers – whose profits are measured in billions of dollars.

WHY THE TEAMSTERS?

Because the Teamsters’ history of negotiating strong contracts is unparalleled. Teamster contracts have among the highest wages, best benefits, safest workplace and other standards.


The Teamsters are America’s strongest and largest transportation union. With 1.4 million members in 500 locals and 40 Joint Councils, the Teamsters have extraordinary financial resources — $140 million a year at the International level and $850 million a year at the Local union level. The Rail Conference is a key component of the Teamsters’ vision of a comprehensive transportation union – rails and roads, ports and planes.

Contrary to popular belief, the Teamsters are not mostly a truckers union. In fact, truck drivers represent less than 10 percent of Teamsters members. The Teamsters represent workers from a wide cut of America’s transportation workforce, including workers in rail, ports, air cargo, passenger air, trucking and package delivery.

The Teamsters dedicates $15 million annually to organizing and conducts more NLRB and NMB elections every year than any other union in the U.S. Over the past ten years, the Teamsters membership has remained stable, while other unions’ membership has declined.

The Teamster Union is this nation’s most powerful political and bar None. Member power merged with financial power translates into political power.

The future for railroad workers now is uncertain. The BLET/Teamsters promise to use every resource available to provide you with the best representation and best collective bargaining agreements possible. We feel that this can be better accomplished using the strength of the Teamsters and the unity of the Rail Labor Bargaining Coalition (RLBC). Coming together, staying united, we are all stronger.

In Solidarity,

Don M. Hahs

National President

BLET member reminds UTU leader of reality

(ULET Editor’s Note: What follows are portions of a letter from former UTU member and BLET Member Chris Kopf to UTU National Legislative Director Jim Brunkenhoefer)

Mr. James Brunkenhoefer

UTU National Legislative Director

304 Pennsylvania Ave, S.E.

Washington, DC 20003-1130

Dear Mr. Brunkenhoefer:

After reading from the United Transportation Union web site, and from a circular that they put out, I felt the need to rebut some of the things that they have said.

As you know I was a member of both the UTU and the BLET and double headed whenever I wasn’t serving as an officer of the union. My feeling was, if I wanted a voice I had better be a member. I was a UTU-E Local Chair for a good many years on the Penn Central Railroad and on Conrail before switching to the BLET. I switched for good, after seeing first hand how craft autonomy worked within the UTU re-garding engine service members.

The UTU says, “Crew-consist and remote control agreements protect UTU members from total elimination via the adverse effects of new technology.” The truth is, the October 31, 1985 UTU agreement allowed engineers who couldn’t hold an engineer’s position due to the adverse effects of new technology to bump onto a trainman’s position. If RC operators are doing more work than the engineers they replaced, shouldn’t the RC operators make at least as much as the engineers that they replaced? The only person the UTU has ever protected was the pre-85 trainman.

History is clear, the UTU has bargained away the craft and class of firemen, and bargain away the jobs of flagmen, brakemen, and engineers. They now want to roll conductors and engineers into an bastard craft that is neither conductor nor engineer. They are willing to sell engineers’ and conductors’ rights and seniority away in order to be the sole representative for whoever or whatever is left.

If the NS trainmen elect to be represented by the BLET, they will be able to enjoy self determination for their own craft. They may choose to have their own general committees if they so wish. Trainmen will have their own local chairman, who will address issues that are unique to their craft. They will have the right to vote on their own contracts. The door is now open for all rail labor to join together in one strong union.

Fraternally Yours,

C.F. Kopf

BLET Division 4

Toledo, Ohio
BMWED member responds to UTU distortions

(BLET Editor's Note: The following is a copy of a letter written by a rank-and-file member of the BMWED to UTU National Legislative Director James Brunkenhoefer)

Mr. James Brunkenhoefer,
UTU National Legislative Director
304 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20003-1130

Dear Mr. Brunkenhoefer,

I have read your missive posted on the UTU web page titled, "Teamsters Threaten Rail Retirement, FELA." I am dismayed that you and the former carrier official acting as a "spin doctor" at UTU would so misrepresent the facts simply to take a cheap shot at other unions representing over 70,000 rail workers.

Your unprovoked attack against the BMWED is little more than the desperate act of a desperate union leader who has lost his way and his focus.

First of all, to set the record straight, BMWED was not "absorbed" into the Teamsters, and neither was the BLET. BMWED members nationwide voted by an overwhelming 76% to merge with the Teamsters and join the Rail Conference. BMWED's membership was even higher, with 81% voting in favor of merging with the Teamsters. Yes, this is the same BLET membership that twice voted overwhelmingly to reject a merger with the United Transportation Union. With the kind of anti-union propaganda coming out of your office, I can fully understand why the membership of BLET twice voted against a merger with the UTU.

You also misrepresent the BMWED position on Railroad Retirement reform. Recall that the membership of BMWED directed our leadership to oppose the framework of railroad Retirement reform because the membership of BMWED could not support a proposal that gave away $450 million of our pension money to the railroad carriers. I believed then, and still believe, that there was a better deal to be had that could have included full retirement at age 58 or 59. My personal viewpoint remains that we could have gotten more for our $450 million, but UTU evidently thinks differently about the value of the memberships' pension money.

Additionally, if you took the time to actually read General President James Hoffa's position on Social Security reform, it would have been clear to you, as it was to me, that the General President praised the fact that Social Security is finally being reformed. Mr. Hoffa said that retirement for working Americans is in jeopardy, and that his firing was due in large part to his prior public record of operating rule violations, and that his firing was due in large part to his prior public record of operating rule violations.

This outcome completely vindicated the representation efforts made by our dedicated officers, and the union's commitment to our members.

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen has been completely vindicated in a duty of fair representation suit brought against the union by a Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) engineer who was dissatisfied with the outcome of his discipline case.

According to BLET National Division Attorney Tom Brennan, the former BNSF engineer from San Bernardino, Calif., filed a lawsuit in federal district court in Los Angeles in February 2004 against BNSF and BLET. Brother Brennan reports that the former engineer was fired in March 2002 for a stop signal violation, and that his firing was upheld at arbitration before a Public Law Board (PLB) in February 2004, due in large part to his prior record of operating rule violations.

The former engineer claimed that BNSF discriminated against him because of his race and that BLET violated its duty of fair representation even though he had acknowledged throughout the grievance and appeal process that he was satisfied with the representation provided by the union.

"The record in this case clearly shows that every BLET officer involved with protesting this member's rights — including the former and current local chairmen of Division 662 who handled the case on the property (Al Nerkowski and Rudy Burrego), as well as General Chairmen Pat Williams, who presented the case to the PLB — did an excellent job," Brother Brennan said. "Instead of filing this ridiculous lawsuit, this member should be thanking these officers for working so hard to save his job in spite of his terrible work record."

The union vigorously defended its position in court. Prior to trial, both BNSF and BLET filed motions to dismiss the case. Before the court ruled on those motions, the plaintiff agreed to settle with the company and the union, receiving only a nominal amount from BNSF and no money at all from the BLET.

"I would not in good conscience authorize payment of even a nominal amount to this plaintiff after he made unfounded attacks against the credibility and character of the union officers on BNSF and this organization," Brennan said. "If his plan was to force the union to pay him money in exchange for dropping the lawsuit and avoiding negative publicity, he has sadly mistaken this outcome. This case completely vindicated the representational efforts made by our dedicated officers and the union's commitment to our members."

Brennan offered a special note of thanks to retired BLET General Counsel Harold Ross and Local Counsel Ira L. Gottlieb of Gelfand & Bush in Burbank, Calif., for all of their fine work in bringing this case to a satisfactory conclusion.

Sincerely,

Matthew A. Weaver
Proud Trackman, BMWED

James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund Essay Contest

James R. Hoffa became a Teamster member in 1934, served as General President for 14 years, and, in recognition of his tireless service to the Union and its members, was honored as General President Emeritus for life. At the November 1999 General Executive Board meeting, General Secretary-Treasurer C. Thomas Keegel presented a resolution to establish a new scholarship fund in recognition of Hoffa's outstanding contributions to the Union.

The James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund Essay Contest will award scholarships annually to 50 students. Children and grandchildren of eligible BLET, BLET, and BMWED members that are enrolled full-time in an undergraduate college, university or technical school, or technical or vocational program, who will be 23 years old or younger on September 30, 2005 and have not been previous recipients of an award from the James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund are eligible to apply.

Please see the link below for a PDF of the application form which notes all of the application requirements and procedures.

The completed application and essay must be received by the Scholarship Fund office no later than September 30, 2005. We cannot allow any extensions to this deadline.

The 2005 Essay Topic: Describe a brief history of your Union and its leadership and the influence it has had on the community.

Our President, and the President of BLET, sacrificed their personal positions and titles in order to strengthen their respective memberships through merger with the IBT. All the while, your Presidents were standing in some back alley extorting bags of cash from UTU-designated law firms, jeopardizing BLET for injured and deceased rail workers nationwide. Thus, while UTU’s leadership remains shamed and indicted, our leadership remains strong and united.

With over 25 years remaining in my railroad career, I am disappointed that the UTU has fallen victim to the carriers’ “Divide and Conquer” strategy of turning our focus away from them! Instead of concentrating on our solidar-ity you’ve chosen to waste your time and resources on the divisive issues raised in your June 5 attack on our growing partnership. As I’ve been in the midst of organizing a local chairmen’s association in Northwest Ohio and Southeast Michigan for all railroad crafts I realize that your letter goes against all that I’ve learned about Unions!

I am optimistic about my future and the future of my union. Given the current state of affairs, can the UTU make the same claim?

Sincerely,

Proud Trackman, BMWED

The James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund Essay Contest

http://www.blete-1.org/pr/pdf/ EssayApplication05.pdf
SOUTHEASTERN MEETING ASSOCIATION

BLET National President Don M. Hahs

BLET Member Rod Sanders, right, performs at the 78th annual SMA with members of his bluegrass band, The Blue Valley Boys. Brother Sanders belongs to BLET Division 332 in Montgomery, Ala.

From left: Grand International Auxiliary (GIA) Treasurer Bettye Dollar; GIA International President Onita Weyland, and GIA Third Vice-President Serena Hogan.

From left: Marion F. Patrick and Fred Allison of BLET Division 332 in Montgomery, Alabama.

SMA Secretary-Treasurer Ronnie Perkins.

BLET members discuss Brotherhood business in a closed session with BLET National Division officers.

Left: Brother Tommy Mayne, Chairman of the Kentucky State Legislative Board.

Right: W.M. "Gene" Myhan, Secretary-Treasurer of Division 198 (Chattanooga, Tenn.), and Jimmy Brittton, Legislative Representative of BLET Division 473 (Nashville, Tenn.).
Left: Ladies participated in a bead workshop during this year’s SMA. From left: GIA member Bobbie Clarke and GIA Guide DeLaine Morris.

Brother David Bowen, Local Chairman of BLET Division 332 (Montgomery, Ala.), served as Chairman of the 78th annual BLET/GIA Southeastern Meeting Association (SMA). Here, Brother Bowen distributes raffle prizes with the help of his right-hand man, grandson Morgan Popwell. The SMA was held at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Montgomery, Ala.

No one gets into a closed meeting during the SMA without proper identification. Here, Brother Chuck Warder, Secretary-Treasurer of BLET Division 190 (Huntington, W.Va.), verifies the identity of Brother K.L. Jackson, Local Chairman and Secretary-Treasurer of BLET Division 120 (Kansas City, Mo.).

BLET National Division officers field membership questions during a closed session. Standing, from left: BLET National Secretary-Treasurer William C. Walpert; BLET Vice-President Paul T. Sorrow; and BLET Vice-President Lee Pruitt.

At a tour of the Montgomery Zoo, from left: Caitlyn Popwell, Brittany Popwell, Athan Alhosmes, Morgan Popwell, Kamiel Hogan and Karlee Hawkins.

Carlos A. Lizarraga, Local Chairman of BLET Division 106 (Muncie, Ind.), and retired Norfolk Southern General Chairman Larry W. Sykes.
Hahs: Increasing funding for rail security training

Terrorist attacks in London reveal need for improved security in the U.S.; Senate bill needs support

(BLET Editor’s Note: BLET National President Don Hahs issued the following statement in the wake of the July 7 terrorist bombings in London.)

On behalf of the 55,000 men and women of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, I extend condolences to the families and victims of the tragic July 7 terrorist bombings in London.

Great Britain stood side-by-side with America after our country was attacked by cowardly terrorists on 9/11, and we are honor and duty-bound to support our British allies in the wake of 7/7.

As British Prime Minister Tony Blair said, “our determination to defend our values and our way of life is greater than (terrorists’) determination to cause us harm and destroy the ideals and principles.” In the BLET embrace those remarks as they reflect the attitude and spirit of the American people in the war on terrorism.

The fact that the 7/7 bombings focused on London’s rail and mass transit systems drives our determination even further. In 2004, terrorists targeted the rail system in Madrid, killing nearly 200 innocent victims.

These terrorist attacks should serve as a warning to the railroad industry in the United States. We are in the BLET are determined not to let the same thing happen here in the United States.

Let this serve as a call to rail management to work together and improve our readiness to face and fight these terrorists. The greatest weapon in this war is preparation and constant vigilance.

Let us work together for the protection of our country by increasing rail security funding and education. Let us work together to pass legislation that will provide security training to the workers on the front lines in this war — the locomotive engineers and trainmen who operate the trains crisscrossing American soil.

Currently in Congress, Senator Joseph R. Biden Jr. (D-Del.) is sponsoring a rail security bill that would provide a $10 million training fund for rail workers who handle hazardous materials.

The Hazardous Materials Vulnerability Reduction Act of 2005 would require the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to develop a comprehensive strategy for handling the transportation of the most dangerous chemicals by rail and would work with state and local officials to determine which areas are “high threat corridors.”

The bill — while not a cure all for the security gap — could help to increase rail security by 8 percent in calendar year 2004, along with actual 2004 average employment, exceeding the range projected for 2004.

The Board’s 2005 railroad unemployment insurance report projected that, even under a pessimistic employment assumption, which adjust contribution rates for changing benefit levels, and its surcharge (trigger for maintaining a minimum balance) help to ensure financial stability in the advent of adverse economic conditions.

Under experience-rating provisions, the employer’s contribution rate is determined by the Railroad Retirement Board on the basis of benefit payments made to the railroad’s employees. The report predicted that, even under the most pessimistic assumption, the average employer contribution rate remains well below the maximum through the period 2005-2006 and a 1.5 percent surcharge for calendar year 2007. A 2.5 percent surcharge is expected for calendar year 2008.

The report also predicted that the 1.5 percent surcharge in effect in calendar year 2005 will likely be followed by no surcharge for calendar year 2006 and a 1.5 percent surcharge for calendar year 2007. A 2.5 percent surcharge remains well below the maximum through the period 2005-2006 and a 1.5 percent surcharge for calendar year 2007. A 2.5 percent surcharge is expected for calendar year 2008.

The economic and employment assumptions used in the unemployment insurance report corresponded to those used in the report on the retirement system. Projections were made for various components of income and outgo under each of three employment assumptions, which adjust contribution rates for changing benefit levels, and its surcharge (trigger for maintaining a minimum balance) help to ensure financial stability in the advent of adverse economic conditions.

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IN THE LINE OF DUTY

Mark W. Cain and Arthur L. “Buddy” Irby

BLET Division 203 (Jackson, Miss.) members Mark Cain and Arthur “Buddy” Irby were killed on July 10, 2005, when their CN/IC locomotives collided head-on on Anding Miss.

Two other crew members were also killed in the collision. Conductors Shannon Purvis, 21, of Pockett, Miss., and Samuel Jones Sr., 56, of Jackson, Miss., were both members of the United Transportation Union.

Brother Cain, 51, joined the BLET on November 1, 1986. He is survived by his wife, Genny Cain of Kosciusko, Miss., his parents, Paul and Frankie Cain of Sallis, Miss.; a son, Brian Cain of Sallis; five step sons, Timothy Bohrer, Jordan Bohrer, Joshua Bohrer, Jonathan Bohrer, and Josiah Bohrer; all of Kosciusko; a daughter, Lins Burr of Oxford, Miss.; two step daughters, Amanda Bohrer and Alyssa Bohrer, both of Kosciusko; two brothers, David Cain of Durant and Arthur F. Cain of Sallis; and two sisters, Paula Cain Sawyer of Fredericks-town, Mo. and Glenda Doutil of Sallis.

Brother Cain and his wife Genny were married on June 4 — just five weeks before the accident.

Brother Irby, 58, joined the BLET on October 1, 1973. He is survived by his wife, Becky L. Irby of Sandhill, Miss., his parents, Marbo and Betty Irby of Sandhill, three daughters, Stecy Trest and her husband, Rodney of Sandhill, Susan Irby of Sandhill and Sandra Shivers and her husband, Shannon of Richland; one son, David “Bo” Irby of FL, “Hood, Texas; one sister, Margaret Walds and her husband, Jacky of Sandhill, two grandsons, Taylor Trest and Connor Shivers; and one granddaughter, Shelby Trest.

Brother Irby served over 20 years as a BLET local chairman. He was a Mason, a member of the Masonic Lodge in Pelahatchie and was a member of the Miss. National Guard for eight years.

Together, Brothers Irby (58 years) and Cain (29 years) had 88 years of total railroad service.

“All railroad workers are deeply saddened by this terrible tragedy,” said BLET National President Don M. Hahs. “The lives of these two Brothers and the two other members of their crews were taken far too early. I send my deepest condolences to their families, friends and co-workers.”

The accident occurred about 4:15 a.m. when a northbound train and southbound train collided on the north side of the bridge on Anding Oil City Road.

A total of 17 cars were derailed, including seven that were carrying combustible materials. Fire and heat hampered rescue and recovery efforts for nearly two days.

The northbound train from New Orleans, on its way to Iowa, had 157 cars and four locomotives and the southbound train from Champaign, Ill., to Ferguson, had 107 cars and two locomotives.

The BLET Safety Task Force is assisting the National Transportation Safety Board in its ongoing investigation to determine the cause of the accident.

The BLET flag was lowered atop the Standard Building in memory of the two Brothers.

“These brothers, their crew members and their families are in our thoughts and prayers,” said President Hahs. “Railroad safety is such an important issue to our organization and this accident makes it all the more urgent.”

Donations may be made in Brother Cain’s name to Stump Ridge Cemetery Fund, c/o Wayne Bishop, Rte. 2, Box 72, Sallis, MS 38660.

Memorials can be made in Brother Irby’s name to Lebanon Baptist Church Building Fund, c/o Wesley Parker, 791 Hwy. 451, Morton, MS 38642.

FRA rule calls for improved ‘black box’ standards

The survivability of railroad locomotive event recorders or “black boxes” will be improved to enhance the quality of post-accident investigations, as a result of a final rule entered into the Federal Register on June 30.

Under the rule, developed by the Federal Railroad Administration through the Rail Safety Advisory Committee (RSAC) process, event recorders will be hardened to prevent the loss of data from exposure to fire, impact, shock, fluid immersion, and other potential damage resulting from train accidents. Older event recorders that rely on magnetic tape for data storage will be phased out over the next four years.

Currently, locomotive event recorders capture many pieces of information, including train speed, use of automatic air brakes, throttle position and cab signal indications. The new rule requires that new data required be captured by event recorders, including horn activation, cruise control functions and train control operating directives sent to the engineer’s onboard display.

Through the RSAC process, the BLET did a tremendous amount of work on this project to ensure that the final rule addresses many concerns locomotive engineers and trainmen have regarding new technologies in the industry.

The FRA is amending its existing regulations in four major ways:

• By requiring that a new locomotive have an event recorder with a “hardened” memory module, proven by a requirement that the memory module preserve stored data throughout a sequence of pre-tested tests;

• By requiring that this event recorder on a new locomotive collect certain additional types of information;

• By improving standards for rail companies to inspect, test and maintain all event recorders; and

• By requiring the phasing out, over a four-year period, of event recorders on existing locomotives that use magnetic tape as a data storage medium and their replacement with event recorders with a certified survivable version of its previous event recorder.

The rule requires railroads to keep data stored on event recorders involved in accidents for one year, up from the current 30-day requirement.

This regulation has been developed over the past eight years through the RSAC process and has been driven by recommendations from the NTSB.

The Final Rule effective date is October 1, 2005. The final rule is available on the FRA’s web site at www.fra.dot.gov and in docket number FRA-2003-16857 at dms.dot.gov.

It is also available on the BLET website at: http://www.ble-t.org/pr/pdf/EventRecorderFinalRule.pdf

BLET seeks human factors input on Cardinal rule violations

Program seeks to eliminate root cause of incidents; Guarantees privacy of members who volunteer

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen is asking its members to participate in a voluntary program that will gather data to help eliminate the root causes of common railroad rule violations.

Members are asked to fill out a “Human Factors/Ciradian Rhythms Questionnaire” if they are involved in a “Cardinal rule” violation (signals, speed, braking and slack operation) as prescribed in 49 CFR Part 240. All information gathered from the questionnaire will be kept confidential.

The questionnaire is available on the BLET’s International Vice President Bill Keppen is spearheading the program.

“Rule violations at train accidents are sometimes the result of human errors or performance lapses. If it is possible to identify the root causes of these lapses and errors, then it may be possible to reduce rule violation and accidents.”

The questionnaire is designed to collect work-related human factor and demographic information. Among other information, participants are asked to provide seven to 10 days of sleep information, if possible.

“Truthful and forthright answers to questions are essential to the success of this project,” Brother Keppen said. “If our members are really concerned about safety, then they have a personal responsibility to fill out these questionnaires and respond. If we don’t get the data, then we are not going to fix problems like train line ups and staff shortages.”

Brother Keppen also assures that participants will remain anonymous.

“This data will be kept confidential. It will be kept by the union — the FRA and railroads will not see your individual information or data. But we will share group information with FRA once an appropriate level of statistical data has been collected.”

Members with questions should call Brother Keppen at: (908) 575-9994.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) regarding this program are available on the BLET website:

http://www.blie-l.org/pr/pdf/HUMANFACTORQuest.pdf

A copy of the Human Factors/Ciradian Rhythms Questionnaire is available at:

http://www.blie-l.org/pr/pdf/HFRCQuestPhase1V.pdf

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President Hoffs statement on withdrawal from AFL-CIO

Move will help labor become bigger and stronger.

As President of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, the founding member of the Teamsters’ Rail Conference, I respect the decision of General President Hoffa and the Teamsters General Executive Board to withdraw from the AFL-CIO.

It was a difficult decision and was not made lightly. Some months of failed negotiations between Change to Win and AFL-CIO representatives went into the decision. Change to Win believes labor must organize more members and grow the labor movement. Change to Win also respected several AFL-CIO constitutional changes. AFL-CIO was not willing to make the requested changes.

I was present at the July 29 meeting in Chicago when, subsequent to a thorough report from the IBT’s Change to Win negotiators, the GEW unanimously authorized General President Hoffa to withdraw from the AFL-CIO if no agreement was reached.

The need to organize now is greater than ever before. We must regain labor’s influence in Washington by increasing our membership. One of the main reasons for disaffiliation was to spend more money on organizing. In the past, the AFL-CIO spent 42 cents of every dollar it spent on transportation unionism. We must regain labor’s influence in Washington by increasing our membership, as evidenced by the recent Presidential election, our best showing in years. Our members voted by an overwhelming 81 percent to join the Teamsters. We must regain labor’s influence in Washington by increasing our membership.

The National Division is asking its General Committees of Adjustment, State Legislative Bodies and Divisions to continue their participation with State and Local AFL-CIO bodies, to the extent that the AFL-CIO will allow. The National Division intends to continue as an active member of the AFL-CIO’s railroad Transportation Tractors Department, to the extent that the AFL-CIO will allow.

While this decision may be hard for many of our members to accept, hopefully the future will prove it is to be beneficial to our current and future members as well as the entire labor movement.

* "NOTE 2: Within (2) years of the effective date of these bylaws, a ballot will be sent to the active member under investigation to decide whether to eliminate Note 1."

Ballots on this measure were mailed on July 22 and all votes must be in by August 26. Members may return the ballot via U.S. mail in a pre-paid envelope that will be provided; or they may vote online via the BLET website: http://www.blet.org. Online voting requires a username and password, which is the same login information to access the members area of the BLET website. *