BLE Rail Traffic Controllers end strike at CP Railway

Seven-week strike/lock-out ends with improved pay, benefits

BLE-Rail Canada Traffic Controllers ratified a contract on August 5 with Canadian Pacific Railway, ending a seven-week strike.

The contract was ratified by a 75 percent majority and more than 200 RCTC members returned to work on August 9.

“Ratification gets our members back to work and we are happy about that,” said BLE Special Representative Darrell Arnold. “While many of our targeted improvements have been met, the strike has taken its toll on the union-management relationship. The company has made a solid commitment to address several of the outstanding issues and they have assured us that work will get underway immediately.”

The agreement, which extends to December 31, 2005, provides for wage, pension and benefit improvements. RCTC members will see the collapse of their rate levels into two for ITC and additional yearly wage increases over the next three years.

The company has realized work rule flexibility to help improve rail traffic control.

“Our members did not strike for the sake of striking Canadian Pacific Railway,” BLE-RCTC General Chairman Jim Ruddick said. “This was a strike based on principles and respect. Some of the issues our members walked the picket line for could have had an effect on all railway unions.

“When our members on CP Rail start returning to work on Saturday, August 9, they can hold their heads high for their solidarity, convictions and commitment towards a just cause. Our negotiating committee is pleased to see our members returning to work and welcomes the commitment made by both the company and the union to

IBT-IBLE organizes another shortline

Persistence paid off again as the joint IBT-IBLE Rail Operating Employ- ees’ Council scored another shortline organizing victory, this time on the St. Lawrence & Atlantic Railroad (SL&A).

In the last 12 months, the BLE has organized four shortline properties — the Utah Railway, the Iowa, Chicago & Eastern Railroad (IC&E), the Indiana Southern Railroad, and the Texas-Mexican Railway (Tex-Mex).

By a vote of 22-1, operating employees at the SL&A chose the BLE over the United Transportation Union. The National Mediation Board certified election results on August 1.

BLE International President Don M. Hahn first and foremost thanked employees at the SL&A for working with the BLE throughout the organizing drive and for selecting the BLE as their designated collective bargaining repre-sentative.

He also praised Tommy Miller, BLE Director of Organizing, John Mullen, Shortline Director; and John Brown, Vice-Chairman of the Springfield Ter-minal/Delaware & Hudson General Committee of Adjustment, for their ef-forts in making the organizing cam-paign a success. He recognized SL&A employees Jeremy Collee and Maurice Lemieux, who is now the acting Local Chairman on the property.

Hahn also acknowledged General Sec-retery-Treasurer Bill Walpert, who heads the BLE’s Department of Orga-nizing, Mobilizing, and Strategic Plan-ning.

A part of the Genesee & Wyoming shortline network, the SL&A operates over 260 miles of mainline track between Portland, Maine, and Ste. Rosalie, Quebec. The SL&A crosses the international border at Norton, Vt., and interchanges with the Canadian Na-tional (CN) at Ste. Rosalie. It carries a variety of commodities including the key forest products, industrial prod-ucts, intermodal traffic, steel, and grain and agricultural products.

BLF-IBT merger documents now available online

July 22 is “mailing date”

Documents governing the proposed BLE-Teamsters merger are now available in the members area of the BLE website, in line with Section 1(e)(2) of the BLE Constitution & Bylaws.

The documents, unani-mously approved by the BLE Advi-sory Board on July 11, were mailed on July 22 to the general chairmen, state and provincial legislative chair-men, Advisory Board, and divi-sion presidents, also in keeping with Section 1(e)(2).

July 22 will be the “mailing date” that will trigger the sequence of events leading to a vote by the membership.

The documents include:

- Merger Agreement; IBT Constitu-tion; IBT Rail Conference Bylaws;
- Brotherhood of Locomotive Engi-neers and Trainmen Bylaws;
- Teamsters Canada Rail Conference Bylaws; Te-amsters Canada Bylaws; and the Advisory Board Resolution Approving Merger.

A password for the members’ area is required to view the docu-ments at: <http://www.ble.org/members/merger>.

List of communities enacting remote control safety resolutions continues to grow

A total of 34 different com-munities in the United States — 24 cities and 10 counties — have enacted remote control safety resolutions, each calling for improved safety of remote control trains.

Since the last issue of the Locomotive Engineer News- letter was published, three cit-ies and one county have joined the ever-growing list — Commerce, Calif., Clinton, Iowa, Montebello, Calif., and Knox County, Tenn.

Many of the resolutions urge the Federal Railroad Ad-ministration to develop comprehensive and enforceable regulations to govern the operation of remote control locomo-tives.

The FRA has issued rec-ommended guidelines inte-ned for use in remote con-trol “pilot projects.” However, railroad companies have seized the opportunity to use the non-binding guidelines, not for pilot projects, but for full-scale implementation of re mote control operations in their yard operations.

Commerce, Calif. Under the direction of BLE California State Legislative Board Chairman Tim Smith, local efforts to obtain the Com-merce resolution was spear-
Remote Control

Continued from page 1
headed by Eric Johnson, Legislative Representative of BLE Division 602 (Los Angeles), Ray Enriquez, Legislative Representative of BLE Division 660 (Los Angeles), and Kent Richards, Legislative Representative of BLE Division 56 (West Colton).

The brothers made a computer and video presentation to the city council in support of the resolution, which was adopted in mid-July.

In June, 28 runaway Union Pacific cars loaded with lumber reached speeds of 96 mph before derailing in Commerce, a Los Angeles suburb. Thirteen people were injured and two houses were demolished. While the accident was not attributed to remote control, it served to heighten the City Council’s awareness of railroad operations in their community and their need to take steps to protect the safety of their citizens.

The brothers involved expressed thanks to Chairman Smith and the members of the Commerce City Council. They also noted that their ability to work together, even though they represent different railroads, helped to get the job done. Brother Johnson represented members of the Railroaders of Northern Santa Fe while Brothers Enriquez and Richards represent members of the Union Pacific.

A copy of the Commerce resolution is available on the BLE as a PDF at: <http://www.ble.org/pr/pdf/commerce.pdf>.

Clinton, Iowa

Brother William Peart, a member of BLE Division 125 (Clinton, Iowa), served as spokesman for the group that lobbied in favor of the Clinton resolution, which was adopted on July 22. He described the lobbying effort as a “pretty tough fight.”

While the BLE members involved had hoped to secure a resolution with “more teeth,” Brother Peart said they were successful in achieving their main goal.

“At least we made the City Council and the citizens of Clinton aware of remote control’s dangers and implementation,” he said, noting that the issue received coverage in the local newspaper.

Brother Peart recognized those who were involved in organizing the lobbying effort: Bob Harvey, BLE Regulatory Research Coordinator; Tim Windsor, Regional Mobilization Coordinator; Steve Eyer, Local Chairman of Division 125; W.J. “Bill” McPolin, Acting Legislative Representative of Division 125, Dan Jacobsen, Division 125, Art Willkins, Division 125, and Shane Nixon, Division 125.

Peart also noted that members of the United Transportation Union helped the BLE in its lobbying effort. The BLE Brothers contacted members of City Council privately by telephone in support of the remote control safety resolution, but did not attend public meetings and did not wish to have their names published.

“The guys who have the contract to operate remote control don’t think it’s safe, but they don’t have a choice,” Paul said.

Brother Peart also thanked members of the Clinton City Council for their patience and for adopting the safety resolution.

A copy of the resolution is available on the BLE website at: <http://www.ble.org/pr/pdf/clinton.pdf>.

Montebello, Calif.

California State Legislative Board Chairman John Dobson, a successful campaign to enact a remote control safety resolution, this time in Montebello, Calif. Montebello neighbors Commerce, Calif., which passed a safety resolution a few weeks prior to Montebello.

Chairman Smith praised the efforts of Brother Johnson, Division 602, and Brother Enriquez, Division 660, who also worked on the Commerce resolution.

Chairman Smith also thanked Montebello Mayor Kathy Salazar for her kindness and consideration.

A copy of the resolution is available on the BLE website at: <http://www.ble.org/pr/pdf/montebello.pdf>.

Knox County, Tenn.

Knox County became the second Tennessee county to adopt a resolution regarding remote control train operations in their community, joining Unicoi County, Tenn., in adopting a remote control safety resolution.

On July 25, the Knox County Commission overwhelmingly enacted a resolution that asks the Federal Railroad Administration to adopt comprehensive regulations for remote control engines. A similar resolution was enacted by Unicoi County on March 24.

Knox County is the 34th community in the United States to adopt such a resolution, joining 24 cities and nine other counties.

In adopting the resolution, the Knox County Commission recognized that Class I railroads operating in Knox County handle many dangerous and hazardous materials, not only through the community, but switch them as well, and that the U.S. government has issued warnings to the nation’s railroads to be on the alert for vandalism and terrorist threats. In verbal discussions, many commissioners said that this could be a first step in addressing what could become a serious safety concern for the citizens of Knox County.

Brother T.R. (Ray) Dobson, Legislative Representative of BLE Division 781 (Knoxville, Tenn.), said that “we finally got a unique opportunity for two BLE Divisions to work together — Division 781 (CSX Transportation) and 239 (Norfolk Southern).

Brother John Mason, President of Division 239 (Knoxville, Tenn.), and John Norman, Legislative Representative of Division 239, were very helpful and instrumental in the passage of this resolution, Dobson said.

34th community enacts remote control safety resolution

Remote Control

or interfere with legitimate AFL-CIO organizing campaigns. The labor movement stands united in opposition to these pariah organizations.

The AFL-CIO said it would establish a committee of union presidents to develop plans to approach “aggressively” to the threats created by organizations that raid AFL-CIO affiliates.

The statement also reiterates that a union found guilty of raiding an affiliate will be prohibited from affiliating with any AFL-CIO unit.

This is the first time since mergers with AFL-CIO affiliates unless it ceases its AFL-CIO’s goal.

While the BLE members involved already organized workers or by preying on their living by preying on unaffiliated unions, saying:

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Canadian National Railway

Canadian National Railway’s second-quarter profit dropped 12.4 percent as a surging Canadian dollar, fuel costs and lower grain volumes hit its bottom line. CN reported profit of $244 million compared with $290 million for the same quarter of 2002 (all figures in Canadian dollars).

The railroad’s operating ratio for the latest quarter was 79.1 percent, compared with 68.4 percent for the same quarter last year. Carloadings declined one percent.

CN’s operating income for the second quarter of 2003 declined 11 percent per cent to $475 million. Revenue fell 6 percent to $4.41 billion from $4.75 billion a year ago, while operating expenses dropped 3 percent to $1 billion.

The stronger Canadian dollar reduced CN’s second-quarter 2003 operating income by about $25 million and net income by about $11 million. It also hurt the railway’s revenues in a big way.

“The stronger Canadian dollar reduced second-quarter revenues by approximately $80 million,” Hunter Harrison, president and chief executive officer, said in a statement.

CSX Transportation

CSX reported a drop in earnings for the second-straight quarter. The railroad reported quarterly earnings of $127 million compared to $135 million a year ago. Revenue was $3.94 billion vs. $3.07 billion a year ago. Operating ratio was 86.3 percent, up from 84.0 percent in the same quarter of 2002.

The company’s surface transportation division, which includes the railroad and the intermodal unit, reported revenue of $1.89 billion, a 2 percent drop compared with $1.91 billion for the same period last year. But operating income slumped to $259 million compared to $285 million in 2002.

The company has eliminated 451 jobs so far this year, and it’s accelerating the job-cutting pace to reach 900 total by the end of the year. The railroad has said the jobs are being eliminated through layoffs and attrition.

“It’s painful to admit, but we didn’t run the railroad real well in the second quarter,” Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Michael Ward told the Florida Times-Union newspaper. “We’re not real pleased with these results, and we’re taking steps to resolve some issues. Failure to resolve these issues is not an option.”

Norfolk Southern

Norfolk Southern Corp. reported second-quarter net income of $137 million, an increase of 15 percent compared with net income of $119 million in the second quarter of 2002.

However, operating ratio for the quarter (the percentage of revenues required to operate the railroad) was 81.8 percent compared with 79.8 percent in the same period of 2002.

Second-quarter railway operating revenues of $1.63 billion were the highest of any quarter in Norfolk Southern’s history and improved 3 percent compared with $1.58 billion in the second quarter of 2002. Railway operating revenues for the first half of 2003 also set a six-month record rising 3 percent to $3.19 billion compared with $3.09 billion for the same period a year earlier.

Intermodal revenues set records, rising 2 percent to $300 million in the second quarter and 4 percent to $589 million for the first six months, compared with the same periods of 2002.

Operating expenses increased 5 percent for both the second quarter and the first six months of 2003 compared with the same periods last year.

Burlington Northern Santa Fe

Burlington Northern Santa Fe said quarterly profit rose on one helped to boost volume in the first quarter, consumer product revenue and in coal revenue, a key category for North America’s international, truckload and perishable sectors. Coal revenue rose 3.3 percent.

Second-quarter 2003 operating income, excluding the special charge, was $191 million, compared with $219 million in the same period last year. The decline was due to the effect of persistently high fuel prices, a reduction in other revenues, and the net result of the stronger Canadian dollar.

Consumer Products revenue rose 7.4 percent to $811 million on growth in international, truckload and perishable sectors. Coal revenue increased four percent to a second quarter record level. UP noted other high-

Fuel expense rose 27 percent in the quarter from a year earlier.

Canadian Pacific Railway

Canadian Pacific Railway saw its second-quarter earnings drop on a restructuring charge of $150 million, high fuel prices and a stronger Canadian dollar. Net income declined to $29 million in the quarter, from $169 million in the second quarter of 2002 (all figures in Canadian dollars).

Intermodal revenues set records, rising 2 percent to $300 million in the second quarter this year, compared with 79.3 percent in the second quarter of 2002.

Second-quarter 2003 operating income, excluding the special charge, was $191 million, compared with $219 million in the same period last year. The decline was due to the effect of persistently high fuel prices, a reduction in other revenues, and the net result of the stronger Canadian dollar.

Quarterly revenues at KC were $146.3 million, 5 percent more than the $139.2 million posted for the year ago quarter.

Second-quarter 2003 KC expenses increased $8.4 million compared with second quarter 2002 due primarily to higher expenses for depreciation ($2.2 million), fuel ($2.5 million), purchased services ($1.5 million), and casualty and insurance ($0.6 million). The railroad’s fuel costs rose from first quarter to second quarter due to a 24% increase in the average price per gallon.

Kansas City Southern

Kansas City Southern reported a quarterly loss amid sluggish cargo volumes and disappointing results from a Mexican railway. KC’s losses were $450,000 in the second quarter. In 2002’s second quarter, the company earned $14.5 million.

The railroad’s second-quarter 2003 operating ratio was 86.9% compared with 86.7% for second quarter 2002, and was improved from the 86.5% operating ratio in first quarter 2003. KC’s said its quarterly results had been hurt by a $2.3 million loss associated with its stake in Grupo Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana, S.A. de C.V., or Grupo TFM.

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Union Pacific Corp.

Union Pacific Corp. reported second-quarter net income of $288 million, down from net income of $304 million in the second quarter of 2002. Operating income was $895 million, compared to $862 million in 2002.

Revenue of $3.3 billion for the period ended June 30 was the best quarter ever for the company and marked a 3 percent increase over the same period last year. UP’s operating ratio was up 0.5 percent to 79.8 percent over the same quarter in 2002. UP’s year-to-date operating ratio is 83.1, up 2.7 percent from 80.4 percent at the same point in 2002.

In its quarterly earnings release, UP cited employee productivity (gross ton-miles/employee) as one of the highlights, boosting that employee productivity increased four percent to a second quarter record level. UP noted other highlights, including a 3 percent increase in operating revenue.

For its first six months, Union Pacific had net income of $717 million on $8.3 billion in revenue, compared with $526 million on $8.1 billion in revenue in the first half of last year.

Compared to the second quarter of 2002, agriculture revenues were up 6 percent in the 2003 second quarter; Energy revenues were up 6 percent; Revenues from industrial products were up 5 percent; Intermodal revenue was flat; Automotive revenue was down 2 percent; and revenue from chemical shipments fell 2 percent.

Overnite Corp., a subsidiary of UP, reported a 15 percent increase in second-quarter operating income of $21.0 million, compared with $18.2 million in 2002. Operating revenue was up 10 percent to $372.0 million from $337.1 million last year. Intermodal revenue was $1.5 billion, an increase of 32 percent from $1.1 billion in 2002. On August 4, UP announced it would sell the trucking company in hopes of capitalizing on the impressive second-quarter number.

“We are cautiously upbeat about the second half of the year,” said UP Chairman and CEO Dick Davidson in a statement. “One cloud on the horizon, however, continues to be energy prices. Diesel fuel and natural gas prices have remained stubbornly high... creating a drag on the overall economy. We remain focused on running a quality, profitable company.”
From left: Ben Lee, Local Chairman and Legislative Representative of Division 166 (Charlotte, N.C.), and G.L. Payne, Secretary-Treasurer of Division 435 (Hamlet, N.C.).

GIA International President Onita Wayland and BLE International President Don Hahs (center) with the flag bearers who participated in the traditional GIA flag procession during opening ceremonies at the 76th annual SMA, which was held at the Grand Resort Hotel & Convention Center in Pigeon Forge, Tenn., from June 15-20.

From left: Tommy Miller, the BLE’s Director of Organizing, and Ray Wallace, Norfolk Southern (Southern Lines) General Chairman.

From left: David Bowen, Local Chairman of BLE Division 332 (Montgomery, Ala.), and Bill Overton, Chairman of the 76th annual SMA and Local Chairman of BLE Division 239 (Knoxville, Tenn.).

From left: Ed McCulloch, former BLE International Vice-President & U.S. National Legislative Representative and retired member of BLE Division 182 (N. Little Rock, Ark.), his wife Louise, and Ray Clark, a retired member of BLE Division 275 (Pensacola, Fla.).

From left: LeBron Wingo, Local Chairman of BLE Division 198 (Chattanooga, Tenn.), gets some advice from veteran engineers Tony Wayland, a retired member of BLE Division 620 (Fort Worth, Texas) and Cooksey Humphrey, a retired member of BLE Division 326 (Bossier City, La.).

From left: Tony Smith, General Chairman of the CSX Eastern Lines, and Ray Wallace, General Chairman of Norfolk Southern’s Southern Lines.

From left: BLE General Secretary-Treasurer William C. Walpert discusses Brotherhood finances with Ben Blissett, BLE Division 301 (Roanoke, Va.), Donnie Young, Local Chairman and Secretary-Treasurer of Division 301; and John A. Nutter, President of Division 301.

From left: Fielding membership questions regarding positive train control is Raymond Holmes, BLE International Vice-President & U.S. National Legislative Representative, and Robert A. Harvey, the BLE’s Regulatory Research Coordinator.
From left: Jeff Wood, Legislative Representative of BLE Division 26 (Richmond, Va.), and Cleatus Roy, General Chairman of the CSX Western Lines.

From left: During the opening ceremony, BLE President Don Hahs; SMA-BLE Chairman Bill Overton; SMA-GIA Chair DeLaine Morris; and GIA President Onita Wayland.

From left: Terrence Carter, Secretary-Treasurer of BLE Division 295 (Chattanooga, Tenn.), with Robert D. Broka, the BLE’s Director of Records.

BLE International President Don M. Hahs

BLE International President Paul T. Sorrow, center, shares a laugh with members of the SMA arrangements committee.

Hugh L. Sawyer Jr., Legislative Representative of BLE Division 316 (Atlanta), makes a point regarding the proposed BLE-IBT merger during the closed session.

Manning the BLE Legislative Department booth, from left: Tommy Mayne, Kentucky State Legislative Board Chairman; J.T. Norris, Virginia State Legislative Board Chairman; and T.E. Hudson, Alabama State Legislative Board Chairman.

Roger Peace, standing, is chairman of the 2004 SMA, which is slated for Greenville, S.C. He is pictured here with his wife, Karen, and John Mowbray, a member of BLE Division 84 (Greenville, S.C.).

Several BLE members and their spouses proudly participated in a motorcycle rally instead of the golf tournament, led by (kneeling and holding sign, from left) J.G. “John” Mason, President of Division 239 (Knoxville), and C.R. “Rusty” Jones, Secretary-Treasurer and Vice Local Chairman of Division 239.

From left: Ed Rodzwicz, BLE First Vice-President; Raymond Holmes, Vice-President & U.S. National Legislative Representative; Merle Geiger, Vice-President; and Paul Wingo, Vice-President.

From left: Jeff Wood, Legislative Representative of BLE Division 26 (Richmond, Va.), and Cleatus Roy, General Chairman of the CSX Western Lines.
Labor condemns Bush Amtrak plan

Calling it a “death knell for passenger rail” in the United States, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers joined state transportation labor unions in condemning President Bush’s plan for the privatization of Amtrak.

“The White House plan (for Amtrak) is a death knell for passenger rail in this country,” said Sonny Hall, President of the AFL-CIO’s Transportation Trades Department (TTD). The BLE is one of 35 unions that belong to the TTD. The Bush Administration’s plan to restructure Amtrak was sent to Congress on July 28, and was soundly rejected by labor and other supporters of Amtrak.

Critics of the Bush plan say it would effectively kill Amtrak by dividing into separate entities, privatizing portions of it, and shifting its costs to the states, which say they don’t have the funds to run it. Critics worry that who will guarantee the consistency of the safety and maintenance of the lines and how states with budget troubles will pay for it. Some say the legislation is meant to kill Amtrak.

“The widespread problems of privatized passenger rail — which, in England for example, led to rampant delays, increased accident rates, and higher fares — explains why the noted Economic Policy Institute’s (EPI) titled its recent report Amtrak Privatization: The Route to Failure,” President Hall said. “The EPI report noted that many of the British problems grew out of a labyrinth-like carving up of the railroad, a bureaucratic shell game now mirrored in the Bush plan. Amtrak was borne out of the ashes of defunct network of private passenger railroads, so calling for a privatized Amtrak reflects a gross ignorance of both history and economics.”

As part of the Bush plan, Amtrak would become three companies over a six-year span: a private passenger rail company that runs trains under contract to states; a company that operates and maintains the Northeast Corridor; and a government corporation that would retain Amtrak’s rights to use freight railroad tracks and its corporate name.

Also, states would contract for the right to use trains and Amtrak’s name for the passenger rail service they sponsor: States would form multistate compacts to invest in and run passenger railroads. States would submit proposals for capital investment and operations to the Transportation Department. Eventually, the states could pick a train operator from private companies and public transit agencies that would presumably bid for the contract.

The federal government would no longer pay for operating costs; that would be left up to the states. But the federal government would pay for 50 percent of infrastructure costs. Many critics argue that, like highways and the air transport system, railroads don’t stop at state borders and thus require federal oversight and funding.

“The Bush administration is badly out of touch on this issue,” President Hall continued. “Bipartisan majorities on Capitol Hill — and large numbers of those surveyed in public opinion polls — support federal investment in Amtrak. And slashing service to hundreds of communities and millions of passengers benefits no one in a struggling economy. The White House is taking Amtrak down a track few want it go.”

“The Bush plan would further starve an already anemic railroad and make scapegoats of Amtrak’s 20,000 workers. We will not permit this debate to ignore these employees, who make over 20 percent less than those in freight and commuter rail and who have sacrificed for years to keep the trains running. Their needs must be not be forgotten as we debate Amtrak’s future. We call upon Congress to reject this misguided proposal,” President Hall concluded.

On July 30, Republican senators announced a six-year, $60 billion plan to help Amtrak, countering the Bush Administration proposal. Their plan would give Amtrak the $2 billion in annual operating subsidies it has requested. The plan also calls for issuing $48 billion in bonds to raise money for repairs and track construction. (The Associated Press contributed to this report.) •

Amtrak, TCU reach tentative contract

Amtrak and the Transportation Communications International Union (TCU), which represents 5,000 Amtrak employees, have reached a tentative contract renegotiation under the Railway Labor Act. The agreement is retroactive to January 2003 and runs through December 2004.

“This contract represents the best possible settlement given Amtrak’s precarious condition,” TCU International President Robert Scardelletti said in a statement. “Going to an Emergency Board appointed by President Bush would be insane in light of his plan to dismantle Amtrak altogether.”

(The Washington Post contributed to this report.) •

Tracks caused Auto Train derailment

A failure by CSX Transportation crews to properly maintain railroad tracks — which were already in substandard condition — caused the derailment of Amtrak’s Auto Train near Crescent City, Fla., last year that killed four people, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) said. The northbound train, with 413 passengers and 33 crew members, derailed April 18, 2002, as it rounded a curve. At the time, it was operating over CSX tracks under contract with the freight railroad. The Amtrak engineer reported seeing the track badly out of alignment just ahead of him.

The board said the track on the curve where the accident occurred failed to meet minimum standards before the derailment. After the derailment, the NTSB said there were insufficient ballast to ensure that the track was restrained during passage of trains. Also, the track had an insufficient number of rail anchors, and some were improperly installed.

(The Washington Post contributed to this report.) •
Members can save $20 on their registration fees for the 68th annual Southwestern Convention Meeting (SWCM) by pre-registering by September 1. After that date, registration fees will increase to $95 per person.

The meeting will take place at the Chateau on the Lake in Branson, Mo., from September 28 to October 2. As of August 5, the Chateau was completely booked and overflow arrangements have been made at two other hotels. “Both of these properties are within five minutes of the convention and have plenty of space available,” SWCM Chairman Rick Gibbons said. “We will try to accommodate all that need transportation to and from these hotels and the convention.”

The overflow hotels are:

- Welk Resort
  1984 State Hwy 165
  Branson, Mo. 65616
  (800) 505-9355
  Reference: Group #2852
  Two queen beds: $75 (plus tax)
  www.welkresortbranson.com

- Pointe Royale Nightly Condo Rentals
  156-A Pointe Royale Drive
  Branson, Mo. 65616
  (800) 387-5267
  (417) 880-4396
  Reference: Group #2852
  One bedroom condo: $105 (plus tax)
  Two-bedroom condo: $159 (plus tax)
  www.pointeroyale.com

Activities for the SWCM will include the annual golf tournament, a barbecue and the formal banquet. The golf tournament will take place at the Ledgestone Country Club.

Educational activities will include workshops for Local Chairmen, Secretaries-Treasurers, Legislative Representatives, and an Arbitration Workshop. Members with questions should contact Chairman Rick Gibbons at (417) 887-5267, (417) 880-4396 or by e-mail at <rick@blegca.org>.

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Over the next several weeks, the office of BLE First Vice-President Ed Rodzwicz will coordinate a series of Town Hall meetings to explain the proposed BLE-IBT merger.

The first is scheduled for September 9 in Kansas City, Mo. (see page 8 “Calendar” for details).

The First Vice-President and other BLE International officers are expected to participate in approximately 16 Town Hall meetings in centralized locations throughout the United States. The BLE’s Canadian headquarters will schedule its own series of Town Hall meetings throughout Canada.

Further dates and locations of these events are not yet confirmed, but BLE General Chairmen, State Legislative Board Chairmen, and all divisions within the region will be notified once a Town Hall meeting is scheduled for their area.

### SWCM 2003 Pre-Registration Form

**68th annual Southwestern Convention Meeting**

Branson, Mo. • Sept. 28-Oct. 2, 2003

**HOTEL RESERVATIONS**

Chateau on the Lake, 415 N. State Hwy. 265, Branson, Mo. 65616 • Phone: (888) 333-LAKE

BLE room rate is $114 per night; cut-off for BLE rate is August 28, 2003

**SWCM INFORMATION**

Name of Attendee:
Address:
City: State: Zip:
Phone: E-mail:
BLE Division: Office:
GIA Division: Office:
Spouse/Other:

**PRE-REGISTRATION FEE**

$75.00 per person attending if postmarked prior to Sept. 1, 2003
$95.00 per person if registering by mail after Sept. 1, 2003, or at time of arrival

Make check payable to: 68th SWCM

**ACTIVITIES**

Ministerial breakfast • Breakfast Luncheon • Banquet • Barbeque • Banquet

- Sunday, Sept. 28: Reception
- Monday, Sept. 29: Breakfast DLC Luncheon
- Tuesday, Sept. 30: Breakfast Barbeque • Breakfast Luncheon Banquet • Breakfast Luncheon

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, CONTACT:**

Chairman Rick Gibbons, (417) 887-5267 or (417) 880-4396 or <rick@blegca.org>

MAIL THIS FORM ALONG WITH CHECK OR MONEY ORDER TO:

R.T. Windsor
SWCM Treasurer
202 Maple
Frontenac, KS 66763

**BLE NEWS**

68th annual Southwestern Convention Meeting

Tuesday, Sept. 30, 2003 (8 a.m.)

Greystone Golf Course
1100 Ledgeston Way • Reeds Spring, Mo. 65737 • (417) 335-8187

Four Man Scramble, $75.00 per player
(includes transportation, refreshments and prizes)

Make check or money order payable to: 68th SWCM Golf

Mail this form by September 15, 2003 to:
Randy Dumey <rdumey@showme.net>
1266 State Hwy EE • Chaffee, Mo. 63740

Name:
Phone Number:
E-mail:

Team Members (optional):
Name:
Name:
Name:

Branson websites

Location of 68th annual SWCM:
www.chateauonthechalebranson.com
Shows, shopping and restaurants:
www.explorebranson.com
Branson-area golf council:
www.golfbranson.com
An 1880s-style theme park:
www.silverdollarcity.com
SWCM overflow hotels:
www.pointeroyale.com
www.welkresortbranson.com
Contract protects health & welfare

ST/D&H

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“...This round of contract negotiations with Springfield Terminal was extremely difficult to say the least,” Vice-President Geiger said. “It was the Organization’s intentions — along with reasonable wage increases — to not maintain present health care benefits, but to improve upon them without additional cost to the membership.

“Further, we were not willing to give up any of the hard-earned rules and benefits gained in previous contracts. We were ultimately successful in attaining these goals.”

General Chairman Twombly said the health and welfare package is “the single most important item” in the new contract. In a time when companies are forcing employees to pay out-of-pocket expenses for health care services, the Springfield Terminal agreement ensures that BLE members pay no out-of-pocket contributions for health care benefits.

“It should be pointed out that not only did we hold the line on out-of-pocket contributions, but our health care benefits have been improved,” Brother Twombly said.

The major improvement is the addition of eye care coverage to the health and welfare package. The second 1 percent raise is effective at the date of signing. Rates will be increased again on Jan. 1, 2004.

Another 2 percent raise is effective Jan. 1, 2005. Three percent pay raises will come on Jan. 1, 2006, Jan. 1, 2007 and Jan. 1, 2008, providing for an overall pay increase of 15 percent. Members also receive a $1,150 bonus at the time of signing.

The new contract provides for six pay increases over a five-year period, but our health and welfare package has provided tremendous improvements.”

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Contract protects health & welfare

ST/D&H

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(thanks to all the brothers and sisters from other unions who supported us in this struggle.

The strike began on June 18, after a cooling-off period mandated by Canadian labor laws. RCTC members have been without a contract since January 1, 2003.

During the strike, the company used managers and other employees to fill-in for the striking workers, which may have compromised the safety of rail operations. However, the Rail Canada Traffic Controllers’ return to work on August 9 will allow safe operations to resume.

Rail Traffic Controllers

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