Amtrak unions threaten strike

One-day job action would draw attention to importance of passenger rail

More than 8,000 Amtrak union members, fed up with what they call inadequate government rail funding, threatened to walk off the job on Oct. 3 in a one-day strike. "The idea is to try and give the public a snapshot of what the country would look like without a national rail system," said Charles Moneypenny, a director of the AFL-CIO's Transport Workers Union.

"We believe we have the legal right to politically protest the persistent underfunding of Amtrak. Our members are fed up with trying to duct tape the rail system together so it can run," Moneypenny said. Amtrak employs roughly 20,000 unionized workers. Moneypenny said labor groups representing engineers and mechanics the trains are not going to run, he said. The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers is one of the unions planning to participate in the walk-out.

A railroad industry source said Amtrak would likely seek a court injunction to block the threatened walkout on Oct. 3, but a spokesman for the railroad would not confirm that.

Amtrak President David Gunn said the railroad needs to be adequately funded but opposed labor’s approach to putting pressure on Congress and the Bush administration.

"Amtrak has a legal and public service obligation to provide inter-city passenger rail service each and every day. We anticipate all of our employees will abide by existing contracts and the law," Gunn said in a statement.

Moneypenny said his union was passing out leaflets to passengers urging them to call their representatives in Congress to urge full funding.

Amtrak has requested $1.8 billion in subsidies for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, citing the need for urgent repairs to its Northeast Corridor infrastructure. In an advisory sent to employees, Gunn said on "any given day" something could fail and large parts of the system could be shut down. "The Senate is considering $1.34 billion in subsidies, while the House of Representatives has approved $900 million.

"Congress must finally give Amtrak the resources its needs to succeed. And they must reject policies — and policymakers — that seek to ‘reform’ Amtrak for the benefit of a select few at the expense of many," said TTDF President Sonny Hall.

The TTDF did not take a position on the one-day strike because only six of the 11 TTDF Rail Division unions are scheduled to participate. The resolution noted that Amtrak’s workers have paid the price for these policies, as their wages are more than 20 percent below those in freight and commuter rail, and new contracts are years overdue.

(Reuters contributed to this report) •

AFL-CIO state federations enact remote control safety resolutions

In the past three months, six state labor federations have adopted safety resolutions that call upon local, state and federal officials to examine remote control train operations to make sure the technology is implemented in the safest manner possible.

AFL-CIO state federations in Arizona, Texas, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina and Missouri have adopted similar resolutions since June 11. In addition to these six bodies, 36 communities (26 cities and 10 counties) throughout the United States have adopted similar remote control safety resolutions.

In general terms, the resolutions oppose the unregulated use of remote control locomotives. The resolutions also request that state officials, as well as the Federal Railroad Administration, examine remote control technology in the name of public safety.

Arizona AFL-CIO

The Arizona AFL-CIO became the first AFL-CIO body to adopt a resolution calling for more stringent safety practices in the implementation of remote control. The federation unanimously adopted the resolution on June 11. The Arizona AFL-CIO cited the dangers of transporting hazardous materials and the lack of FRA oversight in remote control operations among its reasons for passing the resolution. It calls for the “Arizona Corporation Commission to prohibit the use of RCL technology in switching operations until such time as... A thorough risk assessment study of RCL operations has been made and published by a third party.”

The resolution also states that, "railroad companies have failed to adopt and/or enforce the operational practices most critical for employee and public safety during hurried implementation of remote control operations."

Texas AFL-CIO

The Texas AFL-CIO has become the second state AFL-CIO affiliate to enact a remote control safety resolution, which was introduced on July 26.

The Texas AFL-CIO called for an examination of the implementation of remote control train operations and urged the state of Texas and the FRA to develop and adhere to comprehensive guidelines for remote control operations.

BLE-IBT Town Hall Meetings underway

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers is conducting a nationwide series of Town Hall Meetings to explain details of the proposed merger with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

Delegates to the BLE’s Seventh Quinquennial International Convention in Miami changed Section 1(e) of the BLE’s Constitution & Bylaws in September of 2001. The changes established a 135-day timeline or “ratification schedule” that the International President must adhere to when considering a merger or affiliation with another organization. The change came about after delegates felt a “quicker” or “crunch” period would be forced upon the organization.

The ratification schedule provides time for BLE leadership to review the documents, to submit questions and to ask for clarifications, and for parties to distribute advocacy documents and/or partisan materials. The ratification schedule for the current IBT proposal began on July 22, the day the merger documents were mailed to BLE leaders, after winning the unanimous approval of the BLE Advisory Board. The BLE-IBT merger ratification schedule, per Sec- tion 1(e) of the BLE Constitution & Bylaws, is as follows:

• July 22, Day 1: “Mailing Date” — documents mailed to leadership;
• September 5, Day 45: Request for clarifications and/or interpretations due;
• September 20, Day 60: Agreed-upon answers mailed and notice provided of right to distribute advocacy documents and/or partisan materi- als;
Acting for impaired beneficiaries

The Railroad Retirement Board's policy is that every annuitant has the right to manage his or her own benefits. However, when physical or mental impairments make a railroad retirement annuitant incapable of properly handling benefit payments, or where the Board determines that the interests of the annuitant so require, the Board can appoint a representative payee on the annuitant’s behalf. A representative payee may be either a person or an organization selected by the Board to receive benefits on behalf of an annuitant.

The following questions and answers provide information for family members, or others, who may have to act on behalf of an annuitant.

1. Does the Railroad Retirement Board have legal authority to appoint a representative payee for an annuitant?

The Railroad Retirement Act gives the Board authority to determine whether direct payment of benefits, or payment to a representative payee, will best serve an annuitant’s interest. The Board can appoint a representative payee regardless of whether there has been a legal finding of incompetence or commitment and, depending on the circumstances in a particular case, the Board can select someone other than the individual’s legal representative to be the representative payee.

2. What if a person has been given power of attorney by a beneficiary?

Power of attorney is a legal process whereby one person grants another the authority to transact certain business on his or her behalf, but the Railroad Retirement Board, like the Social Security Administration, does not recognize power of attorney for purposes of managing benefit payments for a beneficiary. For this purpose, the Board uses the position of representative payee.

3. Why doesn’t the Board recognize power of attorney?

The Railroad Retirement Act provides that the Board exclusive jurisdiction in determining whether to appoint a representative payee for an annuitant. If the Board recognizes power of attorney, the Board would be deferring to a designation made by someone outside of the agency and would, in effect, be abdicating its responsibility to the annuitant.

Also, events often occur which may affect an annuitant’s eligibility for benefits. The responsibility for reporting these events to the Board is placed, by law, directly on the annuitant or the annuitant’s representative payee. When benefits are accepted, the annuitant or his or her payee attests to a continued eligibility for such benefits. And if payments are missed, they can be reconciled from the payee. This is not true with power of attorney.

4. How are these representative payees selected?

Generally, the Board’s local office determines the need for a representative payee and interview potential payees. The field office also advises the annuitant of its intended appointee and the name of the payee, in order to allow the annuitant a period of time in which to contest the appointment.

5. What are the primary duties and responsibilities of a representative payee?

The payee must give first consideration to the annuitant’s day-to-day needs. This includes paying for food, shelter, clothing, medical care and miscellaneous personal needs. Beyond day-to-day needs, railroad retirement benefits may be used for other expenses.

The payee is also responsible for reporting events to the Board that affect the individual’s eligibility and the amount of the annuitant’s tax matters.

Periodically, the payee will be asked to complete a report which includes questions regarding how much of the railroad retirement benefits available during the year were used for the support of the beneficiary, how much of the beneficiaries were invested in the savings. In order to complete the questionnaire correctly, a payee must keep current records of the railroad retirement benefits received and how the benefits were used. These records must be retained for four years.

6. What are a representative payee’s primary responsibilities for an annuitant’s Medicare coverage?

When an annuitant requires covered medical services, the payee must have the annuitant’s Medicare card available. The payee must also keep records of the services received and the charges incurred or paid, just as for any otherusual type of railroad retirement benefit.

7. What if an annuitant is confined to an institution?

When annuitants are in a nursing home, hospital or other institution, the railroad retirement payments should be used to meet the annuitant’s tax matters.

8. How should railroad retirement benefits not immediately required be met to an annuitant’s needs be handled?

Benefit payments which will not be needed to protect an annuitant’s investment or invested unless they are needed for the support of the annuitant’s legally dependent spouse or child, or to pay creditors under certain circumstances. It is recommended that contracts, funds be held in interest-bearing accounts. Preferred investments are Federally-insured or State-insured accounts at financial institutions and obligations of, or those backed by, the federal government, such as U.S. Savings Bonds. Funds should not be kept in the home where they may be lost or stolen, nor can they be mingled with the payee’s own funds or other funds.

9. How can a person get more information about being appointed as a representative payee, or whether the use of railroad retirement benefits for a particular purpose would be proper?

For more information, a person should contact the nearest office of the Railroad Retirement Board. The Board offices are open to the public from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Payees can find the address and phone number of the Board office serving their area by calling the automated RRB Help Line at (800) 806-0772. They can also get this information from the Board’s Web site at www.rrb.gov.

FBI: U.S. rail lines targeted for attacks

Al-Qaeda is targeting the nation’s railroads for terrorism so it can disrupt the nation’s economy, according to FBI officials.

The threat has become so real in May, the FBI said, when someone supposed an alert when equipment was reinforced on strategic points along America’s railroads were reinforced on strategic points along the nation’s economy, according to the RAND Corp., the Los Angeles Economic Development Corp, and Orange County Economic Development Corp.

Possible terrorist acts include putting a bomb on a train to cause havoc in the rail system or tampering with the rail lines to cause a derailment, according to the study.

The study suggests that the nation concentrate its counterterrorism efforts along strategic corridors in Los Angeles, New York, Las Vegas, Houston and Chicago, said Tim Baker, senior vice president of the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corp.

The study calls on the federal government to fund training for emergency teams that would respond to a rail disaster. The Association of American Railroads already operates a facility in Pueblo, Colo., to teach emergency personnel how to handle rail accidents, said John Borkenhagen, spokesman for Union Pacific.

The Jefferson Circuit Court jury awarded $2.74 million to Moody $200,000 for future medical expenses, $540,000 for future lost income, $1 million for past and future pain and suffering.

The Los Angeles, Kj, Con-

"•"
Remote control info spreads

36th community passes remote control safety resolution

The number of local communities enacting comprehensive remote control safety resolutions grew to 36 in August. Mankato, Minn., and Saginaw, Mich., joined the growing list of communities that are asking the Federal Railroad Administration to make sure that remote control locomotives are operated in the safest manner possible.

Mankato, Minn.

On August 11, the city of Mankato, Minn., passed a resolution opposing remote control locomotives within its jurisdiction.

The effort to pass the resolution was spearheaded by BLE Division 9 (Waseca, Minn.) President D.A. Boeck. BLE Northern Lines General Chairman Bruce D. MacArthur commended Boeck and the rest of the members of Division 9 for their effort. The resolution stated that the city of Mankato took action in order to ensure the safety of its citizens, and it asked that the FRA develop comprehensive regulations for the use of remote control locomotives.

Saginaw, Mich.

In August, the city of Saginaw, Mich., also adopted a safety resolution regarding the use of remote control trains within its boundaries.

The Saginaw City Council unanimously approved a resolution calling for the FRA to develop comprehensive regulations for the use of remote controlled locomotives, and that “those regulations ensure that the safety and well-being of the citizens of Saginaw will not be jeopardized by the use of such devices.”

Greg Powell, Michigan State Legislative Board Chairman, thanked the members of BLE Division 304 (Saginaw), especially Local Chairman Dave Normann and Legislative Representative Don Roach. He also thanked Joe Smith, President of the Saginaw Central Labor Council; Wilmar Jones-Harm, Saginaw City Mayor; Carol Cotrell, City Councilwoman; and the rest of the Saginaw City Council.

The List


Also, 10 counties have passed similar remote control resolutions. They include Douglas County, Wisc.; West Baton Rouge Parish, La.; Point Coupe Parish, La.; Cuyahoga County, Ohio; Huron County, Ohio; Erie County, Ohio; White County, Ky.; Union County, Tenn.; Contra Costa County, Calif.; and Knox County, Tenn.

Links at <www.ble.org>

For a PDF copy of the Mankato resolution, visit: http://www.ble.org/pr/pdf/mankato.pdf

For a PDF of the Saginaw resolution, visit: http://www.ble.org/pr/pdf/saginaw.pdf

BLE recognizes employee on 35th anniversary

BLE International President Don M. Hahs recognized Betty A. Child, who celebrated her 35th anniversary as an employee of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers on August 20. She is secretary and administrative assistant to the BLE’s U.S. National Legislative Representative Raymond Holmes and has worked in the BLE’s Washington, D.C., office since 1968.

In 1969, Sister Child became the first woman selected as an honorary member of the BLE by a unanimous vote of the Advisory Board.

The resolution stated that the 50,000 men and woman of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, I thank Betty Child for her years of dedicated service and valuable contributions to our organization,” President Hahs said. “I thank her for her patience and persistence over the years.”

She came to work for the BLE as a young woman with two small children in August 1968. She has served under the leadership of 10 International Presidents, beginning with their Grand Chief Engineer Perry S. Heath.

In unanimously accepting her as an honorary member in 1998, the Advisory Board declared: “Betty has many years of dedication, knowledge of the BLE’s history and overall contribution to the organization as a whole is incomparable.”

Betty Child, who in late August marked her 35th year as a BLE employee, with Raymond A. Holmes, BLE Vice-President & U.S. National Legislative Representative.

We only grant this membership to persons who have given an extremely valuable contribution to the cause of railroad in general, and/or to the cause of the craft of the locomotive engineer:

BLE conducting Town Hall Meetings on proposed IBBT merger

Town Hall Meetings

Continued from Page 1
• September 30, Day 70: Deadline for notice from those desiring to distribute materials per area.
• October 5, Day 75: Deadline for Canadians to request separate vote.
• October 20, Day 90: Deadline for mailing ballots and bullet to each active member; and
• December 4, Day 135: Deadline for receipt and counting of all ballots.

The office of BLE First Vice-President Ed Rodzewicz is coordinating the Town Hall meetings. 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 Town Hall Meetings provide a chance for BLE members to participate in a question and answer session with BLE leaders regarding the proposed IBBT merger.

The schedule for these events remains fluid, dates and locations of all meetings were not available for publication in the Newsletter. Confirmed Town Hall meetings are as follows:

October 22, 6 p.m.-8 p.m. Holiday Inn Airport 796 East Brooks Road Memphis, Tenn. (901) 396-5331

October 24, 9 a.m.-11 p.m. IBT Local 667 Meeting Hall 796 East Brooks Road Memphis, Tenn. (901) 396-5331

October 24, 6 p.m.-8 p.m. IBT Local 480 Meeting Hall 1050 Cornelia St. Nashville, Tenn. 37217 (615) 361-4900

October 25, 9 a.m.-11 a.m. IBT Local 480 Meeting Hall 1050 Cornelia St. Nashville, Tenn. 37217 (615) 361-4900

BLE members can look for the dates and locations of Town Hall Meetings to be published on the BLE website when meetings are formally scheduled for a particular area.
Representing Canadian BLE members at the 68th annual EUMA are, from left: Glenn Wightman, Division 91 (Montreal), and George Hucker, BLE International Vice-President & National Legislative Representative-Canada.

BLE International President Don M. Hahs, right, shakes hands with IBT General President James Hoffa.

From left: Carlos Lizarraga, Local Chairman of Division 106 (Muncie, Ind.), President Hahs, and Kevin Berkes, Secretary-Treasurer of Division 106.

From left: IBT General President Hoffa visits the BLE Education & Training Department booth during the EUMA and meets with BLE Special Representative and Education & Training Department Coordinator Ken Kroeger.

From left: General Chairman Tommy Roberts (Conrail Shared Assets/CSX Northern District); Ron Pasquarella, Local Chairman and Legislative Representative of Division 682 (Hammond, Ind.), and General Chairman Don Menefee (CSXT Northern Lines).

From left: Ray Wagner, Regional Coordinator for CSX Operation Redblock; Leon Stockwell, CSX Northern Region SENSE Coordinator; Larry James, CSX System Labor Liaison; and Tom Vassie, Northeast Regional SENSE Coordinator and Secretary-Treasurer of the Central Shared Assets/CSX Northern District General Committee of Adjustment. Wagner belongs to BLE Division 286 (Grand Rapids, Mich.), Stockwell belongs to Division 561 (Richmond, Va.), James belongs to Division 264 (Parkersburg-Grafton, WV.), and Vassie to Division 382 (Buffalo, N.Y.)
Bruce Cushing and his daughter Katie. Brother Cushing is Local Chairman and Legislative Representative of BLE Division 112 (Greenfield, Mass.).

From left: John Rupp, Local Chairman of Division 74 (Harrisburg, Pa.), and Fred Cox, Chairman of the 2003 EUMA in Baltimore.

From left: GIA International President Onita Wayland and BLE General Secretary-Treasurer William C. Walpert.

EUMA Chairman Mark Kenny, who is also General Chairman of the BLE’s Amtrak General Committee of Adjustment.

Teamsters General President Hoffa and BLE International Vice-President Paul T. Sorrow.

Next Eastern Union Meeting Association • August 8-11, 2004
At the Holiday Inn — Grand Island, N.Y.
Hosted by Jimmy & Janet Louis and members of BLE Division 421 (more details to come)
How to calculate railroad, social security benefits

The payment of a railroad retirement annuity can be affected by entitlement to social security benefits, as well as certain other government benefits. Such dual entitlement, if not reported to the Railroad Retirement Board, can result in benefit overpayments which have to be repaid, sometimes with interest and penalties. The following questions and answers describe how dual benefit payments are adjusted by the Railroad Retirement Board for annuitants eligible for social security benefits and/or other benefit payments.

1. How are dual benefits paid to persons entitled to railroad retirement and social security benefits payable to an individual at one time?

A railroad retirement benefit is based, in part or in whole, on employment and earnings. These reductions follow principles of social security law which, in effect, limit payment to the higher of any two or more benefits payable to an individual at one time.

However, the tier II portion of a railroad retirement annuity or tier II portion of a spouse or survivor annuity is reduced for any social security entitlement, even if the social security benefit is based on the spouse’s or survivor’s own earnings. These reductions are based on the tier II portion of the spouse’s or the survivor’s own earnings. These reductions follow principles of social security law which, in effect, limit payment to the higher of any two or more benefits payable to an individual at one time.

2. Why is a railroad retirement annuity reduced when a social security benefit is also payable?

The tier I portion of a railroad retirement annuity is based on the employee’s or the spouse’s or survivor’s own earnings, reflecting what social security would pay if railroad work were covered by social security. Tier I benefits are, therefore, reduced by the amount of any actual social security benefit payments. This is to reflect what social security would pay if railroad work were covered by social security.

3. Are there any exceptions to the railroad retirement annuity reduction for social security benefits?

No. However, if an employee qualifies for dual benefits before 1975 and meets certain vesting requirements, he or she can receive an additional annuity amount which offsets, in part, the dual benefit reduction. This additional amount, reflecting the dual benefits payable prior to 1975, is called a vested dual benefit payment. Legislation enacted in 1974 coordinated dual railroad retirement and social security benefit payments to eliminate certain duplications; but this legislation also included a grandfather provision that the 1975 dual benefits of persons meeting certain vesting requirements by including vested dual benefit payments.

4. Are there any funding limitations on payment of vested dual benefits?

Vested dual benefit payments are funded by annual appropriations from the U.S. Treasury to the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board, rather than the railroad retirement payroll taxes and other revenues that finance over 98% of the railroad retirement system’s benefit payments. Payment of any vested dual benefit is dependent on the time and amount of such appropriations. If the appropriation in a fiscal year is less than the estimated total dual benefit payment, individual payments must be reduced by proration. Vested dual benefit payments are not increased by cost-of-living adjustments.

5. Can Federal, State, or local government pensions also result in dual benefit reductions in a railroad retirement annuity?

Tier I benefits for employees eligible for a railroad retirement annuity and a Federal, State or local government pension after 1985 may be reduced for receipt of a public pension. The reduction is equal to 2/3 of the amount of the public pension. The public service pension reduction, the tier I reduction is based on any of the amount of the government pension. The public service pension reduction, the tier I reduction is based on any of the amount of the public pension.

6. How does the public service pension apply to spouse or widower’s benefits?

A railroad retirement annuity is based on both the employee annuity and the spouse annuity. For spouses and widower(s) subject to the government pension reduction, the tier I reduction is based on any of the amount of the public pension. The public service pension reduction, the tier I reduction is based on any of the amount of the public pension.

7. What dual benefit restrictions apply when both a husband and wife are rail employees entitled to railroad retirement annuities?

If both the husband and wife are qualified railroad employees and neither has some railroad service before 1975, both can receive separate railroad retirement annuity and spouse annuity benefits, without a full dual benefit reduction.

8. Can workers’ compensation or public disability benefits affect railroad retirement benefits?

If an employee is receiving a disability benefit, Tier I benefits for the employee and spouse may, under certain circumstances, be reduced for receipt of workers’ compensation or public disability benefits.

9. How can an annuitant find out if receipt of any dual benefits might affect his or her railroad retirement annuity?

An annuitant becomes entitled to any of the previously discussed dual benefit payments, or if there is any question as to whether a dual benefit payment requires a reduction in an annuity, a Board field office should be contacted. In any situation, the best rule is, “When in doubt-report.”

Upcoming 2003 Railroad Retirement information conferences

The U.S. Railroad Retirement Board will offer free informational conferences for elected BLE retirees during 2003. Registration begins at 8:00 a.m., meeting times vary.

Wydadham Hotel at Franklin Plaza
17th and Race Streets
Meetings are from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
October 17 — Pittsburgh, Pa.
Radisson Hotel, Pittsburgh Green Tree
November 7 — New Orleans, La.
Holiday Inn Metairie, 3400 I-10 & Causeway Blvd.
December 5 — Jacksonville, Fl.
Holiday Inn Baymeadows
9150 Baymeadows Road

October 24 — Portland, Ore.
Hilton Garden Inn, Portland Airport
12014 S.E. Airport Way
NEWS BRIEFS

Study: BNSF one of five worst companies for employee privacy

BNSF Corporation is ranked best for employee workplace privacy and Burlington Northern Santa Fe one of the worst among the largest publicly traded companies, according to a search conducted by WIRE magazine. “Ranking Privacy at Work” in the October 2003 issue reports that with tools like e-mail and Internet monitoring, keystroke tracking and even genetic testing, on-the-job spying has never been more common or effective.

According to WIRE’s findings, Burlington Northern Santa Fe ranks with Eli Lilly, Wal-Mart, New York Times Company, and Hilton Hotels as one of the five worst. It ranked Eli Lilly as the worst.

BNSF scored near the bottom for illegally testing workers for genetic defects. In May of 2002, BNSF paid $2.2 million to 36 workers who said they were genetically tested without their knowledge by the railroad as part of a comprehensive medical exam after filing claims for carpal tunnel syndrome. Most were maintenance of way workers.

The five best companies are IBM, Hewlett-Packard, Ford, Baxter Healthcare and Sears.

(From Wired Magazine) •

Hurricane Isabel hits Eastern U.S. railroads

As much as the railroads in the path of Hurricane Isabel would like to return to normal service, flooding and electrical outages are still interrupting schedules.

As this Newsletter went to press, Amtrak was still experiencing delays between Washington, D.C., and Baltimore due to high water at Landover, Md. As of September 24, the water had receded to a level that enabled Amtrak to restore full service on two tracks.

On its Harrisburg Line, Amtrak reported several downed trees blocking tracks and affecting overhead power lines. Passengers were notified that they may expect significant delays between Philadelphia and Harrisburg until further notice.

Local power outages have played havoc with scheduling and train operations because of concerns about mal-functioning signals. Norfolk Southern and CSX have placed hundreds of portable generators in North Carolina and Virginia to back up crossing gates and flashers. CSX has managed to reopen all of its lines with the exception of the one from Garysburg, N.C., to Ports-

mouth, Va., which it hopes to have in service by September 24.

(From Transaxx) •

UP told to get safety back on track in Calif.

Responding to a series of recent accidents and near misses involving Union Pacific trains in California — including two in September when freight cars almost crashed into Metrolink trains in Los Angeles — state officials criticized the Omaha-based railroad and called on it to improve its safety practices.

“We do not appreciate trains in our rivers, our backyards or running uncontrollable through our neighborhoods, our intersections and past our schools,” said Richard Clark, director of rail safety for the Public Utilities Commission.

On June 20, a UP train broke loose as a yard train in Montclair and traveled out of control for about 30 miles at speeds greater than 80 mph before derailing in a Commerce neighborhood. Nobody was killed, but the derailment crushed several houses.

Since then, Clark said, UP trains have been involved in five more serious incidents in California. The PUC is so concerned about UP’s performance in California that Clark and PUC board President Michael Peavey held an emergency telephone meeting last week with the head of the Federal Railroad Administration and Union Pacific’s operations director. During the phone call, Clark said, and Peavey told UP that the commission would step up its monitoring of the company’s tracks and trains in California, and that UP should do more to prevent accidents or near misses.

(From The Los Angeles Times) •

BLE a hit at AFL-CIO Union Industries Trade Show in Pittsburgh

The BLE Education & Training Department booth at the AFL-CIO Union Industries Show in Pittsburgh, Pa., offered show attendees an opportunity to experience the thrill of operating a locomotive.

Burlington’s newly completed train simulator, installed in a 26-foot travel trailer, attracted the attention of young and old at the May 2-5 show, and was featured in an article published by the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

The simulator is a replica of the CN F7MD 170 comfort cab, complete with all the controls, an ergonomically-correct, adjustable Burlant 3500 series reclining seat, and a computer screen where a video-tape of an actual run is displayed. Next to the “trainee” seat in the cab is a seat for the instructor to observe and critique while the simulator is in operation. Dozens of show goers entered the trailer to sit in the simulated cab and operate the controls during the four-day show.

This year’s show attracted more than 200,000 visitors to the newly constructed, 330,000-square-foot David L. Lawrence Convention Center in downtown Pittsburgh. All the latest in union-made automobiles, motorcycles, appliances, hardware, work clothes, sporting goods, baked goods, and groceries were on display, as well as services and skills performed by America’s union members.

The show, produced by the AFL-CIO Union Label & Service Trades Department, is held each year in a different part of the country. “The American Dream — Union Made” was the theme for the Pittsburgh show.

BLE Job Bank

Amtrak

Amtrak, the National Railroad Passenger Corp., is recruiting Locomotive Engineers to work out of Washington, D.C. Duties include the safe operation of diesel-electric locomotives, complying with train orders, wayside signals, railroad operating rules, special instructions, and federal, state and local regulations to transport passengers and equipment safely and efficiently.

Locomotive Engineers perform equipment and air brake tests as required. Job involves working alone and apart in physical isolation while integrating activities with others. Engineers must make timely and critical decisions under stressful situations to safeguard lives and property.

Candidates must have a current Class I Engineer Certificate and must currently be working as a Locomotive Engineer with one year of service. Any candidate whose driving record indicates a conviction for an alcohol or substance violation, or a refusal to submit to testing in connection with a moving violation within the past 30 months, will be automatically disqualified.

Candidates must be able to report to their Crew Base within a 2-hour call.

Resumes may be forwarded to Amtrak Human Resources Department, 900 Second Street, NE, Washington, D.C., faxed to 202-906-3349, or emailed to thomaswa@amtrak.com.

Amtrak is an equal opportunity employer: EOE, M/F, UV.

Ken Kroeger of the BLE Education & Training Department works with a young railroad enthusiast who prepare for them,” GST Walpert said. “Many of these students to get a first-hand look into the world of railroading as we currently have in mind for this year’s show.”

General Secretary-Treasurer Bill Walpert was on hand when the show opened. Several hundred Pittsburgh-area junior high and high school students attended the show.

Ken Kroeger of the BLE Education & Training Department works with a young railroad enthusiast at the AFL-CIO’s Union Industries Trade Show in Pittsburgh. The simulator used by the BLE as part of the show was provided by Burlant.

“The Union Industries Trade Show is a great opportunity for these students to get a first-hand look into the world of railroading as we currently have in mind for this year’s show,” GST Walpert said. “Many potential future hogheads took away our handout titled ‘Becoming a Locomotive Engineer.’”

Next year’s show will be in St. Louis, Mo.
Remote Control

Continued from Page 1

members of his board, introduced the resolution. It noted that Texas leads the nation in the transportation of hazardous materials, including nuclear materials, and that these materials could endanger lives if released in an enclosed area.

Michigan AFL-CIO

In mid-August, the Michigan AFL-CIO called for a halt of remote control train operations until enforceable federal regulations are in place.

The federation resolved that the state of Michigan ban remote control until it has been thoroughly studied and the FRA promulgate regulations regarding the technology.

Greg Powell, the BLE’s Michigan State Legislative Board Chairman, was instrumental in the passage of the resolution.

He thanked Michigan AFL-CIO President Mark Gallney, Michigan AFL-CIO Lobbyist Ken Fletcher and the BLE’s MI Legislative Board Executive for passing the resolution.

Missouri AFL-CIO

The Missouri AFL-CIO passed a remote control safety resolution on September 8.

The Missouri resolution, which opposes the unregulated use of remote control locomotives, asks the FRA to promulgate regulations regarding the safe use of remote control.

Missouri State Legislative Board Chairman Mickey Gage thanked Missouri AFL-CIO President Hugh McVeY and Secretary-Treasurer Herb Johnson for their help in getting the resolution passed.

More Information

The full text of each resolution is available on the BLE website for downloading.

<http://www.ble.org/remotecontrol/resolutions.asp>

CSX reverts to RCO resolution

CSX Transportation is retaliating against a Tennessee County Commission for passing a remote control safety resolution earlier this year. The railroad is refusing to allow public parking on its property during the county’s annual Apple Festival.

In March, the Unicoi County Commission (Tenn.) passed a resolution that urged CSX to use remote-control switching devices in its rail yard, saying that replacing live engineers with machines was a safety issue.

In August, the Unicoi County Chamber of Commerce requested permission from CSX to allow public parking on its property for the annual Unicoi County Apple Festival.

CSX has provided the property for festival parking at no charge to the Chamber for years. This year, however, the railroad changed its tune.

The vote was considered necessary for public safety, and I don’t see the commission going back and changing it,” County Commissioner Jimmy Erwin said. “Any time you take a person behind the wheel (train engineers), you have more of a chance of error.”

(Activist Record contributed to this report.)

Remote Control

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members of his board, introduced the resolution. It noted that Texas leads the nation in the transportation of hazardous materials, including nuclear materials, and that these materials could endanger lives if released in an enclosed area.

Michigan AFL-CIO

In mid-August, the Michigan AFL-CIO called for a halt of remote control train operations until enforceable federal regulations are in place.

The federation resolved that the state of Michigan ban remote control until it has been thoroughly studied and the FRA promulgate regulations regarding the technology.

Greg Powell, the BLE’s Michigan State Legislative Board Chairman, was instrumental in the passage of the resolution.

He thanked Michigan AFL-CIO President Mark Gallney, Michigan AFL-CIO Lobbyist Ken Fletcher and the BLE’s MI Legislative Board Executive for passing the resolution.

Missouri AFL-CIO

The Missouri AFL-CIO passed a remote control safety resolution on September 8.

The Missouri resolution, which opposes the unregulated use of remote control locomotives, asks the FRA to promulgate regulations regarding the safe use of remote control.

Missouri State Legislative Board Chairman Mickey Gage thanked Missouri AFL-CIO President Hugh McVeY and Secretary-Treasurer Herb Johnson for their help in getting the resolution passed.

More Information

The full text of each resolution is available on the BLE website for downloading.

<http://www.ble.org/remotecontrol/resolutions.asp>

CSX reverts to RCO resolution

CSX Transportation is retaliating against a Tennessee County Commission for passing a remote control safety resolution earlier this year. The railroad is refusing to allow public parking on its property during the county’s annual Apple Festival.

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CSX has provided the property for festival parking at no charge to the Chamber for years. This year, however, the railroad changed its tune.

"In the past, we have been happy to authorize public parking on our property for the Apple Festival, but since the County Commission has taken official actions to question the safety of our operations, we do not feel that it would be appropriate to have members of the public parking in the vicinity of those operations," said a CSX official in a letter to the county.

Members of the county commission did not show signs of changing their opposing positions on the issue.

"My vote as a commissioner was for safety, and I don’t see the commission going back and changing it," County Commissioner Jimmy Erwin said. "Any time you take a person behind the wheel (train engineers), you have more of a chance of error." (The Erwin Record contributed to this report.)