More than 40 percent of Rail Labor now belongs to IBT Rail Conference

In a historic vote, members of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMWE) approved a merger with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT). The BMWE is the second major railroad union to merge with the Teamsters this year. An overwhelming 76 percent of BMWE members approved the merger in the ballots tallied on October 27.

"We are proud and excited to be part of the Teamsters Rail Conference," said Simpson. "With over 42 percent of union members in the rail industry now united under the Teamsters banner, the rail corporations are going to have great power at the workplace, in Congress and in negotiations."

The BMWE now joins the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen as a member of the Teamsters Rail Conference. The BLET became the founding member of the Rail Conference when it merged with IBT on Jan. 1, 2004. "On behalf of the 55,000 members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, we welcome our Brothers and Sisters of the BMWE into the Rail Conference," BLET National President Don Hahs said. "I look forward to working together with the BMWE and IBT in a successful partnership."

With the addition of the BMWE, the Teamsters Rail Conference now represents more than 40 percent of rail labor.

"I'm ecstatic about the possibilities for the future with the BLET and BMWE in the same house," BMWE President Simpson said. "The possibilities are limitless."

FRA delivers urgent safety message

Increase in the number of fatalities cause for increased safety awareness

Betty Monaco, Acting Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration, issued the following safety message on November 4 regarding the recent series of switching accidents in the railroad industry. A review of FRA's accident/incident data demonstrates that overall safety of rail transportation continues to improve. However, within a 59 day period, seven railroad employees have lost their lives while on duty, and six of the seven were engaged in switching operations. They were:

- Sept. 2, 2004 — Thursday — Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF), Clovis, N.M. A 28-year-old switchman died when he fell from the leading end of a tank car as it derailed during a switching move.
- Sept. 20, 2004 — Monday — Ann Arbor Railroad (AA), Saline, Mich. A 44-year-old brakeorman died when he was crushed between a piece of track equipment and the rail car he was handling.
- Oct. 4, 2004 — Monday — Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF), Topeka, Kan. A 57-year-old machinist died as a result of an injury he sustained on September 29, when he was struck in the face by an object that was ejected from a hydraulic press.
- Oct. 4, 2004 — Monday — Norfolk Southern (NS), Harrisburg, Pa. A 59-year-old conductor was struck and killed by a shove move being performed by another crew when he stepped in front of the leading end of the move.
- Oct. 7, 2004 — Thursday — Union Pacific (UP), Springfield, Ill. A student trainman was killed when the cars he was walking beside derailed, fell on his side, and crushed him.
- Oct. 7, 2004 — Thursday — Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF), Teague, Texas. A 60-year-old trainman was killed when the cars that he was between moved. His was the only crew working at the yard at the time.
- Nov. 1, 2004 — Monday — Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF), Howdoin, Mont. A 47-year-old conductor was killed when he was struck by a passing train that he was positioning himself to observe as it passed his standing train.

"In its recently released report, Finding and Recommendations of the SOFA Working Group; August 2004 Update, the Safet"...
**BLET NEWS**

**Iowa, Colorado elect new Legislative Board Chairmen**

BLET members in Iowa and Colorado recently elected new State Legislative Board Chairmen to direct their political and legislative affairs.

Brother Jeff A. Kurtz will serve as Legislative Board Chairman in Iowa and Brother Mike Weston will serve in Colorado.

**Iowa State Legislative Board**

Members of the BLET’s Iowa State Legislative Board elected Jeff A. Kurtz as their new chairman at quadrennial meetings on October 13 and 14. Chairman Kurtz is a member of BLET Division 391 (Port Madison, Iowa).

“Jeff hit the ground on our Board with his feet running and has never stopped,” former chairman Chuck Hintz said. “He will make a most excellent chairman and members will enjoy his company and wisdom.”

Brother Hintz did not seek re-election for personal reasons.

“It was one of the toughest decisions I have made in my life, but I decided that my family must come first,” he said.

However, Brother Hintz, a member of Division 778 (Des Moines, Iowa), will continue to serve the Board as First Vice-Chairman.

BLET National President Don Hahs thanked Chuck Hintz for his dedication as Vice-Chairman.

“I appreciate him continuing to help us,” President Hahs said. “We look forward to working with Brother Kurtz and the members of the Iowa State Legislative Board.”

Also serving the Iowa State Legislative Board are: Secretary-Treasurer Janet L. Schultz, Division 6 (Boone, Iowa); Second Vice-Chairman Shaun Kelley, Division 642 (Creston, Iowa); and Third Vice-Chairman Steve Wendt, Division 656 (Mason City, Iowa).

During the quadrennial meetings, members discussed the upcoming Presidential election as well as a number of legislative and regulatory issues of importance to locomotive engineers and trainmen.

**Colorado State Legislative Board**

Members of the BLET’s Colorado State Legislative Board elected new officers at their second quadrennial meeting held in Denver on September 14. The new State Legislative Board Chairman is Mike Weston of BLET Division 186 (Denver), and the new Secretary-Treasurer is Jim Wilmeshier of Division 256 (Denver).

The former Chairman, George Last of Division 940 (Denver), and the former Secretary-Treasurer, Steve Patterson of Division 256 (Denver), did not run because they are retiring from union work after years of service to the BLET and its members.

The following officers were also elected at the September 14 meeting:

- Dennis Parker of Division 133 (Denver), Vice-Chairman;
- Lew Fraser of Division 215 (Grand Junction, Colo.), Second Vice-Chairman; and
- Kevin Utterback of Division 47 (Denver), Alternate Secretary-Treasurer.

**PASSENGER NEWS BRIEFS**

Authorities suspect sabotage in collapse of transmission tower

Authorities suspect sabotage was behind the collapse of two enormous electrical transmission towers in Wisconsin that halted Amtrak train service over the holiday weekend.

Nobody was hurt, but freight and passenger train service was halted until crews cleared the power lines from the tracks and authorities collected physical evidence.

A freight train stopped 75 yards short of the wires. Milwaukee’s Mitchell Airport, which is about a mile from the towers, lost power for a while over the weekend.

(From the Chicago Sun-Times) •

N.E. corridor bridges may be on last legs

Passengers riding the rails in the Northeast hardly notice the three busy drawbridges they cross in southeastern Connecticut. But Amtrak engineers say the bridges are in such dire condition that they threaten to eliminate service between New York and Boston and cut access to three rivers.

The tiny 291-foot drawbridge that has operated over the Niantic River for 97 years is the busiest of the three. Its steel supports have holes so large, a person can stick a finger in them. To the east, bolts supporting a four-million-pound counterweight keep falling on the 85-year-old bridge that runs over the Thames River. To the west, structural support pins are wearing out on the railroad bridge over the Connecticut River. That bridge is 97 years old.

Of the roughly 1,300 bridges that Amtrak owns, the three in southeastern Connecticut are among the most antiquated and least reliable in the system, Amtrak officials said.

(From The New York Times) •

**FRA issues safety awareness notice after rash of fatal accidents**

**FRA Message**

Continued from Page 1

**ings and Recommendations of the SWG**

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(From The New York Times) •

With business on the upturn and many new employees entering the workforce, keeping the focus on our jobs is more important than ever. We must continue to remain vigilant about our personal safety, the safety of others, and the safety of the equipment we use.

As we approach important holidays and the end of another year, let’s all be watchful so that we can share these times with family and friends, knowing that others will enjoy the same blessings.

Betty Monro
Washington, D.C. •

**“Lew Fraser of Division 215 (Grand Junction, Colo.), Second Vice-Chairman; and**

**Kevin Utterback of Division 47 (Denver), Alternate Secretary-Treasurer** •

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Burlington Northern Santa Fe

BNSF posted a sharp drop in third-quarter profit, as a charge to reflect changes in the way the company estimates asbestos and environmental liabilities hurt its bottom line.

The railroad said third-quarter net income came to $2 million, including a charge of $288 million, compared with $203 million a year earlier. On a per-share basis, the company reported a loss of 30 cents per share versus earnings of 14 cents per share the year before.

Excluding the per-share charge for asbestos and environmental liabilities ($405 million), the railroad’s operating ratio was 79.4 percent. Consumer Products revenues increased $185 million, or 18 percent, to an all-time quarterly record of $1.1 billion as a result of double-digit increases in the international intermodal, forest products, and petroleum products sectors. Coal revenues rose $78 million, or 15 percent, to $589 million resulting from record demand by utility customers.

Canadian Pacific Railway

Canadian Pacific Railway reported third-quarter 2004 net income of $177 million, compared with net income of $91 million in the same period of 2003 (all figures Canadian). The increase included an after-tax gain of $73 million on foreign exchange on long-term debt. Volumes grew in six of seven business lines, including a 9-per-cent jump in intermodal, which is on pace to become a $1 billion line for CPR this year.

The railway’s operating ratio of 77.9 percent in the 2004 third quarter compares with 77.5 percent in the 2003 third quarter. CPR reported that its operating income of $219 million was an increase of 8 percent over the 2003 quarter. Its revenue was also up $85 million, but operating expenses were also up $70 million, driven by higher freight volumes and fuel prices, temporary costs to train additional crews, and a return to a normal level of performance-based incentive compensation.

CSX Transportation

Third-quarter earnings at CSX fell about six percent over the same quarter of 2003. Excluding quarterly charges in 2004 for the Conrail spin off and charges in 2003 for restructuring, earnings were $190 million in the third quarter compared with $116 million in 2003.

The railroad’s operating ratio for the 2004 third quarter was 86.7 percent compared to 52.5 percent in the 2004 second quarter. Surface Transportation revenue, including rail and intermodal, increased $115 million to $1.94 billion, merchandise revenue was up 6%, and coal revenue was up 10%.

“We are encouraged by these results and remain committed to further improving CSX’s service and costs. This will allow CSX to capitalize even more on both growth and yield,” said CSX Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer Michael J. Ward.

Kansas City Southern

Kansas City Southern reported net income for third quarter 2004 of $8.9 million compared to $1.0 million for third quarter 2003. KCS posted record third quarter 2004 operating revenues of $102.1 million, an increase of $17.2 million, or 17.9%, over the comparable 2003 period. Four of its five commodity groups attained quarter-over-quarter double digit revenue growth led by Paper & Forest Products, which increased 25.3% with strong gains in intermodal, fuel and forest products.

Nordic Southern and CSX haulage business, increased 14.1% in third quarter 2004 compared with a year earlier.

KCS third quarter 2004 total operating expenses of $317.5 million were $10.7 million higher than the same period in 2003, driven by higher fuel prices, compensation, and casualty and insurance costs.

KCS third quarter 2004 operating income increased $65.6 million, or 35.9% year-over-year. KCS’s operating ratio improved to 64.8% compared with 67.3% for the prior year period.

For the first nine months of the year, Union Pacific earned $525 million, or $2 a share, up from $1.03 billion, or $3.84 per share, a year ago. Revenue rose to $8.986 billion from $8.586 billion a year ago.

“Our $3.1 billion in third quarter operating revenue marks the second consecutive quarter of Railroad revenue over the $3 billion mark and our best total revenue performance ever as a company,” said Dier Davidson, chairman and chief executive officer. “However, unprecedented fuel prices and high operating costs resulting from our service inefficiencies outweighed the revenue growth.”

Union Pacific’s operating ratio for the 2004 third quarter was 86.4 percent, compared to 80.6 percent for the third quarter of 2003. Its year-to-date operating ratio is 77.9 percent, compared to 82.0 percent for the first nine months of 2003.

In the third quarter, commodity revenue was up 4 percent compared to the 2003 third quarter. The breakdown is as follows: Industrial Products up 9 percent; Chemicals up 8 percent; Intermodal up 7 percent; Autootive up 4 percent; Energy was flat; and Agricultural down 4 percent.

Quarterly average system speed, as reported to the Association of American Railroads, improved 0.5 mph versus the prior quarter, but was 1.1 mph lower than the third quarter of 2003.
SOUTHWESTERN CONVENTION MEETING

Members of the BLET Advisory Board, front row, from left: Vice-President Merle W. Geiger Jr.; Vice-President Steve Speagle; and Vice-President Dale McPherson. Back row, from left: National Secretary-Treasurer William C. Walpert; Vice-President & U.S. National Legislative Representative Raymond Holmes; First Vice-President Ed Radzwick; and National President Don Hahs.

General Chairman John Koonce (Illinois Central)

From left: Garry Tudor, Local Chairman of BLET Division 249 (Houston); and Russell Elley, BLET Division 197 (San Antonio) and Third Vice-Chairman of the UP-Southern Region GCofA.

From left: Gary Bell, Local Chairman of Division 182 (No. Little Rock, Ark.); Velma Williams, GIA Auxiliary 37 (Memphis); and W.D. Gaddy, Secretary-Treasurer of Division 182.

Brother G.Y. Bailey, Local Chairman of BLET Division 62 (Houston), served as chairman of the 69th annual Southwestern Convention Meeting, which was held just outside of Houston in The Woodlands, Texas.

Clockwise, from bottom left: Serrena Hogan, GIA Third Vice-President; Ken Kroeger, BLET Special Rep; Pat Lynch, Local Chairman of BLET Division 446 (Gallup, N.M.); and Mike Twombly, Springfield Terminal/D&H General Chairman.

Tony Brown, Secretary-Treasurer of BLET Division 857 (Tyler, Texas) and his wife, Michelle.

Herb Yambra, President and Legislative Rep of Division 194 (Houston); and Larry Schneider, Legislative Rep of Division 192 (El Paso).

National Vice-President Lee Pruitt.

Steve Christian, Local Chairman and Legislative Rep of Division 524 (Van Buren, Ark.), with his better half.
HOUSTON, TEXAS

From left: Ed Way, Chairman of the BLET’s Illinois State Legislative Board; Diane Lind; and Skip Lind, a member of BLET Division 520 in Joliet, Ill.

From left: Jim Keele, Chairman of the Kansas State Legislative Board; and Jim Bradford, BLET Special Representative.

From left: Fred Weaver, Local Chairman of BLET Division 604 (Sherman, Texas); and Chad Gambel, Vice-Local Chairman and Secretary-Treasurer of BLET Division 604.

From left: G.Y. Bailey, SWCM 2004 site chairman; Pat Johnson, SWCM Recording Secretary; and Tim Windsor, SWCM Treasurer.

Members of the Southwestern Convention Meeting Scholarship Awards Committee, from left: Onita Wayland, GIA President; Bill Walpert, BLET National Secretary-Treasurer; Leo Srubas; Don Hahs, BLET National President; Patricie Howell; and Debbie Keele.

From left: Kathy Yambra, GIA Texas State Legislative Representative; and Herb Yambra, Division 194 (Houston) President and Legislative Representative and 2nd Vice-Chairman of the Texas State Legislative Board.

From left: John Tolman, BLET National Division Chief of Staff and Political & Legislative Director; and R.E. Mansfield of BLET Division 711 (Baytown, Texas).
Information on Medicare for railroad families

The Federal Railroad Retirement and Survivors' Protection Act of 2003 (the Act) is the major update to the program since the new Railroad Retirement Act of 1974. It is the I-10 amendment to the Social Security Act. It is also known as the Railroad Retirement Modernization Act. It focuses on Medicare Part B (hospital insurance) and Part D (drug coverage) under new provisions.

1. What were the assets of the railroad retirement system at the end of each year? The Railroad Retirement and Survivors' Protection Act of 2003 did not change the railroad retirement system assets for the years ending March 31, 2003 and 2004. Projections were made for the years ending March 31, 2005 and 2006. The projected railroad retirement system assets for the years ending March 31, 2005 and 2006 are $57 billion and $54 billion, respectively.

2. Who is eligible for Medicare coverage before age 65? A railroad employee who retires before age 65 is eligible to receive a railroad retirement annuity, enrollment for both Part A (hospital insurance) and Part B (medicare insurance) is automatic and coverage begins when the person reaches age 65. If the individual does not enroll during their initial enrollment period in any General Enrollment Period (January 1 - March 31 each year) Coverage for such individuals begins July 1 of the year of enrollment.

3. What methods were used in forecasting the financial condition of the railroad retirement system? The 2004 report projected the varous components of income and outgo of the railroad retirement system under three employment assumptions, utilizing different patterns of changes and decreases in the railroad work force for the 25 calendar years 2004-2028. The projections of these compoments were combined and the investment income calculated to produce the projected balances in the railroad retirement accounts at the end of each projection year.

- Projecting income and outgo under optimistic, moderate and pessimistic employment assumptions, the 2004 report projected income and outgo under the most pessimistic assumption, this mechanism provides a worst-case scenario.
- Projecting investment return of approximately 22.6 percent significantly exceeding the expected investment return of 6 percent in calendar year 2003. Projecting benefit amounts are slightly lower due in part to the lower assumed cost-of-living increases in 2004 and 2005 in this year's report.

5. Did the 2004 report on the railroad retirement system recommend any financing changes? The report did not recommend any railroad retirement financing changes. The payroll tax adjustment mechanism provided by the 2001 legislation will automatically increase or decrease tax rates in response to changes in fund balance. Even under a pessimistic employment assumption, this mechanism is expected to meet cash-flow problems for at least 22 years.

6. What were the findings of the 2004 report on the financial condition of the railroad unemployment insurance system? The Board’s 2004 railroad unemployment insurance financial report was also generally favorable. Even as maximum benefit rates increase 35 percent (from $55 to $74) from 2003 to 2014, experience-based contribution rates are expected to sustain the railroad unemployment insurance system’s solvency.

7. What methods were used to evaluate the financial condition of the railroad unemployment insurance system? The economic and employment assumptions used in the unemployment insurance report corresponded to those used in the report on the railroad retirement system. Projected amounts were for varius combinations of income and outgo under each of three employment assumptions, but for the period 2004-2014, rather than a 25-year period.

8. Did the 2004 report on the railroad unemployment insurance system recommend any financing changes? No financing changes were recommended at this time by the report.
Medicare

Continued from Page 6

5. What is covered by Part A (hospital insurance) of the Original Medicare Plan?

The hospital insurance program is designed to help pay the bills when an insured person is hospitalized. The program also provides payments for required professional services in a skilled nursing facility (but not for custodial care) following a hospital stay, home health services, and hospice care.

There is a limit on how many days of hospital care Part A of Medicare helps pay for in each "benefit period." A benefit period begins the first day a patient receives services in a hospital. It ends after a person has been out of a hospital or other facility primarily providing skilled care for 60 days in a row.

Benefits are ordinarily paid only for services received in the United States or Canada. Hospital insurance also covers hospital stays in Mexico under very limited conditions.

6. What are the Medicare Part A deductible and coinsurance charges in 2004 and what will they be in 2005?

For the first 60 days in a benefit period, a Medicare patient is responsible for paying the hospital care for the 61st through the 90th day $129 in 2004, increasing to $229 per day in 2005. If a beneficiary uses "lifetime reserve" days, he or she is responsible for paying the first $3,600 in out-of-pocket spending. The Part A deductible will increase to $912 in 2005. The daily coinsurance charge that a Medicare beneficiary is responsible for paying for hospital care for the 91st through the 150th day in 2004 will be $3,600.

7. What are some of the services covered by Part B (medical insurance) of the Original Medicare Plan?

Medicare medical insurance helps pay for doctor services and many medical services and supplies that are not covered by the hospital insurance part of Medicare, such as certain ambulatory services, outpatient hospital care, X-rays, laboratory tests, physical and speech therapy, blood, mammograms, Pap smears, and colorectal cancer screening.

8. Will the Medicare Part B deductible and premium change next year and by how much?

The annual deductible for Medicare Part B will increase from $100 in 2004 to $110 in 2005. After that, the deductible will be index and subject to annual increases. After the deductible is paid, Medicare will generally pay 80 percent of the approved charges for covered services during the rest of the year. The beneficiary is responsible for paying the remaining 20 percent of the cost.

All beneficiaries currently pay the same basic monthly premium for Medicare Part B ($66.60 in 2004 and increasing to $76.20 in 2005), which covers outpatient care and doctor visits. Beginning in 2007, the premium will increase for individuals with annual incomes of more than $80,000, and for couples with annual incomes of more than $160,000. The amount of the premium increase will be based on a sliding income scale.

9. What is not currently covered by the Original Medicare Plan?

The Original Medicare Plan provides basic protection against the high cost of illness, but it will not pay all health care expenses. Some of the services and supplies Part A or Part B cannot pay for are custodial care, such as help with bathing, eating, and taking medicine; dentures and routine dental care; most eyeglasses, hearing aids, and examinations to prescribe or fit them; long-term care (nursing homes); personal comfort items, such as a telephone or TV in a hospital room; most prescription drugs; and routine physical checkups and most related tests.

10. What changes to Medicare were effectuated by the enactment of the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003?

Among the major features of this legislation are provisions for Medicare coverage of prescription drugs. In 2004, Medicare began establishment of a Medicare Advantage Program to replace the previous Medicare+Choice Program, and provisions for new preventive benefits.

11. When will Medicare coverage for prescription drugs begin?

The actual availability of prescription drug benefit will begin in 2006. In the interim, Medicare-approved drug discount cards became available in June 2004 to help Medicare beneficiaries save on prescription drugs. Medicare contracts with private companies to offer the drug discount cards which bear a Medicare-approved drug benefit that begins enrollment began May 2004 and continues through December 31, 2005.

The discount card program is not intended to be a prescription drug benefit, but rather a temporary discount program to help people without outpatient prescription drug insurance until the Medicare drug benefit takes effect on January 1, 2006.

In June 2004, Medicare also began providing a $600 annual credit towards the purchase of prescription drugs for Medicare beneficiaries with incomes in 2004 of not more than $12,569 for single individuals or $16,862 for married individuals. To qualify for the credit, beneficiaries must not be receiving outpatient drug coverage from other sources, including Medicaid, TRICARE, group or individual health insurance coverage, or the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program. Generally, once a person qualifies for the $600 credit, he or she is qualified until the new Medicare drug benefit begins.

The credit is reflected on the Medicare-approved drug discount cards that cover prescription drugs. While Medicare-approved discount program cards can charge a beneficiary an enrollment fee of up to $30 per year, Medicare will pay the enrollment fee for beneficiaries who qualify for the $600 credit.

12. How will the Medicare prescription drug benefit work when it takes effect?

Beginning in 2006, all people with Medicare will be enrolled in plans that cover prescription drugs. Plans might vary, but in general, this is how they will work:

• Beneficiaries will choose a prescription drug plan and pay a premium of $35 a month.

• Beneficiaries will pay the first $250 (the deductible).

• Medicare then will pay 75% of the costs between $250 and $2,520 in drug spending.

• Beneficiaries will pay only 25% of these costs.

• Beneficiaries will pay 100% of the drug costs above $2,520 until they reach $3,600 in out-of-pocket spending.

• Medicare will pay about 90% of the costs after the beneficiary has spent $3,600.

Some prescription drug plans may have additional options to help pay the out-of-pocket costs. Extra help will be available for people with low incomes and limited assets. Most significantly, people with Medicare who have incomes below a certain limit won't have to pay the premiums or deductible for prescription drugs. The income limits will be set in 2005. If a beneficiary qualifies, he or she will only have a small amount to pay for each prescription needed.

Other people with low incomes and limited assets will get help paying the premiums and deductible. The amount they pay for each prescription will be limited.

13. What is Medicare Advantage?

In 2004, the health plan option known as Medicare + Choice was replaced by the Medicare Advantage Program.

Congress created the Medicare Advantage Program to give beneficiaries more choices, and sometimes, extra benefits. If a Medicare beneficiary chooses, the company may offer them their Medicare benefits. People who join a Medicare Advantage Plan may have the following choices:

• Medicare Managed Care Plans;

• Medicare Preferred Provider Organization Plans, and;

• Medicare Private Fee-for-Service Plans.

If Medicare Managed Care Plans, Medicare Preferred Provider Organization Plans, or Medicare Private Fee-for-Service Plans are available in a beneficiary's area, he or she can join one and get Medicare benefits through the plan. By joining one of these Medicare Advantage Plans, beneficiaries can often get extra benefits, such as additional days in the hospital. The plan may have special rules that they need to follow. They may also have to pay a monthly premium for the extra benefits. Medicare Advantage Plans are available in many areas of the country. For information about the Medicare Advantage Plans available in a particular area, beneficiaries should call Medicare's toll-free number 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) or visit Medicare's Web site at www.medicare.gov.

14. What new preventive benefits are being offered?

Beginning in 2005, preventive benefit coverage will be expanded to include: a one-time initial wellness physical examination; screening blood tests for early detection of cardiovascular diseases; and diabetes screening tests for people at risk of diabetes.

15. Will Medicare put out information about program changes?

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), the Federal agency responsible for administering Medicare, mailed letters to all Medicare beneficiaries in Spring 2004 to explain the Medicare drug discount cards. In 2005, CMS plans to mail informational booklets to Medicare beneficiaries to explain the prescription drug benefits. In the meantime, CMS will provide information about the Medicare-approved drug discount cards through the Medicare toll-free number 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227), and through their Web site at www.medicare.gov.
While labor’s candidate for President, John Kerry, did not win, we are proud that the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, along with the entire family of labor, united in an historic effort to fight for the interests of working families. And while President Bush was re-elected, we note that more than 55 million people cast their vote for a progressive agenda. We will continue the fight for that agenda in the next Congress and in state legislatures around the nation as we work together to expand the base of support.

For the Teamsters, this election marks the largest member mobilization effort in the history of the union. With hundreds of rank and file Teamsters, including many BLET members, working full time on the campaign in the field, and with hundreds of thousands of leaflets and phone calls, hundreds of work site visits and dozens of rallies, the Teamsters have never been more involved in a Presidential election. We are proud that the Teamster membership responded by turning out in overwhelming numbers for Senator Kerry and in support of our economic justice agenda.

November 2 was not the end of our effort to take back this country for working families. It was the beginning. This effort was never about one candidate, one political party, or a single election. It is about moving forward a pro-worker agenda at the national level. We will continue the fight for fair trade, universal health care, increased rail security, worker rights, pension reform and retirement security. And we will continue to work with everyone — Republican, Democrat and Independent — who shares our agenda.

BLET National President Dan Hahs, IBT General President Jim Hoffa and BMEW President Freddie Simpson at the Stanley Yarn in Toledo, Ohio, on November 5, 2004.

Rail Labor uniting

From left: BLET National President Dan Hahs, IBT General President Jim Hoffa and BMWE President Freddie Simpson at the Stanley Yarn in Toledo, Ohio, on November 5, 2004.

A message from IBT General President James P. Hoffa

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November 2 was not the end of our effort to take back this country for working families. It was the beginning. This effort was never about one candidate, one political party, or a single election. It is about moving forward a pro-worker agenda at the national level. We will continue the fight for fair trade, universal health care, increased rail security, worker rights, pension reform and retirement security. And we will continue to work with everyone — Republican, Democrat and Independent — who shares our agenda.

BLET National President Dan Hahs, IBT General President Jim Hoffa and BMWE President Freddie Simpson at the Stanley Yarn in Toledo, Ohio, on November 5, 2004.

A message from IBT General President James P. Hoffa

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