BROTHERHOOD OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND TRAINMEN

NATIONAL DIVISION
7061 East Pleasant Valley Road
Independence, Ohio 44131

Phone: 216.241.2630
Fax: 216.241.6516
www.ble-t.org

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

June 11, 2024

All BLET Members

Re: SMART-TD President Continues Misinformation Campaign

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

This is an open letter from the BLET Advisory Board in response to the comments made by the President of the Transportation Division of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, and Transportation Workers (SMART-TD) on June 5, 2024. President Ferguson dares to attack this Board, consisting of experienced and seasoned union officers. His references to former National President Pierce's commitment to solidarity fail to recognize that our Organization is not controlled by one person but rather a consensus of Advisory Board Members, Wage Team Members, General Chairmen, State Legislative Board Chairmen, Local Division Officers, and Members. It was not the BLET that abandoned solidarity but President Ferguson.

In his unprovoked attack on our BLET members at the Louisville and Indiana Railroad, Ferguson states BLET made three previous failed attempts to raid SMART-TD properties. These claims are false. This lie is the impetus for Ferguson reigniting a war that has been dormant for over twenty years. BLET had not filed any authorization cards (A-Cards) on any property before the aggressive behavior of SMART-TD.

Given the no-raid position of the Teamsters, President Hall took the initiative to inform General President O'Brien's office of the developments related to SMART-TD. His office then reached out to SMART General President Michael Coleman in February to discuss the intentional actions of SMART-TD related to the Louisville and Indiana Railroad. SMART General President Coleman attributed the action to three specific issues. Flyers were placed at one reporting location to gain membership, conductors were recruited on a couple of BLET websites, and there was an accusation that the BLET was intentionally lowering trainmen dues to recruit SMART-TD members. All these claims were thoroughly investigated and found to be baseless, primarily due to the dues structure mandated by the BLET Bylaws, which have had a trainmen dues rate in place since 1953.

Notably, Coleman's explanation for the raid was then contradicted by the February 16, 2024, letter distributed under the signature of Jerry Gibson from the office of SMART-TD President Ferguson. Gibson's letter states that because of multiple contacts by BLET Members of Louisville and Indiana Railroad and due to their "persistence," SMART filed A-Cards on the Louisville and Indiana Railroad.

SMART Transportation Division President Ferguson, his Chief of Staff Jerry Gibson, and SMART International President Coleman are not on the same page. Regardless of their internal discourse, there are simply no A-Cards collected and signed by the BLET. Our members deserve factual evidence which SMART-TD cannot provide.

In a move that was both ironic and predictable, first-term President Ferguson's June 5, 2024, statement questioned the direction and leadership of the BLET. However, the BLET's leadership attempted to defuse the situation on March 22, 2024, as a symbol of solidarity for all rail labor. During a video conference, President Hall directly requested President Ferguson to withdraw the SMART-TD application to represent members of the Louisville and Indiana Railroad. President Ferguson refused to do so, failing to communicate any information as to why his Organization wanted to reignite this futile battle with the BLET.

President Ferguson instead chose to attack the BLET's representational abilities. While SMART-TD remains woefully behind in providing any quality-of-life enhancements that our members have enjoyed for over a decade on most Class 1 properties, the BLET has multiple agreements in place that are being implemented while the trainmen wait.

Also, President Ferguson's rhetoric about partnering with corporate greed in the Ancora issue on Norfolk Southern (NS) is a clear misdirection. The Ancora agreement was a decision made by our NS General Chairmen, who took the initiative to explain it to our members at the recent regional meeting. In the face of NS's corporate greed, our General Chairmen were the only ones willing to stand up.

Brothers and Sisters, we understand these are desperate times for SMART-TD. Collectively, the BLET Advisory Board has over 474 years of experience in the railroad industry. We have seen all of these tactics before. As BLET National President Hall stated in his May 31, 2024, email, the BLET is not seeking a war with SMART-TD. We prefer to spend your dues and our collective resources battling the Carriers. However, we will use all available means to defend our members from being used as political pawns by SMART's current leadership's self-serving attempt to be re-elected in August.

We will keep you posted and look forward to seeing many of you in Washington, DC, next month. With warmest personal regards, we remain

Fraternally yours,

Vice President Rick Gibbons | Vice President Jim Louis | Vice President Alan Holdcraft | Vice President Vince Verna

Vice President William Lyons | Vice President Randy Fannon | Vice President Pete Semenek | Vice President Gary Best

Trustee Dick Crow | Trustee Pat Driscoll | Trustee Kyle Bagby

First Vice President Mark Wallace | National President Eddie Hall | National Secretary Treasurer David Estes