

Amtrak Employees Protest Job Cuts, Contracting Out on Both Coasts

On December 17th, more than 100 rail employees came together in Riverside, CA to protest cutbacks at Amtrak, the U.S. rail passenger carrier. Members of the Transportation Communications Union (TCU) picketed in protest of Amtrak's plan to shutter the call center and eliminate 550 jobs. "They're closing this office and outsourcing the work to a non-union shop in Florida", said Jack Dinsdale with the TCU. The proposed closing of the facility is an offensive, in-your-face blatant case of union busting.

Simultaneously in Boston, workers protested the downgrading of long-distance dining service, and the possible outsourcing of some 1,700 union food & beverage jobs, that currently exist aboard the trains. The east coast workers - from a number of crafts, represented by various unions - like their western counterparts, are calling on Amtrak Chief Richard Anderson, former head of Delta Airlines, to be fired and replaced. Last Summer Amtrak had released a "Request for Information", looking for in-

dustry best practices, including proposals that include staffing "with and without Amtrak employees now performing the work." Once again, the company is referencing future prospects to circumvent the union and to contract-out work to non-union labor.

Earlier this year, train and engine employees were also up in arms when Anderson proposed the destruction of the *Southwest Chief* train, which runs between L.A. and Chicago. Likewise, track workers on the Northeast Corridor have been upset by Anderson's anti-worker approach. Having alienated nearly all Amtrak employees, the traveling public, rail advocacy groups, private car owners and others (see *The Highball*, Fall 2018), hopefully these forces will soon coalesce to better fight back in a united fashion. They share the same interests; i.e., professionally staffed trains, well trained crews, high morale, a high level of passenger service and comfort, and expanded rail service. What they are getting under CEO Anderson is the exact opposite.