



The Highball

Official Publication of
Railroad Workers United

UAW Membership Approves Referendum to Bring “One-Member-One-Vote” to the Union

In a national referendum in the Fall, the members of the United Auto Workers (UAW) voted overwhelmingly to adopt a direct voting system for choosing their union leadership by “one member, one vote” instead of the traditional practice of delegates voting at convention. The union joins with just a few others in the United States – including the Teamsters (see Article below), the United Mineworkers Union (UMWA), and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen (BLET).

It's a historic win for reformers in one of the nation's most important unions, where members have pushed for this change for decades. Most local unions voted in favor of the change, with both traditional large assembly plant locals – including those that were on strike at John Deere - and university locals leading the way.

“The strike no doubt gave us a unique perspective, the referendum ballots going out right on the top of our strike,” said Deere worker Nolan Tabb of UAW Local 281. Tabb believes elections at the top will mean accountability for leaders who negotiate bad contracts: “The good old boys system has been held in place because they're not elected spots. Not only do we not have control over who gets put into those positions, but we don't have control over getting those people out of those positions.” He said the result “clearly validates the perspective that the rank-and-file members will no longer just keep it 'business as usual' - neither with the company perpetuating corporate greed, nor the good old boys system that's gone unchecked and unaccounted for in our leadership.”

Railroad Workers United has advocated for a “one-member-one-vote” system for elections in rail unions – at the local, General Committee and National Division levels - since our founding in



More than 10,000 members of the UAW went on strike against John Deere for 5 weeks in the Fall of 2021. Two tentative agreements were rejected before an acceptable agreement was ratified. While they may not have won everything they were entitled to, their determined, unified resolve conquered significant gains that would never have been in play had they not resisted.

2008. RWU was involved in supporting – and protecting - the direct election system established in the BLET more than a dozen years ago, the only rail union to date to have adopted this democratic system of electing top officers.

But winning the right to vote for the union's top leadership is a hollow victory unless there is an organized group of workers ready, willing and able to run for office. In the BLET for example, there was initially a partially contested election in 2008, but no opposition to the incumbents ever since. That may change this round as members may be inspired by rank and file movements and victories in both the UAW and the Teamsters union (see Article below).

Insurgents Win Top Office in the Teamsters Union in Fall Elections

The election results this past November in one of the biggest unions in the United States – The 1.3-million-member International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) – were decisive. The *Teamsters United* slate swept to victory, defeating their rivals 2 to 1 and winning a controlling majority on the union's 27-seat International Executive Board.

It's the first time in almost a quarter-century that a coalition backed by the rank-and-file caucus group - Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) - has taken control of the international union, after coming up short in elections since the 1990s, unable to defeat the James Hoffa machine. With Hoffa retiring, the floodgates of discontent opened wide and resulted in new leadership and hopefully, a new direction for the union.

The incoming president, Sean O'Brien, says his top priorities are to unite the rank-and-file to take on employers, organize Amazon

and other competitors in the union's core industries, and withdraw support from politicians who don't deliver on union demands. Essential to organizing at Amazon or anyplace else, O'Brien argues, is winning enviable contracts for the existing Teamsters. “Our biggest selling point to potential members is showing in black and white what a union contract can do,” he said. “We've got to have a grassroots campaign to engage our members working in similar industries and showcase what Teamsters can do – and that means negotiating strong contracts that people want to be part of.”

In UPS negotiations in 2023, he says, the union must abolish the second tier of drivers, raise the starting pay of part-timers from \$14 an hour to \$20, and crack down on subcontracting and Uber-like deliveries by “personal vehicle drivers.” He and his running mates have pledged to strike UPS if necessary.

Continued on Page 3



RWU News

RWU to Conduct 8th Biennial Convention in June of 2022

RWU will conduct our 8th biennial Convention in Chicago on June 16th and 17th, 2022. All members in good standing are invited to register and attend, take part in all proceedings, vote on all issues that come before the body, and to run for a position the Steering Committee.



Nancy Lessin, long time Health and Safety Advocate with the Steelworkers Union, giving a presentation on the pitfalls of standard Behavior Based Safety Programs at the 2018 RWU Convention.

Due to the Covid pandemic, our 7th Convention was an abbreviated one-day affair meeting virtually by Zoom in April, 2020. This year's Convention will be the first time that the membership will have come together face-to-face in more than 4 years! We highly recommend that all members attend and encourage your participation in all aspects of the Convention.

As in the past, the event will be held in conjunction with the biennial Labor Notes conference which brings thousands of workers and union members together every two years for a dynamic weekend of workshops, industry meetings, presentations and plenaries all geared towards, "putting the movement back in the labor movement." We encourage all members - working rails, family members, retirees and solidarity members to register for both the RWU Convention and the Labor Notes conference and enjoy all four days.

The RWU Convention will deal with internal business, (resolutions, bylaws amendments, Steering Committee and Executive Committee nominations and elections, Committee

reports and discussion of issues of concern to railroad workers. By Friday afternoon, we will Segway into the Labor Notes conference, where we will take part in numerous workshops and panels with other workers - long-shore, airline, trucking, warehouse and others

- extending our reach and solidarity to other workers along the supply chain and in the greater labor movement.

There will be plenty of time for socializing and to meet-and-greet every evening starting Wednesday night and continuing right through the Labor Notes conference and the conclusion of the weekend.

But understand, this is not and old union get together. We will not be golfing. There will be no long and drawn out obscure and irrelevant bylaws changes subject to endless debate. There will be no self-congratulatory showmanship, no long and boring speeches by politicians and bureaucrats. Get ready for a lively and rousing get together of rank-and-file railroad workers and our allies as we address the issues, debate questions of policy and build the movement for Solidarity, Unity and Democracy. We will see you in Chicago - railroad capitol of the world - in June this spring! For more information - including registration, lodging, activities and more - check the links to Convention information on the RWU website at railroadworkersunited.org.

Railroad Workers United

Railroad Workers United was organized in April 2008 at a Founding Convention in Dearborn, MI. RWU grew out of decades of struggle within the craft unions for unity, solidarity, and democracy. We are carrying on a tradition of rank & file activity which dates back to the 1890s and the time of Eugene V. Debs.

RWU is a cross-craft inter-union caucus of rail labor activists across North America. All rail workers of all crafts from all carriers who support our Statement of Principles are welcome to join in our efforts. Please write, call, or email. See the contact information below.

Statement of Principles

- Unity of All Rail Crafts**
- An End to Inter-Union Conflict**
- Rank-and-File Democracy**
- Membership Participation & Action**
- Solidarity Among All Railroaders**
- No to Concessionary Bargaining**

International Steering Committee

- Chuck Corsini, SMART #587, UP, Chicago, IL
- Jason Doering, SMART #1117, UP, Las Vegas, NV
- Ross Grooters, BLET #778, UP, Des Moines, IA
- Ron Kaminkow, BLET #51, Amtrak, Reno, NV
- Fritz Edler, BLET #482, AMTK, Washington, DC
- Hugh Sawyer, BLET #316, NS, Atlanta, GA
- Phil Stevenson, SMART #376, CSX, Ashland, KY
- Tabitha Tripp, (family) BMWED #17, CN, Anna, IL
- Andrew Weir, TCRC-LE #240, CN, Sarnia, ON

Alternates

- James Wallace, BLET #621, BNSF, Lincoln, NE
- Chuck Abbate, SMART-TD #898b, KEOLIS, Boston, MA
- Mathew Groix, BLET #217, NS, Shenandoah, VA.

Trustees

- Jon Flanders, IAM #1145, CSX, Selkirk, NY
- Ed Michael, BLET #724/UTU #979, UP, Salem, IL
- Chet Whyers, UTU #979, UP, Salem, IL

www.railroadworkersunited.org ● info@railroadworkersunited.org ● 202-798-3327 or 202-RWU-DEBS
RWU P.O. Box 2131 Reno, NV 89505



Labor

Insurgents Win Top Office in the Teamsters Union in Fall Elections

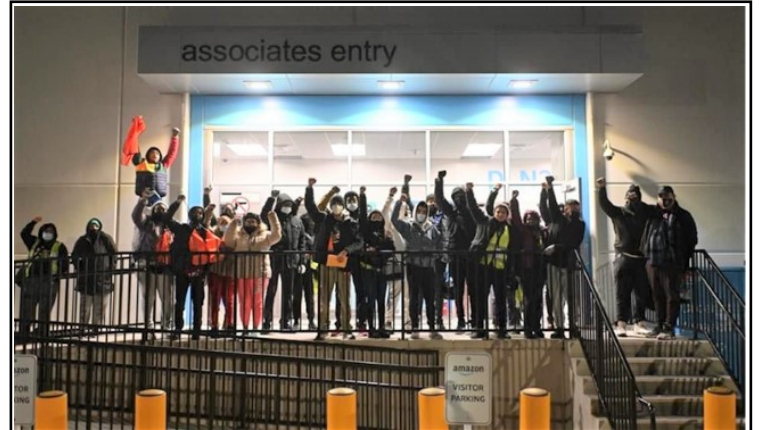
Continued from Page 1

In the last elections five years ago, rail labor voted strongly for the opposition slate, in a show of discontent for the status quo. When the two rail unions affiliated with the IBT more than 15 years ago, they were promised better service, better contracts and more power. But many rail Teamsters have not felt the affiliation with the larger union has resulted in much benefit. This time around the two affiliates were split, with the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMWED) membership voting largely for the Teamsters United slate, while the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen (BLET) ranks tended to vote for the Teamster Power slate, largely because the national division President Dennis Pierce was part of that slate. The nearly opposite vote percentages from the two unions reflected the deep divisions and animosity that has existed between the two unions in recent years, despite both being members of the Teamsters Rail Conference (TRC).

How the victory will affect rail labor – particularly the TRC affiliates – BLET and the BMWED – remains to be seen. For years, these two labor organizations – despite being under the “umbrella” of the TRC – have been at odds. Their respective leaderships have engaged in a war of words, and in the last few rounds of bargaining, refuse to stand together. Rather, they have sought out other bargaining partners from the myriad rail craft unions.

January 10th, RWU sent a letter of congratulations to the winning slate, offering our services and support, and requesting that – upon assuming office in March – the new leadership do what it can to bring unity to the Rail Conference affiliates. RWU

has been campaigning since 2008 for a single bargaining coalition of all rail labor to maximize power and win better contracts. If the BLET and the BMWED were to put aside past squabbles and come together in unity and solidarity, rail workers could see a historic convergence of all of their disparate and fragmented unions. According the RWU General Secretary Ron Kaminkow, “We have high hopes that the new Teamsters’ administration will assist in ushering in a new era of solidarity, unity, and democracy among all rail unions, leading to our long-cherished goal of “One Big Bargaining Coalition.” (See Page 5)

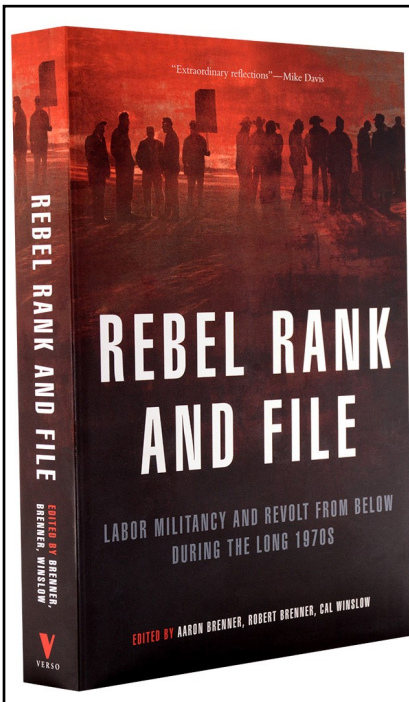


A few dozen workers walked out of an Amazon fulfillment center in Cicero, IL days before Christmas. Can new IBT President Sean O’ Brian tap into this growing discontent against the barbaric working conditions with a successful organizing drive at Amazon?

Book Review

Rebel Rank and File: Labor Militancy and Revolt from Below During the Long 1970s

Edited by Aaron Brenner, Robert Brenner, Cal Winslow



This was originally published in *Red Fault*, the newsletter of the Austin, TX chapter of Democratic Socialists of America.

An inspiring history of the “long 1970s”, the last major labor upsurge in the United States which lasted from the early 1960s through 1981.

A collection of essays from many activists involved in a wide variety of unions, the book presents the rank-and-file militancy of the period. Covering the first major successful reform movement, Miners for Democracy in the United Mine Workers through Teamsters, teachers, telephone and auto plus a

chapter on the women’s movement’s interaction in labor in the period, the authors chart the drastic increase in wildcat and base-led strikes. Documenting the failure of union leadership to prepare for or respond to capital’s onslaught in the face of falling profits and, in the case of auto, Black worker resistance to racist managers and union leaders, they follow the exciting rise and then the depressing fall in workers’ strikes and other self-activity.

However, as long-timers in the labor movement, they also discuss reasons for the downturn. Despite the strong similarities they were facing - speed-up, safety and decreased union control of the worksite - there was little or no communication or cooperation across industries. Outside of small numbers of radicals who had “industrialized”, there was little influence in the labor movement. The main chapters plus overviews by several major figures including Kim Moody will help prepare labor activists of today get ready for the fire next time.

--Joshua F

Joshua F has worked 18 years as a bus driver, mostly in ATU jobs and several years as US Airways cabin crew in AFA. He has been a rank and file activist, a local officer in ATU and AFA as well as an organizer for AFA. He currently works for the University of Texas, is a member of a subsidiary of a CWA and is a solidarity member of RWU.



Covid 19 News

RWU Statement on Vaccine Mandates

The Union Pacific Railroad and other rail carriers don't care about the health interests of railroad workers. Their vaccine mandate has nothing to do with fighting COVID.

While Railroad Workers United denounces corporate vaccine mandates, we acknowledge the need for worker solidarity, including vaccines, for our collective health and safety.

Railroad employers have long disregarded the health and safety of their workers and the public. In May of 2020, near the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Railroad Workers United passed a resolution calling for the rail carriers to take the necessary steps to protect their workers. These steps included temperature testing for employees in the workplace, making available masks and sanitizer, limiting the number of crews to be transported in a vehicle, and full pay and benefits for employees required to quarantine due to exposure or illness. The railroads refused or were slow to implement these protections, choosing instead a business-as-usual approach which put workers at risk. On top of their refusal to implement needed COVID-19 protections, railroads simultaneously furloughed and laid off workers, while using potential COVID-related workforce shortages to capitalize on the crisis by demanding and receiving rollbacks to numerous longstanding Federal regulations regarding safe railroad operations. The predictable result of this neglect by the major rail carriers led to the illness and death of many railroad workers. While naming us "essential," railroads continued to make billions in profits at the expense of worker health and safety, and employment.



Top: Nurses and supporters stand in a picket line outside St. Vincent Hospital in Worcester, Massachusetts during recent, victorious 10 month strike. Slogans include, "Safe Staffing Now", "If Nurses are out HERE, Something is Wrong in THERE" and "Picketing for our Patients and our Community." Bottom: Chicago Teachers Union protesting unsafe working conditions, which jeopardize their health, their students' and by logical extension, the general community. More than ever, rails need to question the status-quo, business-as-usual terms of engagement, to more effectively fight for our dignity, our health, our safety, as well as that of the public.

This is the time for our humanity and our basic solidarity with our own co-workers to come to the fore. In the US, over three-quarters of a million people have died due to COVID-19.

We know railroad carriers do not operate in the interest of workers or the public. They had ample opportunity throughout the pandemic to bargain with the unions to implement measures to protect workers from COVID-19. Because of their history of disregarding safety, we should all question the motives of companies instituting vaccine mandates which extend beyond the boundaries of the Federal Executive Order. Rail carriers can't be trusted on anything related to health and safety – instead, it requires us as union members and workers to fight for these protections.

This is the time for our humanity and our basic solidarity with our own co-workers to come to the fore. In the US, over three-quarters of a million people have died due to COVID-19. Deaths only tell a partial story. The truly devastating issue for railroaders and all working people will be moving forward with the long-term impacts to people's lives and their health. This impact will change everything, including our healthcare costs for the next generation.

Finally, we call on the railroad unions to fight for worker health and safety, and move away from any and all support for so-called "behavior based safety." As workers, we must not make personal decisions which negatively impact the safety of our fellow workers. Rather, our unions must bargain to implement the best on-property agreements we can for our collective interests. Our unions must be front and center, fighting to ensure that the rail carriers provide a safe workplace for their employees and the public.

Adopted by the RWU Steering Committee 11/16/2021



RWU Actions

RWU Resolution on National Rail Strike

In the context of the recent upsurge in resistance of workers, in various industries, nationally and internationally, the RWU Steering Committee passed the following resolution on Jan. 5th, 2022, to contribute to this critical discussion among railroad workers.

Whereas, the major freight rail carriers continue to refuse to bargain in good faith, leaving national negotiations with the unions at a standstill; and

Whereas, these same carriers – represented by the National Carriers Conference Committee (NCCC) - have been making record profits for years, including all through the pandemic; and

Whereas, Precision Scheduled Railroading, firings and furloughs; increased discipline and harassment; massive job cuts, short-staffing, and chronic fatigue; together with unpaid claims and wholesale abrogation of the union contract has left railroad workers frustrated, angry, and ready to fightback; and

Whereas, Countless workers in an array of industries nationwide are fighting back, organizing, striking, and winning; and

Whereas, current conditions appear to be ripe for railroad workers to mount a successful national strike, including but not limited to:

- A general labor shortage where the rail carriers are unable to recruit and retain employees in the various crafts, including train and engine service.
- Supply chains in crisis, as goods in transit are hampered at every turn.
- Public opinion that has sided with striking workers throughout 2021.
- The record profits generated by the carriers, together with their alienation of shippers, passengers and communities, which suggest that railroad strikers would enjoy vast public support.
- Rail unions of late that have been largely standing together.
- The fact that the carriers have attacked ALL rail workers, solidifying workers from all crafts, unions, and carriers.
- The existence of a sitting President who claims to be “the most pro-labor President you have ever had.”

Whereas, such favorable conditions for rail workers outlined above have not existed for decades - if ever - and will not continue indefinitely;

Therefore, Be it Resolved that RWU urges all railroad workers to consider the strike option, and to prepare for such a strike; and

Be it further Resolved that RWU urge the rail unions to educate their respective memberships on:

- the Railway Labor Act (RLA) under which our actions are governed;
- the history of rail strikes;
- the benefits and risks of taking such action with webinars, printed materials, presentations at local union meetings, and other means of communication; and

Be it further Resolved that RWU urge the rail unions to poll their respective members for a strike vote so as to ascertain the willingness of the respective memberships to take such action; and

Be it Further Resolved that RWU urge the rail unions to undertake informational picketing, “practice” strikes, and other high-profile activities to mobilize the membership, put the carriers on notice we mean business, to educate the public as to our cause; and mobilize our allies; and

Be it Finally Resolved, that the rail craft unions put aside their petty differences and take this opportunity to consummate a single bargaining coalition of all rail labor in order to achieve the greatest possible solidarity, unity, and power.

Adopted by the RWU Steering Committee 1/5/2022

An Open Letter from RWU to the Newly Elected Teamsters National Leadership

Dear Teamster’s Union Leadership-Elect:

Railroad Workers United (RWU) would like to take this opportunity to offer our heartfelt congratulations upon your victory in the recent IBT elections.

Many of us in rail are optimistic that the Teamsters United triumph can move the union forward on a new path, ushering in a new era of rank-and-file action, internal union democracy and participation, member-to-member solidarity, and a unified labor organization, one committed to organizing new members, building rank & file power, mobilizing the membership, and winning better contracts. As you are aware, railroad workers of the Teamsters Rail Conference across the board voted in favor of change in the IBT elections five years ago, unhappy with the Hoffa leadership. While that was a heart-breaking loss, the resounding victory this time around was worth the wait!

RWU offers to work with the new IBT leadership upon assuming office. While the membership of our organization is drawn from the ranks of all rail labor and all rail unions, a substantial number of our activists are Teamster members. But all our members – and all railroad workers – have a keen interest in a strong and united Teamster Rail Conference and Teamsters union.

Please do not hesitate to call on our organization at any point you think we might be of assistance in your efforts to build Teamster power and move the union in a new direction. All the best to all of you!

In solidarity,

Ron Kaminkow, General Secretary for the RWU Steering Committee



Commentary

Do Rails Have the "Right" to Strike?

Well it's certainly the understatement of the year, so far anyway, to state the obvious that these are indeed interesting times we are living through. There's a lot going on out there but I want to focus here on the upsurge in working class resistance to the status quo and the implications for rail workers. For rail workers who've been beaten down for years, contending with barbaric work/life schedules, as well as repressive, day-to-day working conditions, it can be inspiring to see so many workers on strike and/or spontaneous walkouts by workers, often not even unionized, because they've simply had enough.

Just as demoralization and defeatism can be contagious, so can defiance and resistance. At this point in time there seems to be some of that going around. If it can be half as contagious as the Omicron Covid variant, we might be on to something here. Hopefully we can ride this wave for a while and see where it takes us.

So what does this mean for rail workers? Though I haven't worked on the railroad for a few years, my hunch is that very little has changed with this common scenario: Some of the younger workers, still full of urine and vinegar, get all riled up and are chomping at the bit, "Look at those Kellogg and John Deere workers on strike. Look at those Amazon workers protesting and walking off the job. That's what we need to do!" Then the older veteran, who's been around the block a few times, attempts to clarify the situation. In doing so he serves to put a damper on the young workers' admirable spirit of defiance, be that intentional or not. "No we can't do that. We can't strike. If we even attempt it the government will shut us down with a Presidential Emergency Board (PEB)."

Unfortunately the older worker is absolutely 100% correct - on a certain level - regarding the facts. In the context of what rail workers are up against, eloquently articulated in RWU's Strike Resolution on Page 5, now's as good a time as any to revisit the basic "highlights" of the Railway Labor Act (RLA).

Per the RLA the president has the legal authority to end any legally sanctioned strike with the stroke of a pen. Without going too deep into all the sordid details of the RLA, the short version is that he/she orders everybody back to work and commissions a three person panel - the PEB. In theory one member would be pro-rail carrier, another member would be pro-union and then the other member would be the proverbial "neutral" arbitrator. The operative formulation here is "in theory."

This board will then investigate the issues of the dispute. What's the carriers' position and what are their arguments to motivate and justify it? What's the unions' position and what are their arguments to motivate and justify it? Then ultimately in a grand spectacle of brotherly compromise - their version of, "Can't we all just get along?" - they make their own proposals on what the terms of the contract should be. The unions are given the opportunity to ratify this proposed contract. If they reject it, the PEB proposal is then submitted to Congress where it is ultimately rubber stamped and signed by the president. Isn't that special!

While there have been some regional and local disputes where the federal government has intervened over the years, I'll highlight the three major national disputes that the federal government squashed during my career.

1) After three days of the 1982 nationwide BLE strike, we were ordered back to work by President Reagan. The proposed "agreement" from the ensuing PEB was then rammed down our



Members of the Teamster Rail Conference on strike against CN in Canada in 2019. Could this scenario be posed for US railworkers in this current round of negotiations?

throats by the House and the Senate, both voting in favor of this wretched concessionary contract by overwhelming majorities of approximately 9-to-1. Reagan's signature was obviously a foregone conclusion.

2) The 1991 national strike during the reign of President George H.W. Bush pretty much followed the same script, except we were only allowed to have a fleeting taste of our potential power for all of 19 hours.

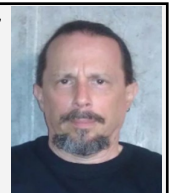
3) In 2011, President Obama, friend to all labor bureaucrats, wouldn't even let us taste a "drop" of our potential power, putting the PEB wheels in motion a few hours before we were due to hit the picket lines. This time, the BLE leadership encouraged its membership to simply accept the PEB's recommendations.

So while the RLA gives the federal government the "legal" right to intervene in our labor disputes, are we forever obliged to unconditionally accept it? Was the RLA imposed by God Almighty himself/herself for eternity or is this simply legislation enacted by mere mortal politicians, at the behest of the railroad "robber barons" in the earlier part of the 20th century, in response to a wave of rail labor militancy and strikes? You get three guesses and the first two don't count.

It's long been my personal opinion that one day the government will force rail labor to confront this issue. Do we continue to just accept these terms of engagement? There is sufficient historical precedent for limits on assemblies, picket lines, marches, back-to-work-orders etc. being forcefully defied. The history of the struggle for social justice includes many instances of our forefathers voting with their feet to reject any moral and ethical legitimacy of the "legal" restrictions imposed on them at the time. Many paid a price for their convictions, being savagely clubbed, teargassed, mauled by vicious attack dogs, pummeled by high pressure water from fire hoses, jailed etc. and sometimes even shot down in cold blood. Without this heroic resistance, it's fair to assert that we would not have labor unions today and Jim Crow segregation would reign supreme. The lousy working conditions at Amazon would be something we could only dream of.

To be continued...

Mark Burrows has served as Organizer and Co-Chair for RWU. He recently retired after hiring out in 1974, working as an engineer for a combined total of 37 years for the C&NW and the Soo Line/CP Rail in Chicago, Illinois. He was SMART-TD 1433's Delegate for the 2011 & 2014 International Conventions and continues to be an active member of RWU.





Editorial

2021: Small Victories and Positive Developments to Build On

The last few years have been bleak ones for railroad workers. There is no denying it. But in 2022, several positive developments and small victories have occurred which – while any one of them does not amount to much – taken together, suggest that there is a breeze – if not a wind – of change afoot.

Rather than go through a litany of what has been bad for rail workers in recent years (for that, see the RWU Resolution on National Rail Strike, Page 5), here we will lay out the case that things are starting to move in our direction. In making the case, we hope to inspire railroad workers to believe in themselves once again and to believe that victory is possible, that better wages, benefits and working conditions are in fact, possible when we act collectively and exercise our power as one, as a union.

1 – Crew Consist: The carriers still have not been able to run trains with a lone crew member despite their intentions to do this now for more than 17 years. The Federal Railroad Administration overturned the Trump era ruling that FRA has no business in regulating crew size. Proposed rulemaking is back on the agenda. And FRA has likewise reversed its previous ruling under rail CEO Ron Batory that the existing state laws requiring a minimum of two crew members stand and shall not be pre-empted by FRA. Meantime, the unions of the operating crafts remain unified on the question. And more states are considering crew consist legislation.

2 – LNG by Rail: The Pipelines & Hazardous Materials Agency (PHMA) has promulgated a moratorium on the shipment of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) by rail. Until a few years ago, it was considered too dangerous to move such large quantities of LNG by rail. In 2019, the Agency ruled that LNG could now be shipped by rail. Now with a different administration, the PHMA has returned to its traditional position, outlawing the practice, and keeping rail workers and communities safe.

3 – Amtrak Funding: The nation’s passenger rail carrier was granted what is probably the largest amount in its half century history, with plans to expand frequencies, routes, and services. This will bode well for rail labor and will result in many good union jobs being created.

4 – FRA Rechartering of the Railroad Safety Advisory Committee (RSAC): The FRA has restored RSAC membership numbers to their previous level and has removed the cap on membership limits in working groups. Through this action, the agency hopes to build upon the legacy of accomplishments in issuing consensus-based rulemakings (which includes rail unions) to ensure a safe rail transportation system and advance rail safety.

5 – Teamsters Elections: After 25 years of Hoffa rule, the Teamster union – parent union to nearly half of rail labor – is soon to be led by a new group of officials who have pledged to make the union more democratic, militant, and proactive.

6 – Strike Wave: Workers have been quitting, switching jobs and most importantly – striking – in industries across the U.S. Many of them – like railroaders – are essential workers who labored faithfully throughout the pandemic, were extolled as national heroes, and then stood up by management at the bargaining table. Polls suggest that the American people overwhelmingly support their efforts. Rail workers might be safe to assume that should we strike, we could win favorable support from the public as well, by effectively stating our case.

7 – UAW and One-Member-One-Vote: In December, after decades of organizing around the issue, rank and file members of the Autoworkers Union (UAW) voted 2-to-1 to elect their top leadership through a one-member-one-vote election in the future. They join a handful of other unions that employ this democratic method. Their efforts (combined with the recent election results in the Teamsters union (see #5) have the power to inspire rail workers to make important bylaws changes and throw out stale and conservative officials.

8 – Surface Transportation Board (STB): After years of complacency and failure to reign in the Class One carriers, ignoring the detrimental effects of PSR, new Board Chair Marty Oberman has been questioning the Class One freight carriers on service disruptions, shipper dissatisfaction, and the general failures of PSR, stating that the STB has the authority to “consider the best interests of shippers, the workforce, and most important the public” - not just the railroad carriers and their stockholders.

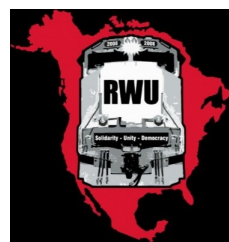
9 – Federal Legislation: In addition to the Amtrak funding (see #3), the Infrastructure Bill:

- Contains more than two dozen Sections on improved rail safety, including stepped up funding for railroad grade crossing eliminations and improvements; funding a study of the inherent safety hazards of trains over 7500 feet in length; and a comprehensive blocked crossing reporting methodology.
- Restructures and reforms Amtrak’s Board, mission statement, and other aspects of the corporation;
- Provides increased funding regional, commuter and transit;

10 – Possible Rail Strike: When NS started using engineers as conductors, the operating craft unions polled their members on a strike vote and jointly petitioned that this constituted a “major dispute” and hence was a legally strikable issue. While nothing has come of it to date, it has caused a stir within the ranks.

11 – Rail Renaissance – Talk has escalated of the need for rail – freight and passenger – national and globally, as the key to a green transportation future. Rail is on the agenda in a way it has not been for decades. Numerous groups – new and old – are taking up the cause of rail expansion and development across the country. And many governments around the world are promoting rail expansion as a key component of their climate strategy going forward.

In the face of these developments, the rail unions have a golden opportunity to go on the offensive, and potentially achieve better wages, benefits, working conditions and expanded employment opportunities. There is a key role for rail labor to play in keeping rail front-and-center in the public mind. Momentum is in our favor on many fronts right now. There exists a great opportunity to move our agenda forward if we recognize the unique opportunity that this moment in history has presented to us. Let’s build on what has been achieved this past year or so and keep moving forward.



Railroad Workers United

All Single-Employee Crew Merchandise on Sale!

Join the Fight To Save the Two-Person Train Crew!

RWU has lots of stuff to assist you in the fight to save the two-person train crew. T-shirts, buttons, stickers, bumper stickers, flyers, yard signs and more. Get yours today!

RWU Online Store

www.railworkersunited.storenvy.com

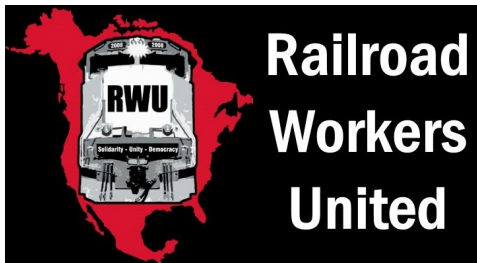
Or order by mail with a check or money order to
Railroad Workers United
P.O. Box 2131
Reno, NV, 89505

SUPPORT

TWO PERSON TRAIN CREWS

“What can Labor do for itself? The answer is not difficult. Labor can organize, it can unify; it can consolidate its forces. This done, it can demand and command.”

Eugene V Debs, Founder of the American Railway Union



Railroad Workers United

Membership Application

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Email Address _____

Union _____ Local # _____ Employer _____

Terminal _____ Craft _____ Years of Service _____

Union Position (if any) _____

I'd like to join for (check one): 1 year \$50.00 2 Years \$90.00 3 Years \$120.00

Clip and mail together with your dues to: Railroad Workers United P.O. Box 2131 Reno, NV. 89505

OR join on-line at www.railroadworkersunited.org