

Fallen Rails Program

For a decade now, RWU has observed *Railroad Workers Memorial Day*. Starting in 2017, we moved the day from *Fathers Day Friday* to *April 28th* to coincide with the *national AFL-CIO Workers Memorial Day*. We ask that all railroad employees wear black to the workplace in remembrance of our fallen fellow railroaders, killed in the line of duty.

As a general rule, RWU focuses the spotlight on a specific incident, issue, or rail property that is deserving of attention. But this past year the organization took no directed action on the day.

This past year, as we approach its end, some 20 railroad workers in the U.S. and Canada have been killed on the job. While this number includes some contract workers, it is hard to say just how many other contract railroaders were killed on the job, as the information on them is not readily available.

RWU continues to keep a running list that archives all killed on the job on our website, a popular feature with railroaders and family members.

Finally, we continue to issue *Alerts* online



whenever a railroad worker is killed, and urge action on her/his behalf, regardless of craft, union affiliation, carrier or contractor.

RWU Steering Committee

The RWU International Steering Committee (ISC) continued to meet monthly throughout 2018, usually on the first Tuesday or Wednesday, based upon work schedules of the members. ISC members do not get paid, nor do they have rights to mark off "union business", so meetings are scheduled when most members are able to attend. This can be tricky given the nature of railroad work. Meetings remain open to all RWU members and a number of them regularly attend. Various guests have also attended throughout the year - friends from other unions, worker organizations and citizens' groups - per our invitation.

The current Steering Committee (elected in April 2018) is the most diverse ever, drawn from six different crafts and seven different unions. including the Sheet Metal, Air, Rail & Transportation union (SMART), the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen (BLET); the International Association of Machinists (IAM), the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW); the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen (BRC); the Brotherhood of Railway Signalmen (BRS); and Teamsters Canada Rail Conference (TCRC). Members range in age from 30 to 60, drawn from 8 different carriers from ten U.S. states and one Canadian Province.

RWU International Steering Committee

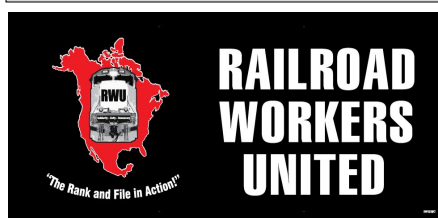
Aaron Dixon, IAM #27, UP
Ross Grooters, BLET #778, UP
Adam Haslag, IBEW # 1832, UP
Ron Kaminkow, BLET #51, Amtrak
Bernie Mahoney, BRS #16, CSX
Joe Mulligan, BLET #57, KEOLIS
Hugh Sawyer, BLET #316, NS
Daniel Stroup, BLET #188, CN
James Wallace, UTU #305, BNSF
Andrew Weir, TCRC-LE #240, CN
Will Young, IAM #27, UP

Steering Committee Alternates

Chuck Corsini, UTU-E #567, UP
Mark Moylan, BRC #6013, CN

Trustees

Jon Flanders, IAM #1145, CSX
Ed Michael, BLET #724/UTU #979, UP
Chet Whyers, UTU #979, UP



RWU Facebook Page

The RWU Facebook Page open forum continued to be controversial throughout much of 2018, with members and non-members alike having differing expectations and desires for what the Group could and should be. The Facebook Committee and the Steering Committee have continued to grapple with the complexities of providing the best possible Facebook Group discussion forum to serve both RWU and railroad workers in general. However, by the end of the year, viewing the Group as more of a liability than an asset, RWU renamed it *Railroaders Forum* and is considering outright suspension in 2019. RWU expects to build a robust Facebook Page and sponsor discussion forums on specific issues (e.g. single employee crews) as the need arises.

The RWU Store

The RWU Store continues to offer a full line of items. All proceeds from the Store benefit RWU. In 2018 we continued to offer most of our previous items, plus we added vinyl stickers, brought back the winter knit hat and gray T-shirt, and added the RWU logo to both side of our shirts. We still use "Store Envy", which accepts Pay Pal or credit/debit card payments online.

Rails and non-rails alike ordered shirts, hats, stickers, bumper stickers, pins and more throughout 2018. In addition, members of the general public, various organizations and unions, attorneys and others are free to make purchases from the Store, and often do so, providing RWU with much needed funding, publicity, and good public relations. Give us your input at Sorekeeper@railroadworkersunited.org.

Website

The website is a great resource for rails and non-rails alike to learn more about RWU, our ideas and actions, rail labor and the rail industry. The website also acts as the archives for all RWU newsletters, articles, resolutions, previous leadership, rail worker fatalities, and more. And it makes it easy to join, renew membership, donate, submit articles, questions or inquires to RWU. Any RWU member with website skills who is interested in helping to maintain the site should contact RWU General Secretary Ron Kaminkow.



Annual Report

of

Railroad Workers United

2018

RWU Campaign for a Single Rail Labor Coalition Gains Traction

The RWU Campaign for Universal Coordinated Bargaining has been a back-burner issue for years. Although we adopted this Campaign at our Founding Convention in 2008, it has been difficult to bring the issue to the forefront. Finally, the latest round of bargaining brought the issue to light, and RWU found itself supporting the efforts of the newly formed All Rail Crafts Coalition (ARCC), an amalgamation of rank & file members of the various crafts, largely fronted by the BMWED but supported by a broad cross-section of rail labor - primarily members of the non-operating craft unions but including members of the operating crafts as well.

RWU did what it could to publicize and support the various ARCC meetings, rallies and pickets, all designed to draw attention to the state of bargaining and the need for all the rail unions to stick together as one in this latest round. While petty jealousies and personality conflicts threaten to derail this

effort, RWU remains focused and unvacillating in our efforts to unite ALL of rail labor onto One Big Bargaining Coalition.

Towards the end of the year, meetings were scheduled of the various union leaders to meet and discuss the concept of a single bargaining coalition in the upcoming round. RWU sent communications urging support for a single coalition and suggested our members and supporters contact these leaders and urge them to do the right thing and stick together.

Sadly, as this *Annual Report* goes to press, it appears that the union "leaders" are failing to build the universal coalition that the rank & file so desperately want. If this effort fails, RWU will then take up the question in 2019 of where do we go now. The patience of the ranks is wearing thin, and the need for a single coalition has become obvious to more and more working railroaders. RWU urges all rails from all crafts to lobby your union officials. Tell them "United we stand, divided we fall!"

RWU Fights for Scapegoated and Prosecuted Railroad Workers

On January 30th, 2018 Canadian railroad workers Tom Harding and Richard Labrie were acquitted of the criminal charges brought against them. These workers had been the target of a frameup, being scapegoated for the reckless and unsafe behavior of their employer - Ed Burkardt's Montreal, Maine & Atlantic (MMA), while the Canadian government turned a blind eye. Their convictions could have landed them in prison for life, and had a chilling effect upon the fight for rail safety.

For years RWU has supported these workers while the rest of rail labor had been largely silent. We saw their potential convictions as opening the floodgates on a culture of "blame the worker" anytime there is an accident, injury or mishap. Thankfully, the jury got it right. RWU raised thousands for the defense, held rallies and pickets, public forums, sent a special envoy to Canada numerous times, hosted Harding's lawyer

Thomas Walsh at our Convention in 2016, and solicited assistance from our friends and allies in the environmental movement across North America.

We continue to offer support to other railroad workers who face similar trumped up charges and face criminal prosecution. Amtrak engineer Brandon Bostian, along with Norfolk Southern engineer Kevin Tobergte and Conductor Andrew Hall, are all criminally charged. Like their Canadian counterparts, their convictions could set an ominous precedent and signal open season on workers while letting corporations off the hook. Neither of these cases have appealed to RWU for assistance, and despite both being in the news for some time, very little is known of the details. It has been difficult for RWU to play a supporting role other than verbal support and opposition to this type of criminal prosecution of workers.

RWU Continues to Lead the Fight Against Single Employee Crews

The fight against single employee train crews might be off the radar of most railroaders this past year, but RWU has remained vigilant, watching intently in an attempt to not be caught off guard when the next assault is launched. Once the BNSF initiative was soundly defeated in 2014, the carriers rolled back the rhetoric, and figured that they would simply wait until PTC was fully installed before launching the next full frontal attack. They have cleverly camouflaged their intentions, with Union Pacific repeatedly stating that, "We are not interested in implementing single employee operations of trains at this time," careful to never state if "at this time" is referring to years, months or days. Meantime, the late Hunter Harrison, was fond of stating

that single employee train operations was not on his agenda. But RWU is not interested in the words of CEOs. We know that since 2004, the carriers have been frothing at the mouth at the perceived cost-savings and profits to be made with a lone crew members aboard every train. RWU has pledged since our founding in 2008 to do all in our power to prevent this reckless and irresponsible scenario from unfolding. While unity of the operating crafts is essential if we expect to win, we need ALL of rail labor united and determined if we hope to emerge victorious. So our Coordinated Bargaining Campaign is an essential element for our ability to wage this strategic battle on train crew size. (See top of this page).

Newsletter

RWU's quarterly newsletter *The Highball*, has come a long way, and is widely respected in rail labor. Our network of contributors, writers, and distributors continues to expand. Some members choose to receive a bundle of the newsletter (generally 10, 25, or 50 copies) each issue, while others make their own copies at home, work, or the copy shop. Thousands of copies get distributed each issue. In addition, the newsletter is available on-line as a pdf on the website, Facebook and through the list serve for our on-line readers. All members are encouraged to help distribute *The Highball*. If you are interested in helping to spread the word, email newsletter@railroadworkersunited.org.

Historically the newsletter has been produced and edited by the General Secretary, but this year we have put energy into building a proper committee to oversee its production and distribution. The plan is that in the coming year the Committee will completely assume the duties of making the newsletter happen each issue.

The newsletter provides a progressive analysis of events and developments. We criticize the carriers and union officials alike, providing alternative solutions. We provide a much needed source of information and inspiration for a workforce that is demoralized and often starved for such a perspective. All RWU members are encouraged to get involved. Email your input to newsletter@railroadworkerunited.org.

RWU 6th Biennial Convention in April, 2018

On April 5th and 6th, 2018, Railroad Workers United conducted our 6th Biennial Convention in Chicago, IL. In addition to over a dozen workshops and presentations, six new resolutions were adopted on a wide array of subjects of concern to the organization and to railroad workers in general. Six minor Bylaws Amendments recommended by the Steering Committee were approved by the members present. A new Steering Committee was elected (see the Steering Committee entry in this Report and photo below). And there was ample time for socializing and networking among members and friends following each day's floor session.

Well over a dozen workshops, discussions and plenaries were conducted including the following:

- "Safety Culture": A concept to Improve Safety or Rhetoric to Lead us Astray?;
- Workplace Injuries & Fatalities: Blaming Workers is Never a Good Idea;
- Railroad Collisions: A Deadly Story of Mismanaged Risk;
- Advancing the Fight for the Two-Person Crew;
- Forging a Cross-Craft Coalition of ALL Railroad Workers;
- Building the Rail Worker - Passengers - Advocates Alliance;

- Struggles Along Supply Chains: Rail & Cross-Sectoral Solidarity;
- Railroad Workers United - Planning for the Next Ten Years;
- Building Solidarity on the Ground with Workers in Other Industries;
- The Struggle of French Railway Workers Today;
- The Railroad as the Solution to Modern Transportation;
- Lessons of the Lac-Mégantic Railroad Workers Defense
- Building Solidarity with the Railroad Contract Sector.



Local Union Affiliations

In the Fall, the RWU Steering Committee approved a Proposal from the Organizing Committee to encourage local unions to join RWU. This is expected to ultimately result in a Bylaws change at the 7th Biennial Convention in 2020. In the meantime, RWU is encouraging and soliciting locals, lodges and divisions to join RWU under the same conditions that an individual may now join. The local's elected leadership would put affiliation to a vote of the membership assembled, and if approved, would pay the dues in the normal fashion, have a vote, and be entitled to all rights and privileges, and be under the same obligations as any other member. The expected Bylaws change will provide additional stipulations.

Organizing

While RWU continued to reach out to different sectors of the railroad workforce, the number of rails actually joining declined in 2018 from the previous two years. This can be accounted for partly because of the lower profile of activity in 2018 (no conferences or contract fights).

For the first time in our history, RWU contracted with an *Organizer* (a former railroader) who was "on staff" for the first 14 weeks of 2018. However, we were only able to pay \$15/hour for a 20-hour week. But this gave us a test run of what is possible with staff support, if we one day are able to afford a full-time position all year.

Calendar-Year Memberships

The Sixth Biennial Convention adopted a Bylaws change that provides for a system of membership renewal to coincide with the calendar year. This new system will greatly simplify membership renewals and accounting, in addition to saving the organization money. For members who join in the first six months of the year, their membership will renew on January 1st the coming year. For those who join the last six months of the year, they will get additional months until their membership comes up for renewal the first of January the following year. For those who are members already - unless you are a Lifetime Member or a Sustainer, or have paid for multiple years - please pay your dues in January!

Finances

The January 2018 RWU Steering Committee meeting reported a combined total assets of \$25,809.35 in the bank, \$3200 of which was earmarked for the Canadian worker defense fund (since spent). The December meeting reported assets of \$20,11574. This amount does not reflect a sizable amount of donations yet to be recorded from the Fall Fundraiser. So all in all, the financial assets are roughly the same at the start and end of CY 2018.

Throughout 2018, our assets ranged between the above figures. The vast majority of this came in the form of membership dues. Sales of merchandise (see RWU Store), along with donations (see Sustainers + Annual Fall Fundraiser) accounted for the remainder.

In 2018, RWU converted our bookkeeping over to Quickbooks. Keeping a ledger of members, donors, associates, store sales, events, and the associated income and expenditures had become virtually impossible in a handwritten ledger. The organization has simply become too big for a volunteer to manage any other way.

QuickBooks (QB), also allows for an infinite number of reports to be written. The fiscal health of the organization can be broken down and studied from any aspect, and the findings presented in a number of formats to make the information digestible.

Most importantly, QB has made the fiscal snapshot of the organization available to any who need it, including the Steering Committee, the Trustees, the Storekeeper, the general membership, the IRS, or the State of Illinois, online and in legally accepted formats, an important feature, given that we are spread out across the continent. And, of course, it will ensure a seamless transition to a new Treasurer.

Annual Fall Fundraiser

This past Fall, RWU embarked upon its first properly organized fundraiser. It has proven to be successful and we hope to repeat it each Fall. The fundraiser was emailed to all members/supporters on the list serve and also mailed to more than 300 who were considered most likely to donate. A team of Steering Committee members and others engaged in follow-up phone calls in November and December. The results: To date, 70 individuals donated for a total of just over \$3800 collected through checks, online donations and via the *Go Fund Me* platform. More is pledged. Thanks to all of you who donated! AND if you have yet to do so, please consider a donation to RWU or RWF (tax-deductible) at any time. We will also keep the *Go Fund Me* site available into the new year for the stragglers. If you do not have a chunk of spare cash, consider becoming a Sustainer and contribute a smaller amount; e.g. \$10.00 each month (See the *Sustainer* entry in this Report).

Ongoing Campaigns

RWU continues to promote a series of campaigns. Here is a listing of the current campaigns that RWU is actively involved in promoting among rail workers:

- Opposition to Single Employee Crews.
- Defense of Railroad Workers under criminal indictment for workplace accidents and injuries.
- Defense of Railroad Worker Whistleblowers.
- Coordinated Bargaining of Rail Labor.
- Opposition to Behavior Based Safety Programs.
- Opposition to Excessively Long & Heavy Freight Trains.
- The Fight Against Chronic Fatigue.
- Support for a "Just Transition" to a clean energy economy, ensuring workers are not forced to pay the price.

Flyers, resolutions, press releases and other information is available for each of the above campaigns at the RWU website on the *RWU Campaigns Page*.

New Resolutions Adopted in 2018

In 2018, six Resolutions were adopted by the RWU Convention, and one other by the RWU Steering Committee. These resolutions can be found, along with all previous resolutions, on the RWU website at the *Resolutions Page*. They are:

1- Resolution in Support of an RWU Sustainers Drive to recruit members and supporters to make regular recurrent donations to RWU.

2 - Resolution in Support of a Rail Safety Coalition, whereby RWU and its allies will build a lasting organization dedicated to rail safety across North America.

3 - Resolution Against the Criminalization of Workers, and the bosses' attempts to not only blame-the-worker, but to throw her/him in jail when there is an accident, injury or mishap.

4 - Resolution in Support of Electronically Controlled Pneumatic Brakes that the rail industry says are "too expensive."

5 - Resolution in Support of All-Craft Unity in Bargaining, calling for union officials to consummate a single coalition.

6 - Resolution in Support of PTC Implementation with no further extensions granted to the rail carriers.

7 - Resolution in Support of the Amtrak National Network with no cuts in service, schedules or routes.

We are under no illusion that these resolutions will change the world. They are largely symbolic statements of support of - or in opposition to - a specific issue, event, struggle, organization, etc. But these Resolutions outline the trajectory of the organization, give it depth and principle, and stand as testament to what we as RWU believe and stand for. We make it clear who our friends and allies are, and also who our adversaries are. If you are a railroader and find yourself in agreement with many, most, or all of our basic Resolutions, then perhaps it is time for you to join RWU!

RWU Sustainers

First solicited for at the end of 2017, the ranks of our Sustainers continues to grow. These individuals - usually members but not always - have opted to donate a specific set amount each month or each paycheck to RWU, giving as little as \$5 a month or as much as \$50. It is a great way for those who cannot afford a large chunk of cash at any given time but can easily donate a smaller amount on a recurring basis. Sustainers allow RWU to more accurately gauge what our financial picture will look like in the coming year and be able to better plan accordingly. They give us a degree of financial stability we would not otherwise have. To date, we have 21 Sustainers and the ranks continue to grow. Please consider becoming an RWU Sustainer. For those members who donate at least \$10 a month, you will never have to pay annual membership dues again! See the RWU website *Page Become an RWU Sustainer*, or contact RWU General Secretary Ron Kaminkow.