

## The RWU Store

The RWU Store continues to offer a full line of items. All proceeds from the Store benefit RWU. This year we added a number of new items including an RWU beer koozie, and "Vote No!" stickers for use during the BNSF-SMART contract campaign against single employee crews.

In April we switched over to a new server called "Store Envy". This platform can accept Pay Pal or credit/debit card payments online, and offers numerous advantages over the previous "We Pay" system that we had been using for the RWU Store over the previous couple of years.

During the struggle against the single crew TA in the summer, the Store proved invaluable to the campaign. Rails ordered shirts, hats, stickers, bumper stickers, pins and more on a daily basis. The Store proved itself to be a great asset to the organization to get materials into the hands of members and others asap.

## Railroad Workers Memorial Day

For the 6th straight year, RWU observed *Railroad Workers Memorial Day* on the Friday prior to Father's Day, June 13th, 2014. We asked that all railroad employees wear black to work in remembrance of our fallen fellow railroaders.

Each year since 2009, RWU focuses on a specific incident, issue, or rail property. In 2014 we focused on Metro North, the New York based commuter railroad with a horrendous safety record. In 2013–2014, MN suffered a series of train wrecks and track worker fatalities. In the wake of a wreck that killed four passengers and injured dozens more, the FRA cited the railroad as having a "deficient safety culture". For a railroad long considered the "gold standard" for the region's commuter systems, the debacle on MN revealed that glaring safety issues had gone unnoticed and unreported for years. Without a safety program that is designed to recognize and eliminate hazards, rather than simply focus on worker behavior, the railroad was a disaster waiting to happen (see the front page of this annual report concerning the RWU Campaign for Real Safety Programs).

## Official Website

The RWU Website continues to be a major source of information for our members, railroad workers as a whole, and the general public. We recently updated our pinpoint map to show where all of the RWU members are located around North America. Every leaflet, flyer, issue of the newsletter and other RWU materials are being archived on the website together with separate articles from each issue of *The Highball*. We are currently looking for a new co-webmaster. If you have the skills and time to assist, please email: [info@railroadworkersunited.org](mailto:info@railroadworkersunited.org).

## Facebook Page

The RWU Facebook Page really took off in 2014. The Page proved to be an invaluable resource to both RWU and the railroad workers concerned about and involved in the fight against single employee crews in late summer. The number of "members" mushroomed to more than 4,000 by the Fall. Thousands of railroad workers have checked it out. By year's end, the plan was to create a "members' only" section of the Page where RWU members can interact with one another discretely.

Check out the RWU Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Railroadworkersunited/>. If you have comments or concerns about the Facebook Page, please contact J.P. Wright at [railroadmusic333@gmail.com](mailto:railroadmusic333@gmail.com).

## Steering Committee

The RWU International Steering Committee (ISC) continues to meet monthly, usually on the first Monday or Tuesday of the month. No Steering Committee member gets paid, nor do they have rights to mark off "union business" for the meetings, so we try to schedule them when most members can attend, in order that are able to achieve a quorum. In addition, numerous RWU members have attended the meetings in 2014. All RWU members in good standing are welcome to attend, listen and/or participate in these monthly meetings. Also, a number of guests have attended the meetings throughout the year – friends from other unions, worker, citizens and environmental groups that we have a relationship with.

The current Steering Committee (elected in April) is largely drawn from the operating crafts – represented by the Sheet Metal, Air, Rail & Transportation union (SMART) and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen (BLET). But we also have representation from members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), National Conference of Firemen & Oilers (NCFE), Transportation Communication Union (TCU) and the Teamster Canada Rail Conference (TCRC). We also seated our first "regional", first "unrepresented", first contract-sector and our first Canadian railroad workers aboard the ISC in April.

### The current RWU Steering Committee:

**Mark Burrows**, UTU #1433, CP, Chicago, IL  
**Paul Jenvey**, IBEW #889, UP, San Luis Obispo, CA  
**Ron Kaminkow**, BLET #51, Amtrak, Reno, NV  
**Paul Matchett**, WSOR, Janesville, WI  
**Dreadsen Owen**, IWW #520, MRS, Chicago, IL  
**Hugh Sawyer**, BLET #316, NS, Atlanta, GA  
**Daniel Scudder**, TCU/BRC #6354, NS, Atlanta, GA  
**John Vitaska**, NCFE #395, CP, Chicago, IL  
**James Wallace**, UTU #305, BNSF, Lincoln, NE  
**Andrew Weir**, TCRC-CTY #240, CN, Sarnia, ON  
**John Wright**, BLET #78, CSX, Louisville, KY

### Alternates

**Jen Wallis**, BLET #239, BNSF, Seattle, WA  
**Robert Hill**, BLET #239, BNSF Tacoma, WA.  
**Mike Matson**, UTU #911, CP, St. Paul, MN

You can reach any Steering Committee member individually or the entire ISC by emailing [info@railroadworkersunited.org](mailto:info@railroadworkersunited.org).



# Annual Report of Railroad Workers United

# 2014

## RWU's Three Long-term Campaigns Move Forward in 2014

### Opposition to Single Employee Crews

Throughout 2014, Railroad Workers United continued to raise the issue and keep the focus on the fight against single employee train crews. RWU has been committed to the workers on the W&LE and see them as on the front lines of the struggle to maintain the standard minimum of two employees on every train. We issued a complete analysis of why single train crews were unsafe and inefficient, and just a bad idea.

Then in July, SMART-TD GO #001 and the BNSF dropped the bombshell: A Tentative Agreement (TA) had been reached that would in effect eliminate the road conductor from most trains on most of the former BN properties. This was the day that RWU had warned about for nearly a decade. The organization moved into action, issued a press release, organized rallies, pickets and demonstrations, distributed thousands of stickers, buttons, and bumper stickers, together with flyers, poster, leaflets and other print materials, all designed to defeat the TA. When the smoke cleared, the BNSF workers had defeated the TA by a historic margin of 5-to-1!

This victory is a highpoint for RWU. As we have predicted for years, the carriers are committed to this, and the unions are, at best ill-equipped to fight the battle, and at worst complicit in the carriers' push for single employee crews. The BNSF trainmen—with the assistance and support of RWU—have made it clear: we can and will win this battle and we can and will maintain a minimum of two workers on each and every train! RWU emerged from the battle electrified and better equipped for the next round.

### Support Union-Based Safety Programs

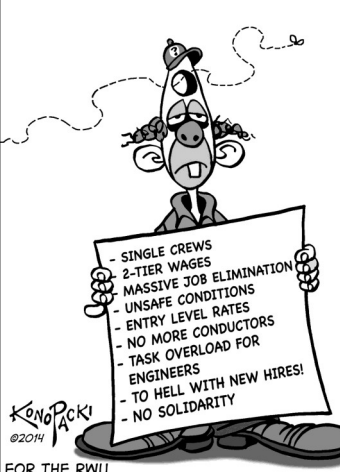
At the RWU Founding Convention, the members present held a special meeting to discuss our opposition to "behavior-based safety" (BBS) whereby the carriers convince the union to buy into a "safety program" that largely ignores hazards and blames workers for accidents and injuries sustained at work. From that day to this, RWU has pledged to oppose any and all such programs. *We are committed to safety programs that focus on hazard elimination, period.*

In 2014, we continued our work to educate railroaders about the duplicitous nature of these schemes. As more and more workers file and win OSHA "whistleblower" cases, the nature of these programs becomes ever clearer, since these programs by their very nature blame workers for getting hurt, hence leading to unlawful disciplinary action. Momentum is building and we have high hopes that 2015 could be a watershed year. Sooner or later, one of the rail unions will denounce BBS, and the house of cards will collapse.

### INTELLIGENT CONTRACT



### "SMART" CONTRACT



## Support for Coordinated Bargaining

In December, the unions of the operating crafts announced that they would jointly head up a bargaining coalition in the upcoming round of "national handling" for the master contract with the major rail carriers. At this time, they are joined by four other unions that together represent over half of railroad labor in the U.S.

While this sort of coalition is nothing new, the fact that both unions of the operating crafts – the BLET and SMART-TD are in this one together—is a potentially major development. The operating crafts have historically been the most powerful ... and the most fractured. RWU has – since our founding – pushed for all unions of rail labor to bargain as a group in "One Big Bargaining Coalition". We have issued a flyer, and a special issue of the newsletter together with other print materials to raise the issue and educate union members of the need for such a coalition as the way forward to effectively bargain with the rail carriers. Many railroad workers agree and see the wisdom of this approach. They know that united we stand and that divided (as we have historically been) means we continue to fall. They have come to understand and appreciate the strength that such a coalition would provide all railroad workers.

RWU encourages all union members to get involved. Attend your union meeting. If your union is an affiliate of this coalition, demand that your union officials stick together and not break ranks from the group. If your union is currently not in the coalition, demand that your officials take the necessary steps to ensure that it participates. This is the best opportunity we have had in decades to create a universal, powerful bargaining coalition.

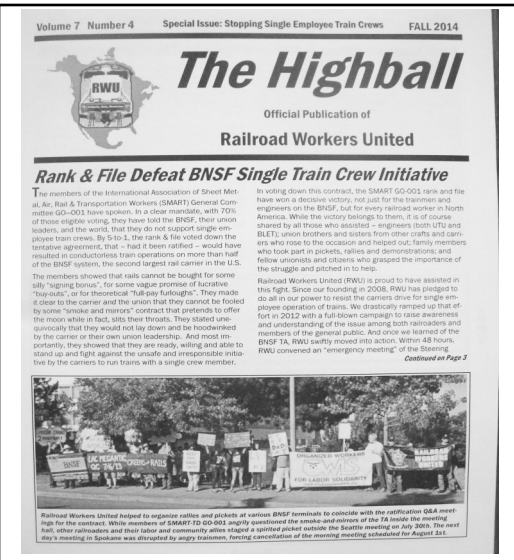
# Newsletter

RWU's quarterly newsletter *The Highball*, continues to grow and improve. Our network of distributors has grown over the past year. Some members (and supporters) elect to receive a bundle of the newsletter (generally 25 to 50 copies) each issue, while others make their own copies at home, work, or the copy shop. Thousands of copies get distributed each issue now. In addition, the newsletter is available on-line as a pdf on the website, Facebook and through the list serve as well for our on-line readers. All members are encourage to help distribute *The Highball*. If you are interested, please email [secretary@railroadworkersunited.org](mailto:secretary@railroadworkersunited.org).

We try to keep the newsletter topical and focused on issues that matter to railroad workers today. The Winter issue focused on the single employee train crew issue, inward facing cameras, the debacle at Metro-North and our upcoming RWU Convention. The Spring issue continued our coverage of the single crew issue, analyzed the UP dispatchers defeat at forming a union, and reviewed the results of the RWU Convention. The summer issue focused on the OSHA whistleblower law and cases and revisited the single employee crew fight on the W&LE.

The Fall 2014 issue was a special 12-page edition that focused near exclusively on the struggle against single employee crews. It was a way of recapping 10 years of struggle on the heels of the victory over single employee crew TA on the BNSF (see the front page of this report).

By focusing on the current issues that face the working railroader and refraining from "feel good" topics (golf tournaments, scholarship funds and officer re-elections), RWU hopes to make *The Highball* the best read newsletter among railroad workers of North America.



# The Fourth Biennial Convention of Railroad Workers United

RWU's fourth biennial Convention was held April 3rd & 4th, 2014, once again in the railroad capital of the world, Chicago. RWU believes that any and all rail conventions should always be held in cities that are major rail terminals, and have adhered to this policy since our founding.

As the organization has grown and the issues it has taken on have expanded, the RWU Steering Committee felt that a two-day convention was warranted. The first day focused on planning and strategizing sessions as well as workshops on a wide variety of topics. The second day also had a number of educational events but was more geared towards the business of the organization: consideration of bylaws amendments and resolutions, and the election of a new Steering Committee for 2014-2016.

### WORKSHOPS

A dozen or so workshops were conducted throughout the Convention and included such topics as: Global supply chains; North American railroad worker solidarity; organizing the contract sector; Safety programs and workplace injuries; Organizing railroad crew van drivers; *Rails Without Borders*; The Korean railroad workers strike; Organizing Chapters of RWU; and Building the campaign for a safe railroad.

### GUEST SPEAKERS

A number of guest speakers from various unions, work backgrounds and nations took part in the convention. They included the following:

- Ho-join Song, International Solidarity liaison of the Korean Railway Workers Union (KRWU);
- Kaourantin Lampriere, member of the French SUD-Rail union;
- Sheila White, supreme court plaintiff in victorious discrimination lawsuit against BNSF;
- Nancy Lessin, OSHA whistleblower Advisory Committee;
- Deb Gornal and Roger Zaczuk, United Electrical Workers

### SOCIAL & FUNDRAISER

The Steering Committee decided to throw a major party at this year's Convention, which took place Friday evening. In addition to those who participated in the RWU Convention, there were lots of guests from the *Labor Notes* conference as well. All told, a few hundred activists passed through our hospitality suite during the course of a fun filled evening which featured food and drink, live music and good conversation. The party doubled as a fundraiser, which added to the spirit of the event. RWU raffled off dozens of donated railroad items and raised hundreds of dollars to help pay for the party and the convention!



RWU Steering Committee, international guests and friends at the 2014 RWU Convention

### BYLAWS & STEERING COMMITTEE

A new Steering Committee of 11 regulars and 3 alternates was elected and installed (see the back of this Report under "Steering Committee". And only a handful of minor Bylaws amendments were proposed and adopted.

### RESOLUTIONS

Those members present adopted a series of resolutions, including the following:

- Supporting limits and restrictions on the use of inward facing cab cameras;
- Support for quality ongoing education and training for railroad employees;
- Expanding RWU in both Canada and Mexico;
- Diversifying RWU membership by appealing to brothers and sisters from the non-operating crafts;
- Support for dignity and respect on the job by the rail carriers
- Opposition to excessively long & heavy trains.

These Convention resolutions (and all other RWU resolutions) can be found on the RWU website. Click on the link *RWU Resolutions*.

# Organizing

Calendar year 2014 saw the largest growth in RWU membership since the organization was founded in 2008. The exponential growth of our Facebook page, combined with the struggle against single employee crews on BNSF combined to propel our membership forward. While the majority of the new members are drawn from the operating crafts, we also saw new members join RWU from the ranks of track workers, car inspectors, clerks, machinists, hostlers, locomotive service workers, and electricians. In addition, a number of workers from related industries joined as "Solidarity Members", including a sailor (IBU); a teacher (Industrial Workers of the World, IWW), a van driver and a locomotive builder (UE); and a labor educator from the Steelworkers union (USWA).

Most new members are now joining RWU on-line and making use of our new on-line membership (and renewal) form through our new platform "Constant Contact." This has simplified the way new members can join and has greatly facilitated the General Secretary's job of processing new memberships and renewals.

In addition to new members, RWU developed over 100 new "contacts" with railroad workers and others, who, — while they have not yet decided to join — support RWU and are interested in our efforts. Many of them signed up for the list serve and are active on the RWU Facebook page, while others help distribute the newsletter and RWU flyers and stickers. Hopefully many of them will become members in the coming years.

# Conference: "The Future of Railroads"

In the Fall of 2014 — together with other labor, citizens and environmental groups — RWU spearheaded the organizing of a series of conferences scheduled for presentation in early 2015. By building this solidarity with others outside of the rail industry, RWU hopes to assist rail labor to become better equipped in the future to win the battle with the rail carriers.

The public generally has no idea what goes on daily on America's railroads. At this conference — entitled "The Future of Railroads: Safety, Workers, Community & the Environment" — we plan to talk about crew fatigue, single employee train crews, excessively long and heavy trains, draconian availability policies, short staffing, limited time off work and other concerns. These issues are of concern not just to railroaders, but are of con-

cern to environmentalists, the community at large and society in general.

Non-railroaders in attendance at the conferences will come away with a deeper understanding of our workplace and a greater appreciation of the issues facing us. They will without a doubt, become valuable allies in our future fights with the rail carriers. And railroaders will gain a better insight into the environmental movement and how to forge alliances with public citizens.

The conferences are planned for the Pacific Northwest and the Bay Area, a week apart. Numerous organizations have endorsed at the end of 2014 at the time this report was issued. Expectations are high. If successful, RWU hopes to replicate the conferences in towns and cities all across the U.S. and Canada.

# Using the Media

The RWU email list serve on "Google Groups" continues to expand, as more and more railroaders tune in to get news and information from RWU. In addition, we have begun to make use of special e-newsletters powered by "Mail Chimp". RWU now issues "Monthly Bulletins" as the need arises between issues of *The Highball* newsletter. During the contract campaign to defeat the single crew initiative on BNSF (see front page of this Report), we began issuing a weekly update in this same newsletter format, a resource for those involved in the struggle.

Throughout 2014, RWU has issued press releases and spoken with media on TV, radio, newspaper and other media. A database of news media outlets and specific reporters now serves as an invaluable resource for RWU to get the word out.

# Solidarity

RWU continued its efforts at building solidarity with other workers and groups related both directly and indirectly to the rail industry within North America as well as overseas. We hosted various railroad workers from foreign lands at our Convention (see above), and continued to support the efforts of workers who service and build locomotives, drive crew vans, or otherwise work for outfits that contract with rail corporations.

Among railroad workers throughout North America, we continue to preach the gospel of universal solidarity of all railroad workers without regard to craft or workgroup, union affiliation, date of hire, carrier or nationality. "An injury to one is an injury to all!"

