



# *The Highball*

Official Publication of  
**Railroad Workers United**

## *Railroad Workers Stage "Day of Action" Across the U.S.*



*Railroad workers and allies rally in Nashville, one of three major terminals targeted by the union that spearheaded the "Day of Action" on May 3rd. The action was called to unite and mobilize all railroad workers in the U.S. to send a message to the rail carriers that rank and file rail workers demand a decent contract. For full article, see Page 3. For RWU's opinion, see the Editorial on Page 7.*

## *Civil Court Trials Set for Railroad Workers in Canada and the U.S.*

When Summer is winding down this September, two very important trials of railroad workers will be gearing up. All railroad workers in North America should sit up and take note. The railroad workers in question are all good railroaders, all of whom got caught up in situations which were largely beyond their control. What happened to them could happen to each and every one of us, any day, any time. None of us is perfect, and more importantly, none of us sets policy and procedure and is *legally responsible* for providing a safe workplace. These are the bailiwick of the rail carrier, and in the case of both train wrecks that these brothers were involved in, the company came up short. In both cases, the carrier failed to provide that safe workplace, and as a result, citizens, passengers and workers are all paying the price.

The state has decided that the worker(s) in question - not the carrier - is at fault and should be subject to a civil penalty. If the outcome of either trial results in a conviction, it will send a chill down the spine of every railroad worker in North America, and will set an ugly precedent that no matter how irresponsible and reckless the rail carrier may be, no matter how bad the safety record, no matter the failings of corporate and government policy and procedure - including disrespect for the

law - it will still be the *individual worker or workers* involved who bear the blame for whatever might have gone wrong.

Railroad Workers United takes both of these cases very seriously and understands the severe ramifications for all rails. These sorts of trumped up charges against workers are becoming more and more commonplace - not just on the railroad but across industry - as union power continues to erode while corporations endeavor to shift the blame for accidents, injuries, fatalities and disasters away from the company and onto the individual worker. This trend is a dangerous escalation of the ideology of so-called "behavior based safety", taken to an extreme degree. Taken to its illogical conclusion, all accidents, all injuries, and fatalities and all disasters are simply explainable by pointing the finger at the worker who is the culprit, and disciplining, firing, fining and imprisoning him/her, exonerating the company and the industry from blame in the process.

Neither Amtrak's Brandon Bostian nor the Montreal, Maine & Atlantic's Tom Harding and Richard Labrie deserve to go to prison. They are not criminals. Their fellow railroad workers are their best allies. They need and deserve your support.

**See Pages 4 and 5 for further information and commentary**



# RWU Happenings

## RWF First Official Fundraiser is a Success but Falls Short of Target

This Spring, we launched our first official fundraiser for the Railroad Workers Education & Legal Defense Foundation (RWF), RWU's tax-exempt sister organization. In the face of elevated attacks by both the rail carriers and government upon railroad workers' wages, benefits, working conditions, continued employment and retirement, it seemed a good time to test the waters and see if our members and supporters were willing to dig deep and donate some spare change. While we fell short of our goal, nearly 50 of members and supporters contributed over \$3000.

There is general agreement of the Steering Committee that we need to conduct regular fundraisers in the future. Perhaps Fall may prove to be a better time in general than Spring, when so many people are focused on graduations, weddings, Fathers/

Mothers/Memorial Day, together with the fine weather.

And we suspect that our members and supporters might be more forthcoming with donations if we target a certain project or campaign with a specific goal and timeline, one with more tangible results. It is way more glamorous to donate to something that is more readily defined than, for example, expanding distribution of the newsletter.

So thanks to all who donated their hard earned cash to this first fund appeal. For those who never got around to making a donation, you can still do that online or by check to either RWU or RWF at any time throughout the year. See the RWU website Home Page. Or just look for the next fundraiser to come, sometime in the not-too-distant future.

## Recent Changes to the RWU Steering Committee (ISC)

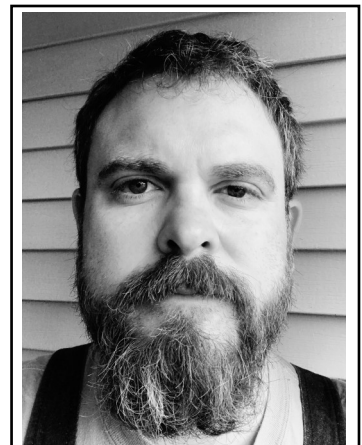
In May 2017, RWU Co-Chair and founding member Jen Wallis resigned her position as Co-Chair. A physical injury has rendered Jen incapable of performing service, and she awaits disposition of her FELA claim. We wish her well and welcome her back at some point in the future.

James Wallace, who has served as RWU Recording Secretary for five years now assumes her position along with Ross Grooters and Jim Thomason as Co-Chair. Daniel Stroup, an engineer with BLET #188 on CN out of Superior, WI will assume the Recording Secretary slot.

Meantime, John Wright - RWU Organizer - has resigned his position on the railroad as a CSX engineer. For the moment, J.P. will continue in his capacity on the RWU Steering Commit-

tee and he expects to be an active member of RWU.

All RWU Steering Committee positions are up for election in April of 2018. All RWU members in good standing are eligible to run for the job. See your copy of the RWU Bylaws for an outline of duties and responsibilities. Members of the non-operating crafts are especially encouraged to consider a position on the ISC.



Recording Secretary Dan Stroup

### 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

- Ross Grooters**, BLET #778, UP, Des Moines, IA
- Ron Kaminkow**, BLET #51, Amtrak, Reno, NV
- Paul Matchett**, WSOR, Janesville, WI
- Hugh Sawyer**, BLET #316, NS, Atlanta, GA
- Cameron Slick**, UTU #911, CP, St Paul, MN
- Daniel Stroup**, BLET #188, CN, Superior, WI
- Jim Thomason**, UTU #1292, CN, Two Harbors, MN
- John Vitaska**, NCF0 #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

- Brian Clark**, TCU #3060, CN, Champaign, IL
- Robert Hill**, UTU #556, BNSF, Tacoma, WA
- Alan Thompson**, UTU #316, UP, Clinton, IA

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RWU P.O. Box 2131 Reno, NV 89505



# Railroad Workers Unite in a Cross-Craft Rally Nationwide

Tom Modica, BMWED #1532

Railroad workers united and came together in cross-craft rallies across the U.S. on Wednesday, May 3rd in support of a fair contract and to send a message to the Class I rail carriers: "Leave our healthcare alone!" With the ongoing national contract bargaining at a stalemate, the carriers are simply refusing to negotiate. They are demanding substantial increases in workers' healthcare premiums, deductibles, co-pays, and prescription costs. There has been a national push for direct action coming from the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division (BMWED) of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT), one of thirteen unions on the U.S. railroads. As well as extreme healthcare concessions, the railroads are also demanding that the BMWED take lousy raises and receive no back pay. Negotiating has gone nowhere for over two years now, as the railroads continue to go backwards in each bargaining session despite the attempt of BMWED - and other rail unions - to reach a just and fair contract for their members. The members have demanded that their healthcare be preserved, and being that the railroads remain adamant, the rank & file decided that it is high time for the rail unions to take action.

For direct action to be viable we need a united rail labor to fight off railroad concessions. After numerous failed attempts to ask the other rail union bosses for unity, the BMWED decided - with the help of its Communication Action Team (CAT) - to organize cross-craft "Healthcare, Not Wealthcare" rallies. The BMWED targeted strategic locations in Chicago - CN Home-wood Yard, NS Calumet Yard, and UP Proviso Yard - as well as CSX Radnor Yard (Nashville, TN) and UP Roseville Yard (Roseville, CA). The union injected their fulltime internal organizers to build a cross-craft rally at each location. In addition, the union mobilized more than 1,000 CAT "Frontline Communicators" - on-the-job organizers who keep members informed of national bargaining and union information - to organize high profile rallies in their respective terminals across the country.

The BMWED teamed up with local communities and allied organizations such as *Jobs with Justice* and the *Illinois Single*

*Payer Coalition* to get the message out. Dozens of rallies coast-to-coast depicted all rail crafts standing together in unity. While it may seem small compared to the roughly 150,000 working railroad workers in the U.S. this action is just the start of a movement of rail workers who are fed up with concessions and fed up with railroad fear tactics and mistreatment. Rail workers across all crafts are tired of being spit upon by the rail corporations that were built with their blood, sweat and tears, and

sometimes with their brothers' and sisters' lives. The railroads received the message loud and clear. Norfolk Southern in Chicago tried to silence the workers at the Calumet Yard, blocking part of the yard entrance with intermodal trailers, thinking that it might keep the workers from attending the rally there. Throughout the event, NS had the railroad police stalking attendees, and later called the Chicago Police in an attempt to further intimidate the workers.

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## "Rail workers across all crafts are tired of being spit upon by the rail corporations"

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While they plead poverty, Class 1 railroads in the U.S. made \$14 billion in profit last year. They simply want to increase their profits off the backs of their employees. The BMWED put together a Committee to evaluate the national healthcare plan of all the unions combined. Their findings proved that by restructuring, more than \$100 million in administration costs would ensue. The union claims those savings would amount to enough that no railroader under the plan would incur any rise in healthcare costs, while maintaining the coverage that is already there. These findings were presented to the carriers early in bargaining, and the railroads agreed that indeed, there was at least \$70 million in savings there. However, the railroads then did an about face and claimed they still wished to raise workers' costs. That, fellow workers, is called greed. We cannot and will not accept that. We are here to tell the railroads that they will not sacrifice rail workers and their families at the altar of profit. We deserve a piece of the wealth that we have created!

We call upon all of rail labor and all union leaders to set aside union politics and sectarian divisions and join in solidarity. The combined power of the railroad carriers is far too great for any one union to defeat on its own. The track maintainers and the BMWED have pointed the way. It is time for other railroad workers to join in the fight and claim what is rightfully ours, together arm in arm. "An Injury to One is An Injury to All!"



Railroad workers and allies rally at the big Union Pacific yard in Roseville, CA on May 3rd, one of three major terminals that the union sought to target around the U.S. in the effort to win a good contract.



# Rail Worker Defense - Canada

## An Open Letter to Our Allies in the Fight for Safe Rails & a Sustainable Environment

At the RWU June Steering Committee meeting, we adopted the *Open Letter* below, the purpose of which is to garner support from our allies in the labor, community and environmental movements in the defense of criminally charged railroad workers in Canada. It is our profound belief that those concerned with the safe movement of trains through communities and environmentally sensitive areas must get involved in the struggle to defend scapegoated workers and hold corporations accountable for unsafe policies and practices.

The trial of two railroad workers gets underway in September. If they are convicted, it will be a defeat for all railroad workers and deal a severe blow to the popular movement for safe trains. Convictions however will be a win for irresponsible corporations who put profits before safety, companies that cut corners and implement unsafe policies and procedures. The upcoming trial in Quebec is political. Are train wrecks the result of individual workers or corporate practices?



*All those with an interest in safe train operations must support the dropping of charges against scapegoated railroad workers.*

### No More Lac-Mégantics - Drop the Charges

July 6<sup>th</sup> marks four years since a runaway train carrying volatile Bakken crude crashed and burned in the small town of Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, killing 47 and destroying half the town. It's time to recommit to making sure tragedies like this don't happen again. It's also the right time to speak up against the criminal trial beginning in early September this year, that unfairly and inaccurately hangs the Lac-Mégantic crash on two railroad workers.

Some of us focus on how dangerous this kind of cargo is. Trains carrying volatile crude are called "Bomb Trains" for a reason. Some of us focus more on rail safety, no matter what or who is on the train. We push for safer work schedules and big enough train crews to handle an unusual situation or an emergency. Railroad managers push hard to squeeze every dollar they can out of every train run. The Lac-Mégantic train had a dangerous cargo, a single crew-member and work rules that cut the margin of safety down to just about zero. The result was a disaster that still impacts the Lac-Mégantic community.

You'd expect railroaders to point the finger at management. But we're not the only ones. Multiple government safety investigations and independent journalists looked at what happened in Lac-Mégantic and came to the same conclusion. Railroad management policies made this kind of runaway train crash likely to happen sooner or later. Lax government oversight looked the other way until it did.

You would think that four years later there would be stronger safety regulations on every railroad, with extra layers of protection for dangerous cargo. Sadly, this is not the case. Railroad policymakers are still cutting corners and government regulators are still looking the other way. They want people to believe that the big safety problem is a few careless railroad workers.

Even after all the reports and exposes, the Canadian and Quebec governments are still not going after the railroad policy makers and their unsafe policies. Instead railroad workers **Tom Harding and Richard Labrie will be on trial this fall in Quebec**. The managers who made the critical policies will not even get a slap on the wrist. That's just wrong, and it *guarantees that the danger continues*. Every year since the crash, the number of reported runaway trains in Canada has increased. That's a sign of a reckless culture, not the actions of two railroad workers one night in Quebec.

Whether your main issue is the environment, community safety, rail safety, or worker's rights, it comes down to stronger government regulations and stronger railroad safety policies, with real community and labor enforcement. The two railroad workers were not the cause of the Lac-Mégantic crash or any of the runaway trains since then. They are not the ones still running trains right through the town of Lac-Mégantic, ignoring the demands of the survivors for a simple rail bypass. The people in Lac-Mégantic know that sending Harding and Labrie to prison won't address any of their problems with the railroad. But if that happens, you can bet the government will close the book as the official verdict on Lac-Mégantic and railroad management will be standing there with them.

Railroad Workers United is going to mark the Lac-Mégantic anniversary wherever we are. We'll stand in solidarity with the people of Lac-Mégantic like we have for four years, and talk about rail safety. That's who we are. But we'll make sure to point out that scapegoating two railroad workers for this tragedy will make railroads and communities across the continent less safe.

When you hold public commemorations this year, we ask you to make this point your way. Blaming Harding and Labrie for the Lac-Mégantic tragedy weakens all of us and all our causes. So all of us have to speak up.

**Justice for Lac-Mégantic requires Dropping the Charges Against Harding & Labrie**



## Rail Worker Defense - United States

### Amtrak #188 Engineer Indicted in PA for Manslaughter

On May 15th, 2015, Amtrak train #188 accelerated into a 50 mph curve and derailed at roughly twice the authorized speed, resulting in the train derailing and the subsequent deaths of eight passengers and injuries to another 200. The engineer of the train - Brandon Bostian - cannot recall the actual event, and may never regain any memory of what happened.

In its report issued a year later on May 17th, 2016, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) concluded that Bostian must have lost his "situational awareness" in the face of numerous distractions around the time of the wreck. Apparently, two trains in the vicinity of Bostian's had been "rocked" by vandals, one having had its windshield shattered just minutes before Amtrak #188 was to derail. According to NTSB, radio chatter around this unfolding drama, coupled with possible concerns for his own safety, led Bostian to become distracted as to his whereabouts. Investigators said Bostian was not on his phone and was not under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and his lawyer has said he has no recollection of the events leading to the derailment.

Bostian remains on indefinite leave from the company (Amtrak) for lack of evidence upon which to charge him. And in mid-May, the Philadelphia District Attorney's office closed its investigation and declined to press charges stating, "We cannot conclude that the evidence rises to the high level necessary to charge the engineer or anyone else with a criminal offense." Then on May 15th, two years to the day after the fatal wreck, the Pennsylvania Attorney General's office charged the engineer with involuntary manslaughter and reckless endangerment.

Like the rail workers in Canada, Bostian's criminal trial is set for September. And like them, he is not a criminal and should not be charged as such. The dissenting member of the NTSB - Vice Chair T. Bella Dinh-Zarr - stated that the lack of Positive

Amtrak engineer Brandon Bostian was at the throttle when Amtrak #188 derailed on a curve just east of Philadelphia two years ago. It is generally understood that the engineer was a model employee with a good work record, high morale, and a love and respect for his job. Given the results of both Amtrak's and the NTSB's investigations, there is no evidence to charge him with a crime. Nevertheless, the State of Pennsylvania will put Bostian on trial this fall despite both Amtrak and the Philadelphia DA's office stating that there is no grounds for further action against him.



Train Control (PTC), not the engineer's supposed loss of situational awareness, was the primary target behind the disaster. Her claim is the starting point for other systemic factors which lie behind the wreck, including decades of deferred maintenance of the Northeast Corridor, failure to employ the use of a simple transponder that would have restricted the ability of the train to achieve such a dangerous speed at that location, the recent changes to work schedules that were unilaterally imposed by Amtrak upon engineers over the objections of the rank and file just weeks before the crash, failure to secure the area from vandals despite its record of vandalism, etc.

Brandon Bostian may or may not be a good engineer. Opinions may differ. But he is certainly not a criminal and as such, all charges against him should be dropped.

### Railroad Workers United to Produce 2018 Rail Labor History Calendar

By this coming Labor Day, railroad workers, our families, friends and allies, rail and history buffs, together with members of the general public will have the opportunity to order their copy of RWU's 2018 Rail Labor History Calendar. RWU's slogan is "the rank & file in action", and as such, each month of this Calendar will be graced with a different photo from rail labor history, depicting a strike, picket, rally or other activity selected from among hundreds of such actions over the course of the last 150 years of struggle. Over 150 dates of historic significance to railroad workers and their unions are included throughout the calendar year.

To order yours, see the RWU website or call 202-798-3327. For those interested in purchasing multiple copies for co-workers, friends and family members, big discounts are available on orders of more than five (5) copies. Help spread the word of our heroic history, and help to inspire rail workers' confidence to wage the battles that lie ahead.



The upcoming RWU Rail Labor History Calendar for 2018 will include more than a dozen photographs of rail labor actions, both from the past and modern times, like that of engineers and trainmen pictured above, on strike in 2014 against Midwest regional rail carrier Wheeling & Lake Erie.



## **Opinion & Commentary**

### ***Business as Usual = Defeat. Resist the Status Quo!***

One objective of my commentaries over the last several years has been to share my personal vantage point from being a railroad worker for 40+ years. I've tried to combine my first-hand experiences and observations with facts that I've acquired, regarding labor history, politics and economics, along with the resulting analysis and conclusions I've arrived at. At times I've reported on our trials and tribulations at CP Rail. While it goes without saying that railroad workers all around the country have been catching hell in numerous ways, shapes and forms, I felt that the uber-aggressive determination to exponentially increase the rate of exploitation by CP's former CEO, Hunter Harrison (HH), was particularly ominous. I feared that if his efforts to obliterate decades of long standing terms of engagement at CP were successful, as he had been at the ICG and CN, this "cancer" could spread throughout the industry. Now that HH's "skills" are at the service of CSX investors, to my brothers and sisters working there: Forewarned is forearmed! This context merits an update on the situation at CP, in order to assess what I consider to be important lessons. What went down here serves as a virtual "poster child" for all that RWU stands for and is fighting against. For background info on this, refer to *The Highball*, Fall 2014 "Don't be Fooled by Candy-Coated Promises: Fight Back"; Fall 2015 "Unity-Solidarity-Democracy: Needed Now More Than Ever!"; and Winter 2016 "Operating Craft Unions are Helpless as HH Divides and Conquers at CP".

Kindergarten level divide-and-conquer methods have been utilized by all bosses vs. the workers since the dawn of the industrial age. Pit the unemployed vs. the employed; the workers at one factory vs. the workers at another; one union vs. another; the workers in one industry vs. workers in another; the workers in one country vs. the workers in another, etc. Though railroad bosses did not invent "divide-and-conquer", they have honed it down to a precise science in their little section of the universe, with a special shout-out to HH. Before I bring this sordid saga to the present, a little more info about CP's Section 4 notice is in order, as it is essential to this story. While some of you may be familiar with a Section 4, prior to the Summer 2015, I had never heard of it. It's a nifty little secret weapon, courtesy of The Railway Labor Act, that a carrier can utilize when the basic collective bargaining process, governed by Section 6 notices, is not working out as the carrier would like. After the SMART-TD decisively rejected H.H.'s "blood-money-for-anything-goes" TA by a 30-to-1 margin back in December 2014, CP went to the Surface Transportation Board (STB) with a heartbreaking tale of economic woe. Citing the need for improved efficiency in their business model, they needed to restructure wages and working conditions. In essence, they were demanding what would have been the equivalent of an \$8.00 per hour pay cut for anything goes, as opposed to the blood money raises that had been decisively rejected. This gun-to-the-head threat was used by the SMART-TD leadership to motivate for a second attempt at ratification, but the TA was once again rejected, this time by a 2-to-1 margin. The BLET leadership also used this threat to motivate their first attempt at ratification. With this threat posed, seduced by visions of dancing \$\$\$s, along with an appalling lack of union consciousness, a majority of engineers gleefully ratified HH's vision, essentially stabbing their fellow SMART-TD union brothers and sisters in the back. Eugene Debs had to be

spinning in his grave. Shortly thereafter, the conductors were dealt another blow when the arbitrator ruled on the Section 4.

After 40 years in the industry, it takes a lot to faze me, but my jaw dropped when I read this. Legalese mumbo-jumbo aside, all rails should contemplate the implications of this excerpt from the pro-company arbitrator: "I am not bound by the terms of the collective bargaining agreements in effect. I have authority to modify work "ownership" rules, seniority rules, job assignment rules, and other labor agreement terms as necessary to permit implementation or an authorized transaction. My authority to modify labor agreements extends to effectuation of operating changes and coordinations that are directly related to, or flow from, the approved principal transaction. A modification of labor agreements is justified if it is necessary to the achievement of the public transportation benefits on which the STB's approval was based."

To that end, the arbitrator kept the wage scale intact but gutted major work rule agreements on a conditional basis, as it pertained to the specific business needs cited. Of course CP took the grey area and ran with it. With the engineers having just sold their work-rule agreements, to make it work CP essentially imposed the same conditions on the SMART-TD conductors under the cover of the Section 4 ruling. This resulted in a fair amount of toxic dissension as engineers were now making mongo blood money for selling their work rules, while these conditions were being forced on conductors being paid approximately 33% less. "What was the point of twice rejecting this agreement, when we are essentially working under it now, minus the blood money compensation?", some would justifiably grumble. As the resulting penalty claims were piling up, the union couldn't afford to take them to a Board because: 1) The union's financial resources were severely strained by a bazillion bogus investigations; and 2) in one major terminal, many conductors defected to the BLET in response to their LC advocating for the agreement. I'm sure that struck fear into HH at the time. The GC ended up working part-time. Because the SMART-TD GC was mandated by the negotiating committee to not even discuss the 10 hour day, at the beginning of this year an impasse was declared and the union agreed to binding arbitration, rather than roll the dice on a PEB under the Trump administration. In March, the arbitrator, under the cover of the BLET's shameless treachery, imposed the same agreement on the conductors that they had decisively rejected twice. The conductors at CP made a valiant stand for their dignity, safety and quality of life, but with the union leadership playing by the established rules, they were essentially set up to be slaughtered without resistance. How many more crushing defeats must we endure before we rewrite this script?

**Mark Burrows has served as Organizer and Co-Chair for Railroad Workers United. He retired last winter after hiring out in 1974, working as an engineer for a combined total of 37 years for the Chicago North Western and the Soo Line/Canadian Pacific in Chicago, Illinois. He continues to be an active member of RWU and a contributing writer to this newsletter.**





## Editorial

### Trackworkers and the “Day of Action” Point the Way Forward for Rail Labor

The railroad workers “Day of Action” initiated by the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division (BMWED) was a major step forward for rail labor in today’s “age of acquiescence”. The union’s rank & file, together with the leadership, took to the streets to demand that the nation’s rail carriers stop stalling in national negotiations and bargain in good faith towards a fair and just contract for not just the 30,000 members of that organization, but for all of rail labor. Rather than go along with “business as usual”, the membership decided that it was time to take action.

The decision to conduct a public protest rally comes on the heels of a concerted effort by the union to involve its members in this round of contract negotiations. Perhaps no other union of the thirteen or so that represent rail workers has done more to inform, educate, and mobilize its members around the contract negotiations process. Without the rank & file’s participation at every step of the process, no union is able to win a decent contract.

The union surveyed its members long before contract negotiations even began to better understand their issues/concerns, and followed up by training hundreds of internal organizers and establishing a network to keep the members active and informed. The members said healthcare was of prime concern and the union has gone on to endorse a national “Medicare for all” single-payer system, and mobilized members in support of this goal. The leadership has conducted regular “town hall” meetings to provide updates as bargaining progresses, available online for all members (and all rail workers) to view. In the face of the carriers’ intransigence, the union opted to call for the *Day of Action*. Apparently there are plans to escalate such actions should the carriers remain steadfast.

Railroad Workers United commends the BMWED for its progressive and democratic actions outlined above. We optimistically look forward to doing what we can to assist and support the next step. And we have a few ideas of how to build the rail workers’ movement for a good contract:

1 – Conduct *regular* “Days of Action” that will take on a life of their own. Why not conduct such “informational pickets” every month, possibly every week? Once they get rolling, it will require far less effort to keep them going, and become second nature for workers to attend the regularly scheduled action.

2 – Whether they become regular actions or special events, more advance notice is needed for workers and their unions to discuss, debate and sign on to the event. Had the May 3rd action been announced earlier, locals, divisions and lodges of the other twelve unions could have had the time to bring the issue to the floor of their union meeting, adopt a resolution of support, organize and otherwise help build for the event.

3 – Build alliances with allies both inside and outside of the labor movement by courting various unions, community and environmental groups. BMWED’s efforts to include Jobs with Justice, the Labor Coalition in Support of Single Payer and groups like the Sierra Club is a step in the right direction. Let’s expand this outreach to likely allies such as the transit union (ATU), longshoreman (ILWU), electrical workers (UE), Teamsters (IBT) and other transport workers; as well as community and environmental groups concerned with rail safety, like the

scores of groups that are part of the RWU safety conferences.

4 – Include more than just three terminals in the action. While big terminals like Chicago and Roseville are important, dozens of large terminals - Kansas City, St. Louis, Twin Cities, Pittsburg, Atlanta, New Orleans, Houston, Seattle, LA - Long Beach to name a few - are just as key. In addition, medium and small terminals should be encouraged to take action as well to ensure that these workers see themselves as vital to the success of the campaign and to show the rail carriers that this is not just a photo op, but rather that we have workers at all levels, throughout the entire system, who are informed, motivated, and ready for action.

5 – When possible, schedule actions in conjunction with other local/national activities. Labor Day presents a great upcoming opportunity for action. Likewise, May Day (International Workers Day) - just two days prior to the May 3rd Day of Action - was a huge day of strikes and demonstrations of mostly low wage workers around the United States. Combining our efforts with other workers’ and peoples’ movements multiplies our power, educates these other movements of our existence and our issues, and sends a message that we are here to support them, as they are here to support us!

6 – Where possible, we should strive to unite freight and passenger railroad workers, who often have little contact with one another and who do not necessarily understand their common interests. In general, what the freight industry settles on becomes the pattern that will be served up to the passenger industry. And the passenger industry is where most Americans interface with the railroad, offering a key opportunity to build support among the general public.

7 – We need to include *everyone* in future events and actions, providing opportunities for all rail workers to take part. If for example, your terminal is not conducting a rally, or perhaps you are on-duty and unable to take part, organizers could provide T-shirts, arm bands or buttons for union members to wear, proclaiming support for the action *on the inside*.

8 – Finally, we need to let the carriers know that these actions are part of a concerted campaign, one that is bound to escalate if they are not responsive to our demands. Rallies, pickets, demonstrations and other public displays are great, and can be very effective at pressuring your adversary. But sometimes, those actions need to be escalated before the powers-that-be take notice. “Practice strikes”, “quickie strikes”, collective visits to the boss, interventions at shareholders’ meetings or CEO residences, combined with other creative actions can apply pressure and win a good contract.

The key to victory is to involve the rank & file of *all crafts and all unions* at every step of the way, from decision making to execution, and to understand each and every action as part of an overarching strategy designed to apply ongoing pressure from a myriad of angles and sources. Union officials who oppose this approach must be called out as the sell-outs and bureaucrats that they are, and deposed as necessary. Actions like the all-craft May 3rd *Day of Action* have the potential to help build the necessary unity and solidarity we need, having been historically divided into 13 different craft unions. May 3rd has set the tone. We must build on it and take it forward.

## Order Your RWU T-Shirt Now!

Our union made in the USA 100% BLACK cotton T-shirt is available in all sizes – S thru 4 XL. The 4-color RWU logo is on the back while the letters RWU are prominently displayed on the front left breast. Designed by RWU members with assistance from the premier labor cartoonist in the United States, Mike Konopacki.

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 RWU P.O. Box 2131 Reno, NV 89505



*Upon every hand there are unerring signs of change, and the time has come for the education and organization of the working class for the social revolution that is to lift the workers from the depths of slavery and elevate them to an exalted plane of equality and fraternity.*

**Eugene V. Debs, Founder of the American Railway Union**  
 Speech on December 10th, 1905

# Railroad Workers United

## Membership Application

Railroad Workers United needs you! Please keep your membership dues current. If your membership is about to expire or has already expired, please renew today and remain in good standing. And if you are not already a member of RWU, please consider joining; then fill out the application below and mail it in with your dues. Thanks!

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](http://www.railroadworkersunited.org)**