



# The Highball

Official Publication of  
**Railroad Workers United**

## *RWU Ratchets Up Campaign to Oppose "Precision Scheduled Railroading"*

In June, Railroad Workers United formally announced a new Campaign to Oppose Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR). This darling of Wall Street investors is a scourge to railroad workers, shippers, passengers, trackside communities and the nation. We have created a "tool kit" for railroaders to make use of in the fight against PSR which includes: a basic resolution explaining why we are opposed to PSR; a bi-fold flyer; various posters and cartoons; a Press Release; an editorial comment on PSR; and commentaries by industry and union officials condemning PSR.

RWU urges all railroad workers and all rail unions to enlist in the fight. PSR serves only the wealthy and does nothing for the rest of us. It's time we think of the rail industry as a national asset, not just as a cash cow for hedge fund investors.

See Page 3 for more information



## *FRA Pulls Proposed Two-Person Crew Rule, Preempts State Legislation*

On May 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) formally withdrew the pending proposed rulemaking that was intended to have set a mandatory crew size minimum of two crew members on most trains in the United States. Given the change in administration at the federal level, this is not surprising and has been expected. However, the agency took the additional step of proclaiming that all state laws and regulations that establish minimum crew standards are null and void, including the recent legislation adopted this spring in both Colorado and Nevada.

Two-person train crew legislation began to gain traction this legislative session in states across the nation. With six states now boasting such laws on the books, and at least a dozen more considering such legislation, the action at FRA was clearly designed to dampen the momentum and enthusiasm, and to stop the spread of two-person train crew bills from becoming law in more states. It remains to be seen, but expectations are that the FRA has effectively given the kiss of death to pending legislation in Illinois, Maine, Oregon, Washington, and a host of other states

where legislation has been either introduced, been adopted by one chamber, and in some cases been passed by both chambers and is awaiting the signature of the Governor.

The unions of the operating crafts – the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen (BLET) and the Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, Transportation Union (SMART-TD) issued a joint statement condemning the action, vowing to fight back with all legal options at their disposal. In addition, SMART-TD National Legislative Director John Risch called for a stepped-up effort to win a federal two-person crew law, the "Safe Freight Act of 2019," HR 1748.

"The action today flies in the face of so-called conservative values and states' rights," stated Risch. "The federal government is refusing to protect the public and at the same time is prohibiting states from doing so by posting this federal notice." And in a joint statement, BLET National President Dennis Pierce and SMART-TD President John Previsich stated: "We frankly did not

Continued on Page 5



# RWU News and Happenings

## ***RWU Revamps Committee Structure, Encourages All Members' Participation***

Like any organization, RWU has a leadership body that is charged with guiding the organization between our biennial Conventions. The International Steering Committee (ISC), made up of 11 railroaders and 3 Alternates, meets monthly and makes the necessary decisions on policy, planning, expenditures, fundraising, etc. But as the organization has grown and developed, it needs more and more "sub-committees" to carry out the day-to-day tasks and spread the workload among our members.

Some of these Committees have been very successful while others are more "paper" committees that are not very active or active at all, but then might spring to life to tackle a specific issue, only to once again become dormant.

This Spring, RWU has made an attempt to build up the Committee structure by assigning a core group of dedicated members to each Committee, together with a designated Chair, in the hopes that these Committees can form the backbone of the organization, distributing the workload, getting tasks completed in a timely fashion, bringing fresh ideas and enthusiasm, and facilitating member involvement.

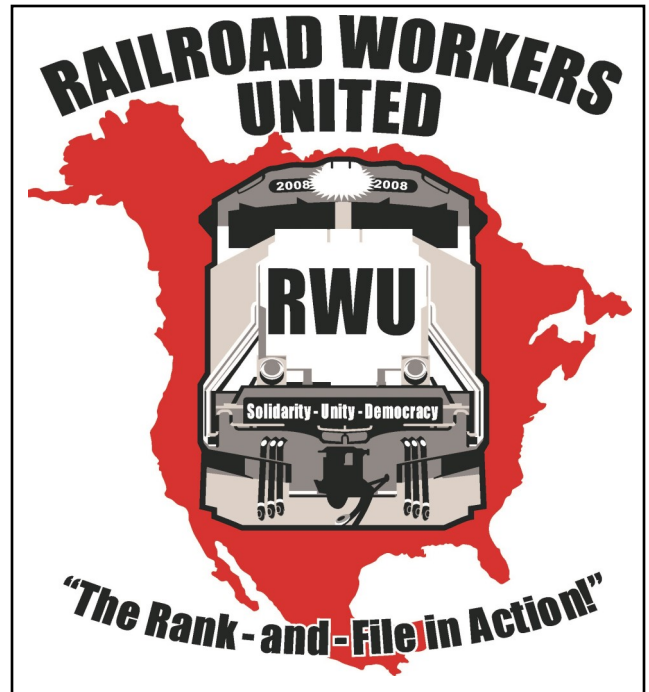
Many RWU members are already overwhelmed with their railroad job, union activities, family matters and more, and do not have the time to serve on a Committee. But for those members who have the time and energy and are looking to become more involved in Railroad Workers United, joining one or more Committees is a great way to jump in with both feet.

If you are an RWU member in good standing, you will soon be receiving a complete listing of all 15 Committees - both "standing" and "special" - together with a listing of RWU "Liaisons" and "Special Reps". Please read it over carefully and contact RWU if you are interested in serving in some capacity.

Don't see a Committee or position on the list, but you think RWU should create it? The Steering Committee is empowered to

create and abolish Committees as the need arises. Please do not hesitate to bring an idea for a specific Committee, Liaison or Special Rep to the attention of the ISC for consideration.

To sign up for a specific Committee or position, contact the Chair of the Committee or the RWU General Secretary (secretary@railroadworkersunited.org 202-798-3327). For a description of all RWU Committees and members currently serving on each, see the RWU website Page entitled RWU Committees: [www.railroadworkersunited/rwu-committees.org](http://www.railroadworkersunited/rwu-committees.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
- Adam Haslag, IBEW # 1832, UP, Kansas City, MO
- Ron Kaminkow, BLET #51, Amtrak, Reno, NV
- Ryan McEldowney, SMART #867, UP, Des Moines, IA
- Mark Moylan, BRC #6030, CN, Twin Harbors, MN
- Joe Mulligan, BLET #57, Keolis, Boston, MA
- Hugh Sawyer, BLET #316, NS, Atlanta, GA
- James Wallace, BLET #621, BNSF, Lincoln, NE
- Andrew Weir, TCRC-LE #240, CN, Sarnia, ON

#### Trustees

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

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## Precision Scheduled Railroading

### *RWU Presents Campaign Materials in the Fight Against PSR*

*Continued from Page 1*

Because PSR is negatively affecting practically all North American railroad workers from all crafts, all unions and all carriers, it affords us the opportunity to unite and fight back as ONE. PSR has presented the rail unions a golden opportunity to form a united front, a reason to come together and form a single bargaining coalition to take on the carriers in this upcoming round of bargaining. RWU has taken this opportunity to draft an "Open Letter to All Rail Labor Union Officials" in the hope of motivating them to do just that. (See the full text of the letter below).

This is not an easy fight. Combatting PSR does not fall neatly into either the "bargaining" nor the "legislative" realm of the

union. In fact, the right to increase or decrease forces, implement operating plans, and run the railroad as they see fit is ground that has largely been ceded to the carriers. The workforce has traditionally accepted its passive role as simply bargaining over wages and benefits. We have yielded to the rail carriers the unfettered right to make decisions about infrastructure, investment, operations, employment levels, implementation of new technologies and more. PSR has given us reason to reconsider our role as railroad workers. Perhaps it is time to question the basic underpinnings of the rail industry, the basic relationship between carriers and unions, and to start to think outside the box of what is possible. We simply can no longer remain passive while PSR destroys us and our industry.

## An Open Letter to All Rail Labor Union Officials

June 4th, 2019

As you know, the rail industry is in the throes of tumultuous changes, collectively known as "Precision Scheduled Railroading" (PSR). As of late 2018, there is no major rail carrier that is immune from the convulsions that are taking place in our industry. This operating plan has been propelled into the forefront in recent years by the quest for short-term profits by hedge fund investors with no concern about the long-term viability nor health of the rail industry. While PSR might help to deliver record profits and all-time low operating ratios, this operating plan is in fact a farce, a thinly veiled disguise that relies on deferred maintenance, lax safety standards, a decline in infrastructure investment, and reduced labor/manpower costs to "succeed." PSR has been problematic for rail workers of all crafts, shippers of all shipping groups, general rail safety, the industry itself and the nation as a whole. The profit-driven speed-up has contributed to worker fatalities and crippling injuries. Workers are vulnerable to even more hazards and dangers, as are surrounding communities.

Rail unions have a culture and history of bargaining over "wages, benefits and working conditions." Traditionally, the unions have remained on the sidelines when the rail carriers implement the latest operating plan or practice deemed to be the "prerogative of management." We must no longer take this approach. While PSR itself might technically be outside of the realm of the collective bargaining agreement, it is having a direct and detrimental effect upon our conditions of employment, upon our wages, benefits, retirement, safety and health, and working conditions. The union that fails to take a position - together with decisive action - in opposition to PSR, does so at its own risk of appearing weak and impotent in the eyes of its members.

This scourge on our industry has been well documented in the last few years, from the operating failures at CP and near melt-down at CSX, to the recent lack of fluidity on CN and the issues at newcomers to PSR - NS, KCS and UP - causing disruption and discontent among rail workers. In March, Dennis Pierce - President of one of the larger rail unions, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen (BLET) - stated that the financial goals behind this get-rich-quick gimmick " ... reveal PSR for what it really is ... a scheme to suck up as much of the railroad's revenues as possible and distribute it to investors, particularly to the hedge funds that own an ever-increasing stake in the industry ... At the same time, operational downsizing cuts are removing much more than "fat"; they cut into the muscle and bone of the operation and are much harder to repair when the hedge fund investors move on to greener pastures."

As the voice of rail labor, the principle officers of the nation's rail unions must not remain silent. Your members are looking to you for leadership and guidance in this difficult time. Failure to take a position on such an issue of grave concern to tens of thousands of railroad workers is an abrogation of your responsibility as union leaders. A failure on your part to take an active leadership role in building opposition to this operating plan - a curse upon your respective memberships - will render you obsolete and irrelevant going forward.

PSR affects all railroad workers, and as such, ironically offers the rail unions a golden opportunity to build the unity and solidarity among our unions and our rank & file that we so desperately need. In addition, the crisis of PSR offers us the opportunity to form alliances with environmental activists concerned about another profit-driven ecological disaster, along with communities who fear becoming the next Lac-Mégantic.

Railroad workers understand that PSR is a direct attack on us - a war being waged by the carriers - that affects employees of all carriers, in all crafts, and members of all unions. PSR stands to decimate our ranks, immiserate our work lives while wreaking havoc on our personal lives, degrade our working conditions, erode safety and health, and harm the industry that we have worked so hard to build up. The rank & file railroad workers of North America are fired up! They are ready for action. They are looking for leadership. They want *action*. RWU joins with them in their demand that their union leaders take bold and decisive action to defend our interests.



# Railroad Safety News

## Safety Board on Amtrak 501 Wreck: "Engineer was set up to fail"

On May 21<sup>st</sup>, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) released its official investigative findings of the December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017 wreck of Amtrak train #501. While making its maiden voyage on the newly refurbished Point Defiance Bypass route, the train entered a curve rated for 30 at 78 mph, resulting in the train's derailment. Three passengers were killed, and 65 injured when the train derailed near Dupont, WA, about 20 miles south of Tacoma, with part of the train careening off an overpass onto a heavily trafficked highway below.

By the end of the week, it had become clear that neither engineers nor conductors had been properly qualified over the new route, with employees revealing that they had inadequate trips to familiarize themselves with it. In fact, up to seven engineers at a time had been crammed into a single locomotive to qualify as a group, even though the System General Road Foreman's Notice at Amtrak states that a maximum of four employees may occupy the cab of a locomotive. And in order to properly qualify on any territory, an engineer must be seated in the operator's seat and run the locomotive. In addition, conductors were not provided with head-end trips to qualify on the territory, but rather were expected to qualify in the body of the train or aboard the trailing unit at the hind end facing backwards. Some employees made their qualifying trips in the dark. Deprived of the proper qualifying, the conductor – unaware of the approaching curve – failed to alert the engineer in advance by radio (a procedure instituted by Amtrak a few years earlier as a result of a very similar overspeed related wreck on Metro-North in New York, December 2013. See *The Highball*, Winter 2014).

Despite all this slipshod "qualifying," the company saw fit to run the inaugural train with no management official aboard the locomotive. Rather, the engineer had a conductor trainee up front who was not qualified on the territory! In addition, the engineer had not been properly trained on and familiarized with the new "Charger" locomotives that had just entered service. The cab camera record clearly shows him distracted by a feature on this style of engine while he was on the approach to the curve.

The NTSB report made note of all of this in its official report. "Investigators found there was a general sense that none of the participants (Amtrak, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), the FRA and Sound Transit) fully understood the scope of their roles and responsibilities as they pertained to the safe operation of the service, which allowed critical safety areas to be unaddressed," the NTSB press release stated. According to NTSB Chair Robert Sumwalt, the crash was entirely preventable. The speed limits didn't come with "appropriate mitigations," he stated, and service should not have begun without certain safety measures in place. Sumwalt also noted there were "training gaps" for the train's operators.

Lack of Positive Train Control (PTC) was another concern of the NTSB's report. In combination with the shoddy qualifying, training, and familiarization provided by the company, "Beginning revenue service before PTC was operational set up the engineer to fail," said Sumwalt. The agency made dozens of recommendations to all four agencies responsible for the crash. Some worthy of note include: Ensuring operating crewmembers demonstrate their proficiency on the physical characteristics of a territory by using all resources available to them, under daylight and nighttime conditions, and during observation rides, throttle time, and written examinations; Revising classroom and road training

programs to ensure that operating crews fully understand all locomotive operating characteristics, alarms and the appropriate response to abnormal conditions; Requiring that all engineers undergo simulator training before operating new or unfamiliar equipment and when possible, undergo simulator training before operating in revenue service in a new territory; Implementing a formal, systematic approach to developing training and qualification programs to identify the most effective strategies for preparing crewmembers to safely operate new equipment on new territories.

However, the NTSB never addressed the question of WHY did the FRA, Amtrak, Sound Transit and WSDOT fail so miserably? The short answer of course is this country's lack of commitment to public transportation and services, basic infrastructure, and public safety. Most commuter and other passenger train services in the U.S. run on a shoestring budget and are often underfunded and cash strapped. (The most glaring example of this in recent years is the crisis at New Jersey Transit. See *The Highball*, Fall 2018). NOT reported by the NTSB was what was going on behind the scenes at Amtrak. Newly appointed CEO Richard Anderson, who had won acclaim at Delta airlines for turning the fortunes of that company around, was in full cost-cutting mode now at Amtrak. In October, Anderson announced that management forces would be cut by 500 before the end of the year. Given this expedited schedule, countless managers across the Amtrak system were making snap decisions about their futures – take the buyout offered and leave the company by December 31<sup>st</sup>, or stick around and risk furlough or layoff? Hundreds of management personnel with years of experience were about to exit the company system-wide (including in the Pacific Northwest), just 13 days prior to the wreck of Train #501. To what extent did this management malaise figure in the tragic wreck that ensued? From the NTSB findings, we know that a profound management failure took place at the company.

Train accident investigator and former locomotive engineer John Hiatt says it is clear to him that lack of training and preparation led to the wreck. "Training is money, and in this case, it looks to me like they were worried about money and time, and safety was number three, at best, on their list,"



*The overspeed wreck of Amtrak Train #501 on December 18th, 2017 took place amidst a system-wide cost-cutting plan to eliminate 500 managers by year's end. According to the official NTSB report issued on May 21st, 2019, "The engineer was set up to fail."*



# Railroad Safety News

## Two person train crew legislation shot down by the FRA

Continued from Front Page

expect this Administration to complete this rulemaking, but we did afford the new Federal Railroad Administrator a fair opportunity to demonstrate that safety was his primary objective. Given the scope of this withdrawal, the Administrator has clearly failed the test, because he has placed corporate profits above public safety. Railroad safety has taken a giant step backward today, but our Organizations do not intend to let this development go unchallenged.”

Whether the trade unions have the ability to mount a successful legal challenge to the FRA’s actions remains to be seen. Likewise, their ability to steer the Safe Freight Act through Congress to become the law of the land is questionable. While rank & file railroad workers support these efforts to preserve and protect the standard two-person operating crew aboard trains, we must never lose sight of the most effective and powerful weapon we have at our disposal – our unwavering solidarity.

The carriers first proposed single employee train crew operation way back in 2004. Yet today – nearly 15 years later – they have not been able to do so. They have laid the groundwork by cutting deals with both unions of the operating crafts: 1) to allow for engineer RCO applications on the mainline (BLET), and 2) for the use of utility conductors outside of the yard (UTU/SMART-TD). But when they have made a concerted push, they have come up short. Why have we been able to prevail?

Let’s examine our two big victories in the battle to maintain the two-person operating crew. Regional carrier Wheeling & Lake Erie (W&LE) for years has attempted to run trains with a lone employee. The union of both the conductors and the engineers (BLET #292) throughout that time has been steadfastly opposed. For nearly a decade these principled, dedicated and disciplined workers went without a pay raise, determined to vote down any and all attempts by the carrier to shove single crew operations down their throat. They went on strike and when finally released by the courts, threatened further strike action. The two crafts stuck solidly together, and both voted overwhelmingly against single employee train operations. Despite an all-out effort by the carrier to stave them out, the workers stood shoulder to shoulder in an admirable show of strength and solidarity. This past winter they finally won, with a pay increase and *no single employee train operations* for the life of the contract, 2026.

The other big victory was likewise won with the outpouring of solidarity and commitment of the trainmen on the BNSF (former BN properties), members of SMART-TD GO-001. Just as on the W&LE, this victory was won on the property, not in the legislature, the Congress, or at the regulatory agencies. When the GCA cut a secret deal and proposed a Tentative Agreement to the members mid-summer 2014, the rank & file mobilized and fought back. Despite the best efforts of union officers, the carrier, industry pundits and mouthpieces, former union presidents and others, the workers rallied in opposition. Their solidarity could not be broken. When the votes were counted, every craft in every terminal systemwide had voted it down. The final tally was 80% opposed to the contract, despite its promise of pay raises, “master conductor” positions, and job guarantees for life.



**With the FRA withdrawing its Proposed Rulemaking on Train Crew Size, while simultaneously giving the kiss of death to existing and future state legislation designed to preserve and protect the two-person crew, the unions of the operating crafts are weighing their options. It is imperative that rank & file rails make sure that the two unions continue to stick together and continue the fight on-property for the two-person minimum aboard all trains.**

The trainmen could not be bought nor sold. They were determined, disciplined and dedicated. And they won. Failing to divide-and-conquer the BN trainmen, realizing it had overplayed its hand, the carrier quietly dropped the issue.

The next round of national bargaining starts this Fall, and will no doubt continue through the course of 2020. Individual carriers will negotiate “on-property” agreements in conjunction with this “master contract.” The rail carriers may propose single crew members in either venue. The time is now to start to gather our forces. While they may from time to time be of assistance, we cannot rely on politicians, lawyers, the FRA, or others to save us. We have the power to win and to preserve the two-person train crew. But we must begin now to build the solidarity and preparedness that we need. Solidarity of all members of the operating crafts, and the unity of their unions is central. But the solidarity of *all rail labor is crucial*. The operating crafts need the support of the non-operating crafts like never before! And we need the rest of organized labor, community groups, passengers, track-side communities, and environmental activists as well.

Despite our victories outlined above, the rail carriers have made clear they will not give up. They will no doubt be coming after us in bargaining. This latest action by the FRA should come as a wake-up call to us. The carriers – in their mania to serve their Wall Street masters – intend to destroy us. It is imperative that the leadership of all the rail unions convene a high-level meeting to discuss the formation of a single rail labor coalition, the development of an action plan, and a general strategy to mobilize the membership. The trainmen on the BNSF together with the trainmen and engineers on the W&LE have shown us what can be achieved. With a united leadership of all the rail unions, backed by the power of the rank & file, not only can we stop the carriers’ drive for single employee train crews, we can win better wages, benefits, and working conditions for *all rail workers*. Long live universal solidarity of rail labor!



# Opinion & Commentary

## Rail Carriers, Wall Street & Labor Unions – Where are YOU in this Equation?

As mentioned on page 1, RWU has initiated a campaign that hopefully will contribute to the building of resistance to the scourge of Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR). This operating plan is nothing less than a violent assault on railroad workers' dignity, well-being and safety, as well as that of surrounding communities. Much has been written about PSR's shortcomings as a sustainable, long term business model for the rail industry by some industry "experts", union leaders, as well as by RWU. That discussion aside, the increase in short term profits can't be denied. What also can't be denied is that a major contributing factor to these short term profits has been the accompanying work rule changes that have been agreed to and/or imposed.

It's important to acknowledge the role our unions have played in allowing these barbaric working conditions to increasingly become the norm; at worst being openly complicit – at best being pathetically impotent. Flash back to sometime in the early 2000s, when I first heard about the sell-your-soul+dignity-for-a-few-\$'s (AKA "10 Hour Day") agreement at the CN, I was horrified at the handwriting on the wall. Having already been in the industry for 25+ years, I knew full well that once any new precedent was established, on any short line, individual terminal, division and/or property, it was only a matter of time before that new precedent ultimately became the norm, barring any major collective resistance (are we almost there yet?). Needless to say, I could not possibly know how this 10 hour day cancer would work its way through the industry, much less the timetable. Though my personal beliefs do not include any Supreme Being/Master of the Universe, out of sheer desperation I did find myself "praying" that I could earn my liberation (AKA retirement) before this was posed at CP. But alas, once the rumors started about Hunter Harrison taking over at CP, I knew my prayers would be rejected, further validating my belief system.

**When the rank & file are ready to rise up and resist en masse, those union leaders who are not astute enough to get on board will be steamrolled over and rendered insignificant by a new militant leadership that must develop within the rank & file**

Many years ago, when I was just a young, well-intentioned but hot-headed rebel, I was fortunate to cross paths with several veteran social, political and union activists, who were well versed in the history and lessons of the class struggle over the past 100+ years. One important concept I learned was to keep my anger - and by logical extension my co-workers' anger - aimed squarely at the bosses, as opposed to ineffective union leadership. When the rank & file are ready to rise up and resist en masse, those union leaders who are not astute enough to get on board will be steamrolled over and rendered insignificant by a new militant leadership that must develop within the rank & file (are we almost there yet?). I still TRY to adhere to that, but damn, I'm only human. At times I've had no choice but to be harshly critical of existing union leadership, in order to speak the truth. But the purpose of my criticism has never been to initiate any kind of urinating contest with any of them. Debs was emphatic that the American Railway Union (ARU) did not wish to

fight the brotherhoods (existing unions at that time). In seeking to carry on the ARU's fight for cross-craft unity, RWU is also adamant that we have no interest in fighting the existing union leadership. We would much rather sing their praises for doing the right thing, as we have with the BMWED leadership in relation to their attempts to organize and build the All Rail Crafts Coalition, which the operating craft unions attempt to undermine. When I criticize the existing union leadership, my objective is simply to make the case to disgruntled rank & file rails that the existing structures and terms of engagement are simply not working because they are rotten to the core and have been for decades.

Imagine going into battle, confident in what you THINK is a razor sharp sword sheathed at your side. As you pull it out in the heat of battle, to your dismay you realize its only a dull butter knife, flimsy at that. Not only is this a problem in the heat of battle, but many workers become justifiably discouraged and demoralized, feeling this butter knife is worse than useless and toss it over their shoulders in disgust. That's easy to do. What's much more difficult is to collectively figure out how to transform this flimsy, dull butter knife into the razor sharp sword, that the leaders proclaim it already is, patting themselves on the back. Facts are facts and the record speaks for itself. Not only do we need that razor sharp sword - we are entitled to it. But no one is going to give it to us. We, the rank & file, must figure it out, and execute this long-overdue transformation ourselves. The response I've received at the 2011 and 2014 UTU conventions strengthens my convictions that there exists many low, mid and even some high level leaders who can be won over to this perspective. Every rail who gets this must challenge and inspire our fellow workers and leaders to break out of the "box" we're trapped in.

In my 40+ years, I've seen way too many giveaways, sweetheart deals and quick-draw knife-in-the-back duels. The Editorial on page 7 sheds some light on one such sordid story, with ramifications that reverberate loudly today. If I were to rank them, the 10 Hour Day agreement is my personal fave for #1 most treacherous, while the BLE organizing to cross the UTU's picket lines during the 1994, 47 day Soo Line strike, ranks a close 2nd. PSR's motto is "Do more with less". The 10 Hour Day agreement is anti-worker/anti-union to the core, for two fundamental reasons: 1) It dishonors the courage and sacrifices, especially the lives lost, in labors' fight for the 8 hour day 100+ years ago; and 2) Any beneficiary of the blood money raise is essentially selling a co-worker's job, accepting a little more money to do more work, so a fellow worker can end up on the street. That is just so unethical, immoral, vile and vulgar. This should NEVER have even been up for discussion. Instead the operating craft unions try to outmaneuver each other with last-man-standing agreements, first for the remote control, then later with single-employee crews. When you've had enough of this treachery, masquerading as unionism (are we almost there YET?!), RWU is always looking for a few thousand more resistance fighters.

**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

## Are Rail Union Leaders Able to Harness Rank & File Power? Will They?

Organized labor has been successful when leaders (at the top or the bottom) do the hard work to mobilize rank & file members into powerful actions which sway management, politicians and society.

### Need for Action Now

Railroaders are facing the worst ever threats to our safety, jobs, working conditions and pensions. Carriers are poised to use new technologies to force the unsafe use of one-person train crews. Adoption of "Precision Scheduled Railroading" brings layoffs across all crafts, deferred maintenance and a decline in long-term capital investment in order to satisfy investor-driven hunger for short-term profits. Freight railroads continue to lobby against AMTRAK. Political, judicial and regulatory actions strip away government regulations that protect labor and society against the unsafe actions of corporate greed.

### Why It Hasn't Been Done

Rail unions remain weakly divided along craft lines. Union leaders have long used the restrictions of the Railway Labor Act (RLA) as the excuse for their inability to fight back while conveniently ignoring labor unions who have successfully mobilized their members. For the last 70 years our "leaders" have failed to organize. Instead they seem content with the status quo and pointing the fingers of blame.

### Other Unions Have Done It!

**Teachers** - In 2018, teachers across the country united and organized rank-and-file actions in a series of successful, sometimes illegal work stoppages. **Nurses** - The past few years have seen members of Nurses' unions grow increasingly militant. They mobilized rank-and-file members who were successful with not only long and short-term strikes but also just the threat of striking. **Fight for \$15** - This nationwide movement has been successful at raising minimum wages in many places and businesses due to on the ground outreach to low-wage earners, organizing to take public actions and enlisting the help of community-based groups. **Teamsters 1997 UPS Strike** - Ron Carey, the first democratically elected President of the Teamsters, led a campaign to mobilize members and won the resulting two-week strike. The victory was the largest for organized labor in the post-Reagan era.

### Common Denominators

Successful union leaders use a proven formula in which they:

- Listen to their members and base actions on members' needs and devote resources to conducting a successful campaign.
- Enlist the help of community and faith-based organizations.
- Use technology and social media to communicate with members, media, public and politicians.
- Create unique methods of pressuring politicians and management.

### Do They Want To?

Getting our unions to work together to mobilize rank-and-file members will not be easy. It will take time, hard work and financial resources. It is debatable if we have rail union officials capable of leading such an effort, or if they would want one to succeed. Why wouldn't they?

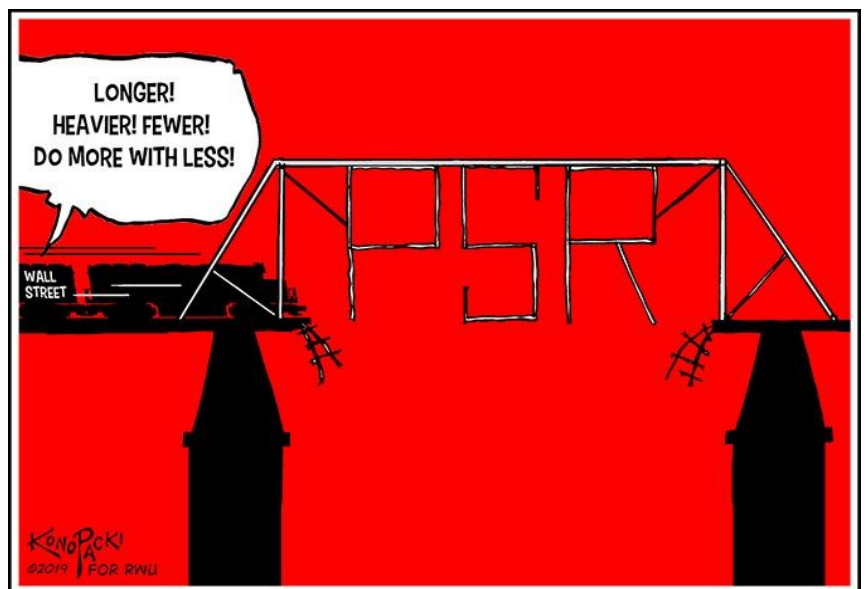
**Cost** - The resources of individual unions would be ineffective. Combining resources could get the job done. But rail union officials have long resisted consolidation, preferring to preserve and protect their respective fiefdoms and wallets.

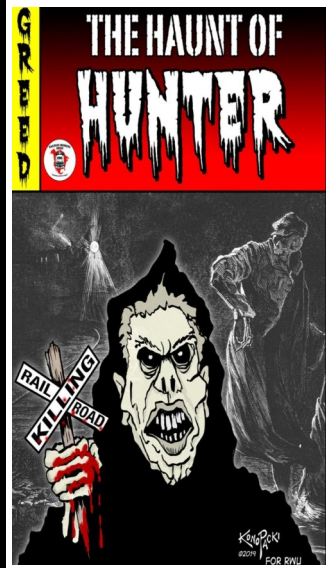
**Fear of a Mobilized Rank & File** - Rail union leaders have nurtured top-down organizations which require members to participate in a "go-along to get-along" structure. Dissent or attempts to change status quo are squashed with political maneuvering, reprisals and personal attacks. Our leaders fear an empowered membership.

**An Example from the Past** - In 1996 Clarence Monin was elected President of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLE) and set out to bring the BLE into the electronic age by developing direct communications with members. He created "Focus Groups" to poll rank-and-filers, which served as a foundation for his "Intelligent Militancy" for using new techniques to fight the carriers. Monin mobilized members by using safety strikes, secondary pickets, sick outs and informational pickets. He enlisted help from unions outside the industry and utilized other creative tactics to disrupt rail traffic and draw attention to worker issues. Monin was creating a bottom up BLE when he undertook the task of ending the harmful battles with the United Transportation Union (UTU). He crafted an equitable merger proposal of the two, but officers who felt their personal privilege threatened, initiated a recall and were able to depose him by a tiny margin. Interestingly, one of the charges levelled at him was that he was spending too much money on mobilizing rank & file members. Since then, rarely has a rail union official has made any viable attempt to unite rail unions or nurture rank & file power.

### Will It happen?

We all know "Precision Scheduled Railroading" is unsafe and piles more stress on an already very stressful job, while threatening the long-term health of the industry and its workers. We know that management salaries and bonuses are tied directly to investor satisfaction with short-term stock prices. We know railroaders have the power to save our jobs through uniting our unions in collective powerful rank-and-file action. Will our leaders get on board? Rank & file railroaders are ready for bold new leadership and action. It's up to us!





## Join the Fight Against Precision Scheduled Railroading!

RWU is making materials available to assist in the fight back against PSR. Check out the website and the online Store for more information. Print up your own or order from RWU!

### RWU Online Store

[www.railworkersunited.storenvy.com](http://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

The hoax known as "Precision Scheduled Railroading"

Like so many other corporate slogans before it, so-called Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR) is just one more fancy alluring label for what is no more than a Wall Street gimmick to pump up stock prices and deliver super profits in the short-run to investors, rich folks who know little about the railroad and care even less about its workers, customers, passengers or long-term viability. Given how dissatisfied and alienated so many sectors are with PSR, perhaps we should rebrand it as something closer to the truth. Some thoughts come to mind....

PSR - Promoting Stockholders and the Rich	
UNDER MEMBERSHIP DO MORE WITH LESS	PSR = Plundering Stockholders Racket
PSR = Putting Safety at Risk	HUNTER'S PSR
THE HAUNT OF HUNTER	PSR = Plenty of Shippers Ruined
	PSR = Passengers Sidetracked Regularly
Got some other ideas? Please email them along to Railroad Workers United info@railroadworkersunited.org	

For more information on the fight against PSR, see the website [www.railroadworkersunited.org](http://www.railroadworkersunited.org)

*They (railroad workers) ought to be able to act together as one. But they divide according to craft and calling, and if you were to propose today to unite them that they might actually do something to advance their collective and individual interests as workers, you would be opposed by every grand officer of these (craft union) organizations.*

-- Eugene V. Debs: "Craft Unionism", speech in Chicago, November 23, 1905



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