



The Highball

Official Publication of

Railroad Workers United

National Rail Bargaining Begins in the U.S. in January

In January, contract negotiations are scheduled to commence between the major U.S. rail carriers and the 13 unions representing some 143,000 workers. Key issues in this round of bargaining will be the usual – compensation, health care costs, and work rules. While numerous so-called “on-property” agreements in recent years have usurped various aspects of these negotiations, the “master contract” is still one of major importance to all railroad workers of North America.

The rail carriers – despite making record profits in recent years – have already made it clear that they intend to play hardball with the unions. “Our compensation and benefit costs must reflect the marketplace in which we compete,” the railroad bargaining notice reads. “Anachronistic work rules and practices that hinder our ability to give customers high-quality, cost-effective service, and which add unnecessary costs, must be reformed.” In short, the railroads are continuing to play the

same old card they always do; i.e., that despite tremendous roll-backs over the past three decades, they are not done with us yet. That is their theme: *You need to work harder, longer and more efficiently ... for less pay and benefits.*

The railroads have laid out a number of key themes in their bargaining notice to the unions:

1 – Linking pay to productivity and performance. Most companies – and the rail carriers are no exception – love this idea. In effect, they want to go back to pre-union days when they could compensate different employees who perform the same task at variable rates. Sadly, many workers fall for this scheme, thinking that they are “good” workers, and that they offer superior performance and should be compensated accordingly. But solidarity is destroyed under such a scheme,

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RWU to Co-sponsor Conferences on the West Coast

Railroad Workers United (RWU) will co-sponsor two conferences, one in the Bay Area and one in the Pacific Northwest in late winter-early spring. Entitled “*The Future of Railroads: Safety, Workers, Community & the Environment*”, Railroad Workers United is partnering with the Backbone Campaign and other labor, citizens and environmental groups to organize these innovative and cutting edge conferences.

In recent months, public attention has focused on the railroad in a way that it has not been for decades. In the wake of Lac Megantic and other derailments, combined with resulting fires and explosions, the public is alarmed about oil trains and the movement of trains in general through their communities. Environmental activists are up-in-arms about the amounts of fossil fuels moving by rail. Farmers and other shippers are concerned about the congestion that has occurred in recent months, due in part to the oil boom. All of this attention gives railroad workers a golden opportunity to educate the general public about the railroad, its inherent efficiencies, its value to society, and its potential. It also gives the workforce an invaluable opportunity to inform non-railroad workers about the situation that we face on the job every day.

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Public demonstration of outrage at the Global Partners Oil Terminal in Oregon in the Fall of 2014. Recent organizing efforts by citizens’ groups across North America may offer railroad workers a unique opportunity to tell our story and build new alliances to more effectively deal with the rail carriers.



RWU Issues Comprehensive “Annual Report” for 2014

Railroad Workers United has published our *Annual Report* for 2014. The Report highlights various aspects and activities of the organization and chart the progress (or lack thereof) that we have made. This is the third year that a *Report* has been issued for members, supporters and others who might be interested to know what we have been up to in the preceding calendar year. (RWU members who receive this newsletter in the U.S. Mail will find your copy with this issue).

Since the Founding Convention in 2008, RWU has waged three ongoing campaigns: Opposition to Single Employee Crews; Support for Coordinated Bargaining; and Opposition to Behavior Based Safety Programs. The year 2014 may well have been a watershed year for all three campaigns. On the single employee crew front, railroad workers—with the support and assistance of RWU—won a major tactical victory with the defeat of the single employee crew initiative on the BNSF. Importantly, this struggle informed every railroad worker in North America that a) the rail carriers are intent on running trains with a lone employee; b) the rail unions are at worst complicit in this scheme and at best, incapable of mounting a comprehensive united approach to stop it; and c) that railroad workers are ready, willing and able to mobilize and fight back on this front.

On the Coordinated Bargaining Front, there is a hint that the rail union officials are starting to understand and appreciate

just how essential this is for the preservation and protection of our wages, benefits and working conditions, and for the very survival of our unions. The new coalition that includes the two unions of the operating crafts — BLET and SMART — is a major step in the right direction., despite its obvious shortcomings. See Page 5 for more information on this development.

Finally, RWU’s Campaign against Behavior Based Safety is gaining further traction. Rather than focusing on eliminating hazards that are the root cause of accidents and injuries, these safety programs shift blame to individual railroad workers. RWU has campaigned tirelessly for their elimination and replacement with “union-based” safety programs that are democratically controlled by the membership, where we meet the employer at the table and in effect “bargain” safety. The carrier wants to talk about our members’ behavior while we want to talk about eliminating hazards such as crew fatigue, short staffing, lack of proper train line-ups, overwork, etc. Together with our efforts, the contradictions inherent in the carriers’ safety programs—where workers are harassed, disciplined and even fired for sustaining a workplace injury—are coming back to haunt these sham safety schemes. See the Metro-North article on Page 5.

Please find the *RWU 2014 Annual Report* on our website or on the RWU Facebook Page. Or you can email us for a copy at info@railroadworkersunited.org.

Railroad Workers United

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

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

- 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, NCFO #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**

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Operating Craft Unions to Head up New Rail Labor Bargaining Coalition

In December, rail union officials announced a new bargaining coalition of six rail unions. The Transportation Division of the Sheet Metal, Air, Rail & Transportation union (SMART) and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen (BLET) will head up the coalition which also includes the American Train Dispatchers Association (ATDA), the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen (BRS), the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers, & Helpers (IBB), and the National Conference of Firemen & Oilers (NCFO). The unions will participate together in coordinated bargaining in the upcoming round of national negotiations. Jointly, the participating unions represent more than 85,000 railroad workers covered by the various organizations' national agreements, and comprise over 58% of the workforce who will be impacted by the negotiations.

On December 8, 2014, both the BLET as well as the SMART-TD General Chairpersons each served bargaining notices on their respective railroads, including identical notices related to health & welfare and related benefits. BLET National President Dennis Pierce stated, "Now more than ever before it is imperative that the unions representing railroad

operating crafts sit side-by-side at the national table, and I am pleased that we have been able to accomplish that." Not to be outdone, SMART-TD President John Previsich commented, "This is a landmark occasion for BLET members and SMART-TD members alike."

Railroad Workers United (RWU) has advocated for a universal bargaining coalition of *all* railroad craft unions since our Founding Convention in 2008. According to RWU Organizer Mark Burrows, "This latest action is a step in the right direction. Significantly, the unions of the operating crafts now find themselves in the same coalition." However, Burrows notes that nearly half of rail labor — including the major unions from the shop crafts (IAM and IBEW), the TCU, and the BLET's traditional partner union in such an effort — the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division (BMWED) — are not party to the new coalition. "Failure to include all rail unions, including some of the largest unions that represent rail workers in the U.S., means we will once again be limited in what we are able to achieve at the bargaining table." Burrows urges all unions concerned to take the necessary steps to build "One Big Bargaining Coalition"

All rank & file railroaders are encouraged to work within their respective unions to push for a universal coalition. If your union is not a part of it, demand that the leadership take the necessary measures to ensure that it is. For more information about Coordinated Bargaining, see the RWU website link "Campaigns — Coordinated Bargaining".

National Bargaining Gets Underway

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and it becomes literally "every man for himself". The ultimate conclusion from this sort of "productivity and performance" pay is a non-union shop. *Therefore, we want a fair and just base-building wage increase for all railroad workers, period!*

2 – Modifying health care plans so that workers bear more of the costs, consistent with what the railroads call "mainstream U.S. business norms". As always, the carriers plead that they only want to keep up with the "norm" and stay on par with what other industries pay for their workers' health care. While it is true that railroad workers have relatively good health care coverage, we fought for it and sacrificed to get it. And our industry is one of the most unionized sectors of the economy. We damn well better have good health care coverage! But if we buy the carriers' line that they just want to be in step with the rest of American industry, then we might as well buy the line that we should all be low paid non-union laborers, since today, most U.S. blue-collar workers hold mostly non-union low paying jobs offering little or no health insurance. *We deserve to keep our health care plans intact with no concessions!*

3 – Revising work rules that "impede the productive utilization of employees." In other words, here the carriers are saying that they want to "utilize" us as they see fit, on any tour of duty, during any given pay period, whenever and however they see fit. Work rules are basically what differentiates a union shop from a non-union shop. When the employer can do pretty much whatever they want with us whenever they want to, it is as if we no longer have a union environment, and we forfeit much of our rights at work. *We refuse to sell our souls (and our unions) and give away any more of our hard fought for work rules!*

"Name Withheld"

Another *Fallen Rail*
Another Sister or Brother
Another "investigation"
Showing he or she
Didn't do this or that
Or did this or that or
Maybe shouldn't have
Been there at all

Another Federal review
Added to hundreds
Of hundreds
That recommend
A recommendation
To recommend
But only
If the railroads
Really
Really
Want
To

Sue Doro
October 30, 2014



Sue Doro is a retired machinist who formerly worked for the Milwaukee Road in the railroad's namesake city. Sue wrote about her life and work of those days in a collection of poetry called "Blue Collar Good-bye's". Her book is available through the RWU online Store. Sue is the founder and editor of the e-magazine "Pride & A Paycheck".



Letter from England: Train Drivers in the UK Today

Last year, a brother railroad worker from the United Kingdom made contact with Railroad Workers United. He ordered a T-shirt and signed up for our list serve, and then visited the United States this fall and met with RWU members. Below is a brief description of the working conditions and the issues facing rail labor — specifically engineers — in the UK today.

My name is Matt and I work as a train driver (locomotive engineer) in the UK. Although generally speaking I have found the railway to be much the same wherever I've been in the world in terms of its family-like atmosphere, well intended jokes and unique characters, I have come to realize that the types of railway we operate and conditions of employment are vastly different. I met railroad engineers in the U.S. recently and we talked of many of the differences, and so I appreciate being given this opportunity to write a bit about the rail network and our conditions at home.

The United Kingdom is only a small island but is blessed with the fastest growing railway in Europe, currently operating around 24,000 trains per day over 20,000 miles of track, catering for 1.3 billion passenger journeys and 105 million tons of freight traffic per year according to the most recent information available to me. A government owned organization operates and maintains the track, signaling and infrastructure, including around 32,000 bridges, tunnels and viaducts. All mainline train operating companies are privately owned - except for the most profitable one which is publicly owned after a series of failed private franchisees - but is soon to be sold off again into the financial black hole that is the privatized rail industry unless we can keep up the campaigning and reverse that decision. The rail operator in question is called East Coast, and operates over the predominantly 125mph railway from London Kings Cross to Edinburgh, Scotland, with limited services to Aberdeen and Inverness.

Rail staff haven't fared too badly out of privatization in any part of the industry, and thanks to the strength and ingenuity of our unions, we are now working for a salary and conditions appropriate to the specialist nature of the work. This is in comparison to the 1980's where staff relied heavily on overtime, extra shifts and enhancements just to make their pay livable. Drivers can generally expect to work a 35 - 37 hour week, usually averaged over a longer period (though we have not quite reached the union goal in any company yet — a 32 hour, 4 day week — so we have a little way to go. Some employers, including mine, operate a system of annualized hours where we are contracted to work a set number of hours in a year (1595 is very common but not exclusive) with every hour that is worked being deducted from that total. Upon completion of the hours it is the drivers' choice whether to take the remainder of the contract off and stay at home (continuing to receive their basic salary) or carry on working and have the excess hours paid in a lump sum at the end. In the event that there are hours remaining at the end of the contract they are written off with no penalty for the employee.

As a freight driver I can expect to receive a minimum of 12 hours' notice for a shift, though this is usually more, and can only be a shift starting within a 6 hour time period. If there are no jobs within that time period then they must give the day off (again with 12 hours' notice). A minimum rest period of 12

hours is compulsory between turns of duty, and we can never work more than 13 consecutive days. These are some of the recommendations that were implemented after the Clapham Junction Rail Disaster in 1988 where 35 people were killed and 484 injured. A major contributing factor in this tragic incident was fatigue through working excessive hours. My maximum scheduled day is 11 hours 30 minutes with no driving after the 11th hour although I can drive up to 12 hours at my own discretion in the event of delay. A 10 hour maximum day is more common on passenger operations. Salaries vary by company, with the lowest paid drivers receiving around £40,000 (approx. \$62,500) and the highest paid somewhere in the region of £57,000 (approx. \$89,000) per year for their basic pay before overtime.



American built Class 66 locomotive #66185 on a train at Elstow Sidings (Bedfordshire) waiting to back out onto the mainline with 42 empty wagons after delivering 1500 tonnes of road stone.

We are a heavily unionized industry, even though union membership is not compulsory. The majority of drivers are in the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF), which is a craft union benefitting from a high membership density. I don't have an actual figure available but I'm confident membership would be a percentage in the 90's. ASLEF has a clearly defined charter, which is available on the website, detailing the aspirations of the union and providing a framework for future negotiations.

Finally, I would like to say that it has been my pleasure to meet a number of railroaders in the USA whilst on my travels, including RWU Organizer Mark Burrows and General Secretary Ron Kaminkow. I hope to cross paths with many more in years to come. Keep on the pressure for improvements, and don't lose faith. Wishing you all a safe journey!

Matt Fawkes, is a locomotive engineer (train driver) in the United Kingdom, and serves as the Assistant Secretary for the Leicester Branch of The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF). Brother Matt will represent his union at the 'young workers (under 30) convention' of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) in March, 2015.





RWU to Co-Sponsor Educational Conferences on the West Coast

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The public generally has no idea what goes on daily on America's railroads. At this conference, 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 issues. These issues are of concern not just to railroaders, but are of concern to environmentalists, the community at large and society in general. Non-railroaders in attendance at the conference 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, environmental politics, and how to better forge alliances and work with public citizens' groups.

Tentative workshops and discussion topics at both conferences include but are not limited to:

- Single employee train crews and the safety hazards they pose for workers, communities and the environment.
- Excessively long and heavy trains and their inherent problems and dangers.
- Crew fatigue and the need for adequate time off, proper

train line-ups, advance call times, call windows and all the rest to ensure well-rested, alert and safe train crews.

- Building worker-to-worker alliances along the supply chain of all transport workers.
- "Railroading for the General Public 101".
- "Environmental Politics for Railroad Workers 101"
- Ensuring safe track, bridges and rolling stock.
- The "Solutionary Rail" campaign and a vision for what a sustainable railroad of the future could look like.
- Fighting for safety across various industrial sectors and together with affected communities.
- A history of labor-community-environmental alliances and how to build one that revolves around the railroad industry.

The conferences are planned for March 14th in the Bay Area (Richmond, CA) and a week later—March 21st—in the Pacific Northwest (Olympia, WA). Specific locations will be announced later in January. For more information, check the RWU website <http://railroadworkersunited.org/> or "Like Us" on Facebook. To get involved in organizing either conference and/or to attend, contact Gifford Hartman at 415-410-9299; giffordhartman@gmail.com in the Bay Area or Jen Wallis at wallisjeanette@gmail.com in the Pacific Northwest.

Metro North Pledges Safety: But Will the Company Be Law Abiding?

In December, Metro-North announced that it has implemented a number of changes in a supposed effort to prevent company retaliation against employees who sustain injuries on the job or report safety hazards and violations. The action comes after an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) ruling hours before the MN statement. The incident in question dates to 2011 when the company issued disciplinary charges against a Connecticut employee who reported a workplace injury. The employee filed an initial Federal Railroad Safety Act anti-discrimination complaint with OSHA in April, 2012. An amended complaint was filed the following April *after the railroad issued additional disciplinary charges against him.*

"When employees, fearing retaliation, hesitate to report work-related injuries and the safety hazards that caused them, companies cannot fix safety problems and neither employees nor the public are safe," said Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health Dr. David Michaels. "In this case, the Metro-North's conduct was deliberate and discriminatory, and we have assessed the maximum amount in punitive damages allowed under the law." The company has been ordered to pay the employee a total of \$250,000 in punitive damages, \$10,000 in compensatory damages, and to cover reasonable attorney fees.

In addition to the company's record of retaliating against employees who are injured or report violations, MN has been under the gun for a series of train wrecks and fatalities over the previous two years. The railroad was cited by the Federal Railroad Administration last spring for its dismal safety record.

As a result of all this, Metro-North claims to be turning over a new leaf. According to a company statement released at the

time of the OSHA ruling in mid-December, "The Metro-North of today has zero tolerance for discipline targeted against those reporting safety violations or injuries, and is expanding training for workers and supervisors on safety requirements and adherence to critical safety rules."

This is not the first time that OSHA has awarded a railroad worker punitive damages suffered by a law-breaking railroad company. In fact, OSHA has found every Class One rail carrier in the U.S. guilty of violating workers' rights to a safe workplace free from discrimination for reporting hazards and/or workplace injuries. And in every single case, the rail carrier has appealed the OSHA decision as a matter of course, in effect throwing out OSHA's finding and remanding the case to the courts. With such brash claims about the company's "zero tolerance for reprisals against workers" will Metro North have the unmitigated audacity to appeal this one? They have 30 days from the date of the ruling, December 16th. Stay tuned.



Can Metro North reform itself into a safe, law abiding railroad?



Opinion & Commentary

Signs of Life from the Rank & File: Now Let's Build a Movement!

In the previous issue of *The Highball* (Fall 2014), I summarized the worst of the sordid details in the "blood money for anything goes" Tentative Agreement (TA) that was then on the table at Canadian Pacific (CP) Railway (US) (See *"Don't be Fooled by Candy-Coated Promises: Fight Back"*). With utmost pride in and appreciation for my co-workers at CP, I am pleased to report this alarming contract proposal was *overwhelmingly* rejected 333-13 (that's not a typo!). By a 30-1 margin, my brothers and sisters in the SMART-Transportation Division (TD) served notice to CP management, in no uncertain terms, that our dignity, self-respect and safety for us as workers as well as the community in general, are NOT FOR SALE!!! A few weeks prior to this development, BNSF workers in the SMART-TD GO-001 sent the same memo to management by decisively rejecting the infamous single employee train crew TA by a vote of 3,056 against to just 623 in favor, a remarkable 5-1 margin.

In my 40+ years of railroading, I've never seen TA's rejected by such disproportionate margins. I think it's safe to say that the disconnect between us – the rank and file workers and our union leaderships – has reached unprecedented epic proportions. While the mission statements of our unions and the rhetoric of our leaders is about fighting for our interests as workers, as well as those of the public, we are voting with our feet that the deeds fall *far* short of the words. While this new feeling of collective empowerment is profoundly inspiring, a fundamental question posed is: *Where do we go with all of this?*

"I think it's safe to say that the disconnect between us - the rank & file workers and our union leaderships - has reached unprecedented epic proportions".

Before I express my personal opinion on this, a qualification might be in order. Though RWU is obviously critical of most policies, strategies and tactics of our union leaders, we *try* to avoid a confrontational tone. Considering what we face on the job in our day-to-day reality, combined with the jaw dropping TA's slithering from the "top-secret" backrooms out into the wide open, that's not always easy. Sometimes we are human and our gut feelings in the moment may slightly override our striving for tact and diplomacy. So I'll clarify that we are not *anti*-leadership, but we are *pro*-rank and file democracy, involvement, action and ultimately control of OUR unions.

We hear the not so subtle sniping by some that RWU is just a bunch of disgruntled "crybabies" on the sideline. In the spirit of democracy we assert our right to criticize the perspectives of our leadership while advocating for common ground where we can fight together shoulder to shoulder.

From our inception the starting point for RWU, as well as the very reason we exist today, can be summarized as: Something is VERY wrong with this "picture". The relationship between our unions vs. the carriers simply is not working for us. Individual union leaders, officers, Presidents, General Chairmen, etc. in the present are not the problem. They are simply implementing the same tired old perspectives in place for decades, handed down like a torch from each preceding generation of leadership to the next. In with the "outs", out with the "ins", the names and faces change while the policies, tactics and strategies remain the same. RWU advocates for a fundamental change in perspectives, summarized on page 2 in our *Statement of Principles* (SoP) bullet points. Please refer to our website for the complete text.

Prior to the onset of rate deregulation that began in the early 80's under Reagan, the carriers were able to pass the cost of our comparatively civilized working conditions back then on to the customer. Deregulation compelled the carriers to aggressively reduce their labor costs. In response to the carriers' assault on our jobs, dignity, self-respect and safety, the unions' perspective of cooperation, collaboration with and subservience to them has proven to be disastrous for us. Giving the union leadership the benefit of the doubt, that while they may mean well, the indisputable fact is that our road to hell is being paved by their self-proclaimed righteous intentions.

The starting point of wisdom is not only for us to recognize that the system in place is not working, but more importantly to ask and discuss amongst ourselves *why* is it not working? *What* kind of changes do we need? *How* do we make this happen? There is no quick fix or easy answer but as the carriers go for our "jugular vein" the need for us to discuss and debate these critical questions is more urgent than ever. We can do this in the spirit of unity and solidarity, with civility and respect for each other, as well as opposing views, especially those considered to be outside the mainstream if not outright controversial. Let's take this discussion deeper into our shanties, break rooms, locomotive cabs, crew vans, bars, dens, union meetings, regional meetings and ultimately to the floor of our national conventions.

We encourage ALL rails who agree with our SoP to join RWU, but a special shout out to the workers at BNSF and CP Rail, whose actions hopefully herald the beginning of a new era where we no longer just take what the carriers are gracious enough to give us. Let's build on this momentum, take it to the next level, transform ourselves as we build a mass movement of educated, organized, mobilized workers determined to fight by any means necessary for that which we are entitled to.

Mark Burrows currently serves as the Organizer for Railroad Workers United. He is a member of UTU Local #1433 and works as an engineer for CP Rail in Chicago, IL. This is the 10th installment in this series.





Opinion & Commentary

Why an Alliance of Rail Labor & the Community is Essential

Railroad Workers United is proud to be at the forefront of the emerging labor-community alliance to defend our mutual interests. Railroad workers and the communities we operate through have similar yet differing interests. But these interests are surely close enough that they pose a historic possibility, a window of opportunity, for a new alliance that would strengthen both labor and community vis a vis the rail carriers.

EDITORIAL

Since the terrible tragedy at Lac Megantic, Quebec in 2013 that killed 47 people and destroyed the small Canadian border town when an oil train ran away and derailed in a fiery explosion, the railroad has been increasingly on the public radar. Throughout the remainder of 2013 and into 2014, a series of high profile train wrecks, including numerous oil train derailments, fires and explosions has fueled fears both real and imagined among the public. The dramatic increase of oil shipments by rail has trackside communities alarmed, farmers and other shippers aggravated and angry, and environmental activists up in arms. The spotlight is on the railroad like it has not been for decades.

This atmosphere has of course led to a lot of misinformation and misunderstanding about the nature of the railroad. But while we cannot expect non-railroaders to be experts overnight at understanding what the railroad is all about and how it functions, we can take a hand in educating the public while working with them to push the railroad to become more responsive to the needs and wishes of trackside communities, shippers, railroad workers, and society at large.

Railroad workers once were a huge portion of the workforce. A hundred years ago, when the workforce was just a fraction of the size it is today, there were two million railroad workers. Today, there is less than 10% of that number. No longer does every citizen have a father, brother, uncle, son or daughter who works on the railroad. Far fewer Americans regularly ride the train now. And many have little exposure or interaction with the railroad, as thousands of miles of branch and mainline track have been eliminated. As a result of all this, railroad workers and our unions have lost power and influence. Meantime the rail carriers on the other hand, have become ever more concentrated, wealthy and dominant.

So now more than ever we need to reach out to the community and society as a whole for support and assistance in order to win our battles with the rail carriers. Citizens who want safe communities, a healthy environment, good public transportation, uncrowded highways and all the rest are our natural allies. While they may have their criticisms of the railroad, don't we as well? And while some citizens do not appreciate the intrinsically safe, efficient, and environmentally sensitive nature of railroading, many more understand and appreciate the railroad. They just have a few reservations when a freight train

laden with toxic chemicals derails into their front yard.

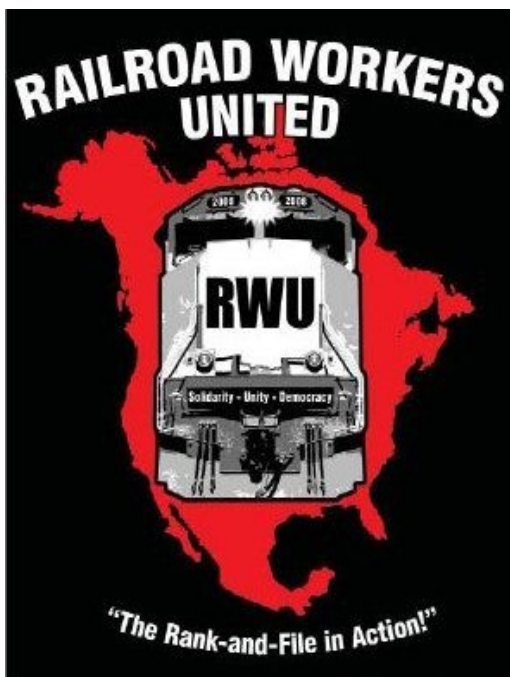
Therefore, they are open and receptive to our criticisms of the railroad. Things like chronic crew fatigue, the specter of single employee crews, safety programs that blame workers yet fail to fix glaring hazards; the general lack of time off for family and rest; draconian attendance policies that force us to work when we are not fit; excessively long and heavy trains and more are all issues of concern to the average railroad worker and yes, of concern to the average citizen too, especially those living in trackside communities.

This past summer we caught a glimpse of an example of what we can achieve when citizens and railroad workers act together. While BNSF trainmen voiced their opposition to the SMART-BNSF tentative agreement that would have allowed single employee train operations, other railroaders were joined by a spirited crowd of environmental and community activists on the picket line outside the hall. Together, we raised the issue before the public, educated the citizenry of what was afoot, and inspired railroad workers across the BNSF system to fight back and vote no on the contract.

As we know, the battle against single employee crews is far from over. The fight to defend our wages, benefits and working conditions knows no end. We need all the help we can get! Therefore, we must appreciate the nature of the system and broaden our horizons. Huge and powerful corporations – the big rail carriers in particular – wield great power and influence in society. They have allies in many places, and largely control both political parties, the courts and the media. To fight back we need numbers, the kind of numbers we simply no longer have in our unions. But the majority of the people are workers, and they live in the community right alongside of us. To win, we need them. And likewise, they need us. It's time for an alliance of labor, community and the environment!



Railroad workers and their allies in the community picket against single employee crews in Seattle, August 2014. What can we accomplish with this emerging labor-community alliance?



Get Your RWU T-shirts & Hats Now!

T-shirts available in Black or Gray in various sizes. RWU logo at left is on the back (or front) of shirt. See the RWU Online Store for sizes/colors.

Hats are available in Black, Gray or Red, one-size fits all. RWU Logo on the front is stitched embroidery. "Railroad Workers United" on the back.

Both T-shirts and hats are union made in the USA, 100% cotton and include the RWU 4-color logo.

T-shirts and hats cost \$20.00 each (\$15.00 for RWU members) Shipping & Handling is just \$1.00 if mailed to addresses inside the U.S.

Make your check to RWU and mail with your order to:

RWU P.O. Box 2131 Reno, NV. 89505

OR

Order and pay with your paypal or credit card via our website at:

www.railroadworkersunited.org

Click on *RWU Store*

"Why should the railroad employees be parceled out among a score of different organizations? They are all employed in the same service. Their interests are mutual. They ought to be able to act together as one!"

Eugene V. Debs: Founder of the American Railway Union (ARU)
From the speech "Craft Unionism", November 23, 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