



The Highball

Official Publication of
Railroad Workers United

Union Pacific the Latest Rail Carrier to Succumb to PSR

In September, the largest railroad in the U.S. unveiled a new operating plan called, "Unified Plan 2020" (UP 2020), one intended to implement "Precision Scheduled Railroading Principles" along the lines that have previously been implemented at four other major Class One railroads in the past twenty years. Former railroad CEO Hunter Harrison, who died while at the helm of CSX earlier in 2018, is known for founding and instituting these practices, first at Illinois Central and then Canadian National, before coming out of retirement to take the helm at Canadian Pacific and finally CSX. While Harrison and his "principles" are held in high esteem by railroad stockholders – especially speculative hedge-funds who are looking for a short-term and steep return on investment – so-called "Precision Scheduled Railroading" (PSR) has not been met with such exuberance by railroad workers, shippers, passengers, and even several railroad executives.

Union Pacific makes no bones about what is the driving force behind the rollout of UP 2020, which began on October 1st, and will be completed in phases systemwide in the next 18 months or so: "Resulting benefits are expected to help Union Pacific achieve its 60% operating ratio goal by 2020, on the way to achieving a 55% operating ratio." The carrier hopes to avoid the more traumatic and dysfunctional aspects of PSR, which were experienced at CSX in 2017, by making use of a slower pace of implementation. It remains to be seen if the railroad giant will succeed in effecting a smoother transition.

An unnamed observer was quoted in *Railway Age Magazine*, stating in reference to the railroad's operating ratio, "... Absent operating ratio improvements at least equal to other



A trainload of coal heads East on Union Pacific, while empties return West. What does UP's version of "Precision Scheduled Railroading" hold for stockholders, shippers, and railroad workers? If results at CSX are any indication, stockholders will rejoice, while shippers and rails will not.

properties, indicating that current management is weak on achieving operating/efficiency goals, somebody else – think an activist hedge fund – could show up for a proxy fight, and we know how that goes," making reference to the hedge fund that gained controlling interest in CP in 2012, clamoring for bigger and quicker profits and installing Hunter Harrison to deliver them.

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Amtrak Employees Protest Job Cuts, Contracting Out on Both Coasts

On December 17th, more than 100 rail employees came together in Riverside, CA to protest cutbacks at Amtrak, the U.S. rail passenger carrier. Members of the Transportation Communications Union (TCU) picketed in protest of Amtrak's plan to shutter the call center and eliminate 550 jobs. "They're closing this office and outsourcing the work to a non-union shop in Florida", said Jack Dinsdale with the TCU. The proposed closing of the facility is an offensive, in-your-face blatant case of union busting.

Simultaneously in Boston, workers protested the downgrading of long-distance dining service, and the possible outsourcing of some 1,700 union food & beverage jobs, that currently exist aboard the trains. The east coast workers – from a number of crafts, represented by various unions – like their western counterparts, are calling on Amtrak Chief Richard Anderson, former head of Delta Airlines, to be fired and replaced. Last Summer Amtrak had released a "Request for Information", looking for in-

dustry best practices, including proposals that include staffing "with and without Amtrak employees now performing the work." Once again, the company is referencing future prospects to circumvent the union and to contract-out work to non-union labor.

Earlier this year, train and engine employees were also up in arms when Anderson proposed the destruction of the *Southwest Chief* train, which runs between L.A. and Chicago. Likewise, track workers on the Northeast Corridor have been upset by Anderson's anti-worker approach. Having alienated nearly all Amtrak employees, the traveling public, rail advocacy groups, private car owners and others (see *The Highball*, Fall 2018), hopefully these forces will soon coalesce to better fight back in a united fashion. They share the same interests; i.e., professionally staffed trains, well trained crews, high morale, a high level of passenger service and comfort, and expanded rail service. What they are getting under CEO Anderson is the exact opposite.



RWU News and Happenings

All Local Rail Unions are Now Encouraged to Affiliate with RWU

As RWU builds steam and strengthens unity among rank-and-file railroaders, the Organization is now accepting memberships at the local lodge, district, and system-council level, of any and all organized rail labor bodies. In holding true to our principles, we do not discriminate against any rail union, craft, or official positions held within. In fact, we welcome all to join in affiliation as an entire body and/or an individual basis. Affiliation benefits put a designated person(s) of the organized body in contact with a broad network of rail labor activists, the most up-to-date North American rail news consolidated into one source, and subscription to "The Highball", the only rail newsletter put together by rank & file railroaders. We expect additional benefits to be added to the RWU Bylaws at the 2020 RWU biennial convention.

As an introduction to RWU "affiliates", we have set the membership fee at a nominal \$50 annually and humbly request a volun-

tary donation of \$1 per member belonging to the affiliate body.

Be a part of this historic rail labor movement, that has not gained this level of traction in 123 years! As a 100% volunteer organization, RWU holds no bias or agenda for political or monetary gains, but rather seeks to bring ALL railroad workers with boots in the ballast, together in education and organizational methods to reclaim the power shift that is increasingly tilted to the ever more powerful rail carriers, backed by Wall Street masters. We challenge all rails to ask themselves "Is your job going to improve in the coming years?". The consensus being a resounding "NO", please empower yourself to take action toward the greater good with like-minded rails. We encourage all rail labor organizations - from the local unit on up - to consider affiliation with RWU. For more info, contact RWU Organizer Will Young at organizer@railroadworkersunited.org.

Once Again, Knit Hats Are Available from RWU in Time for Winter

Back by popular demand, RWU has taken delivery of a batch of knit hats, complete with the RWU logo. And this time, we offer them in black, charcoal and navy. These union-made-in-the-USA hats are great for the Winter and are guaranteed to keep you warm on the coldest night. The hats sell for \$17.00 each (just \$12.75 for RWU members). See the back page for more info or go to the RWU Store at www.railworkersunited.storenvy.com.



RWU Annual Fall Fundraiser Reaches Goal

As we go to press, the RWU Fall Fundraiser has reached the goal set earlier this Fall. But please do not let that deter you if you wished to donate, but have yet to do so. Donations are always welcome! We collected more than \$3800 in cash, checks, online and through our Go Fund Me crowd sourcing effort. In addition, eight members signed up to be monthly Sustainers, pledging a set amount each month, while a few others opted to increase their monthly allotment. Thanks to all of you for your generous support!

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

- Aaron Dixon, IAM #27, UP, Kansas City, MO
- Ross Grooters, BLET #778, UP, Des Moines, IA
- Adam Haslag, IBEW # 1832, UP, Kansas City, MO
- Ron Kaminkow, BLET #51, Amtrak, Reno, NV
- Bernie Mahoney, BRS #16, CSX, Port St. Lucie, FL
- Joe Mulligan, BLET #57, KEOLIS, Kingston, MA
- Hugh Sawyer, BLET #316, NS, Atlanta, GA
- Daniel Stroup, BLET #188, CN, Superior, WI
- James Wallace, UTU #305, BNSF, Lincoln, NE
- Andrew Weir, TCRC-LE #240, CN, Sarnia, ON
- Will Young, IAM #27, UP, Kansas City, MO

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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Railroad and Union News

Union Pacific Rolls-out "Precision Scheduled Railroading" of its Own

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Upon Harrison's implementation of PSR at Canadian Pacific, shippers were up in arms concerning a sharp decline in service, a lack of equipment in a timely manner, and delayed shipments, among other issues. Meantime, workers experienced a sharp decline in safety standards, increasing work hours, layoffs, consolidations, takebacks and givebacks in work rules. At CSX, things appeared close to a total meltdown when PSR – again under Hunter Harrison – was rolled out. Countless train crews expired on the hours of service law as most of the carrier's hump yards were shuttered. Shippers cried foul and called for government investigations into the sharp decline in service. Meanwhile, employees in all crafts suffered even worse than their CP counterparts. In addition, in order to untangle the quagmire the railroad was mired in, CSX abolished long standing safety rules; e.g. encouraging the getting on/off moving equipment. Injuries and fatalities ensued. To add insult to injury, the company actually blamed the workforce for the disastrous rollout of PSR.

Already at UP, RWU is receiving reports of layoffs, consolidation of facilities, harsh attendance and tardiness policies, and threatened changes to long term practices and procedures. If the PSR experience at other railroads is anything to go by, workers at Union Pacific can expect this trend to accelerate as the new system is rolled out.

If "successful" at UP (i.e., operating ratio is reduced, and higher profits are delivered to stockholders in a timely fashion), one can expect that the other Class One Railroads, specifically Nor-

folk Southern, Kansas City Southern and BNSF, will have little ability to resist – should they even wish to – and soon afterward announce their own versions of PSR. There is even some speculation that once the rollout is complete and functional at UP, that the rail giant will seek a merger with its eastern counterpart CSX to form the first coast-to-coast railroad in the United States. Should this happen, then it would be practically inevitable that the remaining two – NS and BNSF – would then consummate a merger of their own.



The "hump" yard has been a salient feature of modern railroading. Precision Scheduled Railroading under CEO Hunter Harrison at three carriers shut down many hump operations. Will UP do the same?

All of this, of course, does not bode well for railroad workers, who stand to lose terminals, crew bases and maintenance facilities, along with employment in most all crafts. Meantime, if the previous experience is a measure to go by, we can expect a change for the worst in work rules, working conditions, and quality of work life. Stay tuned.

Railroad Crew Drivers Struggle to Win a Good Contract



Crew van drivers, and their allies, rally outside of the Sheraton Hotel in Chicago, intending to pressure their employers - Halcon and PTI - to sign a decent contract with their respective unions - UE and USW.

Drivers at Halcon (formerly Renzenberger) and PTI, being represented by United Electrical Workers (UE) and United Steel Workers (USW) respectively, are still operating under old contracts, or contracts that have been signed, but are tied up in legal proceedings. As this newsletter goes to press, members of the negotiations committee were set to meet with the members of the locals, now spread throughout the US, to vote on the tentative agreement. PTI drivers were still looking for their raise after it was ratified by the members and signed by the company.

The two unions worked together to do some bannering outside of a Railroad Insurance Management Association (RIMA) conference in downtown Chicago this Fall, and had allies, including railroad workers from the Chicago chapter of the All Rail Crafts Coalition, as well as Railroad Workers United, show up to support the drivers. The cause of the drivers has become popular among railroad employees.

Michelle Burke is an RWU Solidarity Member and is a Halcon Radius Driver in suburban Chicago.



Technology, Staffing & Railroad Safety

The Technological Revolution and the Future of Work

We are amid a *Technological Revolution* unforeseen in human history. Automation, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning, and the Internet of Things (IoT) is changing everything from how we purchase products, to how we drive our cars, to how we interact with each other, to how we work and our relation to the economy. We've only scratched the surface on what changes this Technological Revolution will bring to our lives. These advances in technology can certainly provide us with many tools to potentially tackle big problems like Global Warming, water shortages, energy distribution, and - most important to those of us who work in dangerous jobs like the railroad - safety.

However, it will also provide the Rich and Powerful with the tools to increase their profits at the expense of working people, job safety, and other real world issues. We've seen how this works on the railroad. The carriers install technology, that if used properly, would make our jobs easier and safer. Instead, they use this technology to cut jobs and dump more responsibilities on those lucky enough to not be let go through furloughs and layoffs. Instead of making railroad operations safer, they make it more dangerous, not only for the employees, but also for the communities through which the railroad operates.

Railroad Workers United (RWU) was formed in response to one of these proposed changes driven by the Technological Revolution; i.e., single employee train crews. The founders of RWU were mostly engineers and trainmen who noticed what the rail carriers were doing and that our union leadership wasn't taking this threat seriously. At its Founding Convention, RWU pledged to resist this reckless approach to railroading. It's clear now, a decade further on, that the carriers have much more extreme ideas planned for how to operate the railroad in the coming years. In a December 12, 2018 article of *Railway Age Magazine* titled, "At Norfolk Southern, Automation is Driving Information", an NS executive is quoted: "What we are doing is leveraging the

safety enhancements of PTC and the data generated by the Global Positioning System (GPS) for optimized operations," says Warren Stubbs, Director of Information System Development. "We try to minimize human transactions. We want autonomous operations, not just autonomous trains." Railroad executives and investors have no plans for us in this *Railroad of the Future*. Profits are their primary concern, not safety or employment. It is our job to resist this attempt to use these new powerful technological tools to decimate employment and increase investor profits at the expense of community safety and railroaders' lives.

Going forward we are going to run regular articles on the Technological Revolution and how it is changing not just the railroad, but other industries as well. We want to hear from the *boots-on-the-ground* and the frontline employees who are seeing up close how these technologies are changing the railroad and the nature of our work. We want to hear from all crafts on how these new technologies are changing your job. We'll also be keeping a close eye on management and executives, and keeping you informed - to the best of our ability - of what their plans are. Rail execs are very proud of their disregard for railroad culture, and their elevation of short-term profits over employee and community safety. In that same article quoted above, another railroad executive is quoted as saying, "We want to be a tech company that runs trains, using technology to solve problems in a traditional industry." Dan Plonk, Director of Transportation Application Planning at NS, adds this: "With PTC integration, you can take everyone off the train. The development phase will take three to four years, including the sensor package and machine vision, and it will be 10 years to full integration" - until, he adds, public sentiment is firmly on the side of autonomous vehicle technology. RWU is here to resist this sentiment. We want to make sure that safety, good jobs, and a strong community - not profits - are the priorities of this new Technological Revolution.

RWU to Co-Sponsor National Book Tour to Promote Rail Safety

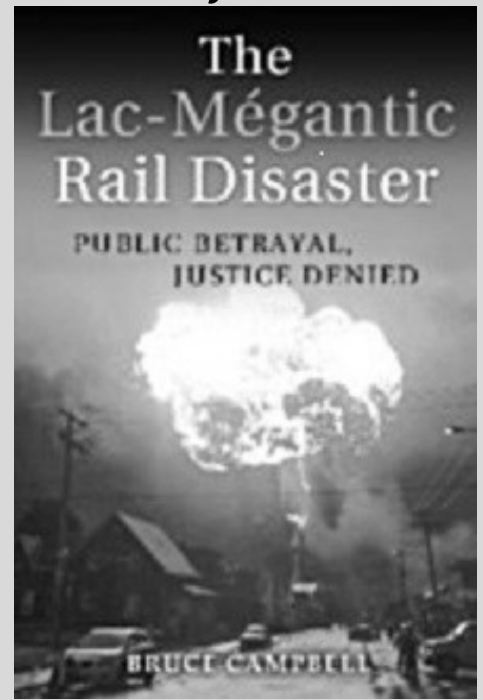
Plans are in the works for a series of events that revolve around a new book recently published by Bruce Campbell. RWU hopes to partner with allies in the labor and environmental movements, to conduct up to a dozen presentations and meetings in cities across the U.S. and Canada, to explore the issue of rail safety, in the wake of the train wreck and disaster at Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, nearly six year ago on July 6th, 2013.

The Lac-Mégantic rail disaster is a tragedy unparalleled in Canadian history. It resulted in major loss of life, massive environmental destruction and the evisceration of a small town. Blame landed squarely on the shoulders of three front-line employees of the Montreal, Maine, and Atlantic Railway Company. But a jury acquitted them.

Lac-Mégantic is the story of a rail industry writing its own rules, a booming US oil industry fighting any obstacles to selling their dangerous product, and a rogue US railway operator cutting corners to make his fortune. At another level, the story is about a federal government blinded by its own free market ideology, fixated on making Canada an energy superpower, and compliant bureaucrats failing to protect the public interest.

At the heart of it all is a small, tight-knit community torn apart and struggling to recover. There is unimaginable loss, broken lives and families, and individual and collective trauma. But there is also healing, solidarity, commemoration, remembrance, and the determination to rebuild and transcend.

This book uncovers the truth about Lac-Mégantic. It includes first person interviews with many of the key players, analysis of the corporate executives and the companies involved, an examination of the complex world of transport safety regulation in Canada, and an account of the trials of the three accused. Order your copy today, available from RWU online at www.railworkersunited.storenvy.com.





International Rail Labor News

UK Railroaders and their Unions Fight to Keep the Guard

Creative Tactics to Win the Struggle for Two-Person Crews

North American railroad workers can learn a few lessons from their counterparts in the United Kingdom, where the unions of the operating crafts – the Rail, Marine & Transport Workers Union (RMT) and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers & Firemen (ASLEF) – have been battling attempts by the various rail carriers in England, Scotland, and Wales, to introduce “driver only operations” (DOO) over the course of the last few years. While the fight is very different in some respects from the one in North America to maintain the road conductor and the two-person crew, there are many similarities. The fight in the UK is one aboard passenger trains, while that in the U.S. is currently focused aboard freight trains. But ultimately, both struggles are, at their core, about proper and adequate staffing in order to maintain safe, secure, and efficient train operations.

Public Outreach

The RMT has invested time and energy in building a campaign to win the hearts and minds of the general public. Many citizens travel by train and the union has direct access to them to make their case for the Guard (conductor). The union has produced a slick color booklet that meticulously outlines the role of the Guard, the safety sensitive functions of the job, and why it is so important to keep this essential worker on the train. The booklet clearly outlines the role of the Guard, recounts a series of passenger/train interfaces, lists events where the role of the Guard made a difference in derailments, collisions and other accidents, in both historic times and in recent years.

The union has also produced and distributed a series of videos, including “*Unguarded*”, a compilation of citizen testimony of what rail travel is like on trains where the Guard has been eliminated, and the accompanying dangers and insecurities, including assaults, fights, mechanical failures, and the difficulties experienced by disabled travelers. In addition, the RMT has launched a Twitter Campaign to #KeepTheGuardonTheTrain. To brand their message clearly for the public, the union has promoted a slogan, “*Your Guard Means Safe, Secure, and Accessible Trains for All of Us.*”

Given the similarities to our struggle on the other side of the Atlantic, perhaps railroad workers and our unions could put forward a similar campaign to win public support. It is high time that an official document was produced – ideally as a joint collaboration of the operating crafts unions – that, like the RMT booklet, explains the role of the conductor on a freight train, the importance to safe operations, and the dangers inherent in single crew operations. Like the RMT document, this one could list countless incidents over the years where the conductor made a dramatic difference in either preventing disaster or remediating the aftermath of one. And while they are at it, the unions could produce a video to the same effect, and promote it on the internet, on U-Tube, elsewhere and email a link to all their members urging the broadest possible circulation. And we could jointly sponsor – together with community groups, environmental organizations, pro-rail organizations and other labor unions – rail safety conferences similar to those that RWU sponsored a few years ago, that drew hundreds of community and environmental activists, and served to educate thousands of the need for a two-person crew aboard freight trains. And perhaps it is time for the U.S. rail unions to take up a similar slogan to the RMT’s, something on the order of: “*The Conductor Means Safe, Secure and Efficient Movement of Trains for all of Us.*”



National Petition Drive

This fall a petition drive was initiated, not by the union but by a 16 year-old. Ben Spiers set up a petition to keep the safety-critical Guard on the train and it has gone viral. The RMT has endorsed the young man’s effort and has promoted this surprising development. Under British law, the government must now compose a response to the young man and all those who have signed the petition. With our allies in the community, the unions on this side of the Atlantic need not wait and see if such a drive is initiated, but rather, we could launch such a petition *anytime* on the question of single employee train crew operations.

Outreach to the Greater Labor Movement

Labor Party leader Jeremy Corbyn joined conductors on the picket line on Day 35 of their strike against Northern Rail. Other unions have also come to the aid and assistance of the RMT. On this side of the Atlantic, we need to employ the same strategy, building solidarity with other transport workers unions and other unions around general safety issues. And imagine the publicity we could get by having a national political figure, say Bernie Sanders, to come walk a picket line with us on the issue of single employee train crews!

Strike Action

At the end of the day, while courting public opinion, building alliances and doing outreach to other labor unions and the community is important to win our fight, ultimately the struggle comes down to industrial action, without which – or at least the threat of – the rail carriers remain firmly in the saddle. The RMT in the UK has engaged in numerous strikes over the last few years that have revolved around the crucial issue of the Guard. At Merseyrail, the union conducted 16 strike days over an 18-month campaign and won. At Greater Anglia, the union struck for 12 days and won. Victories have also come at Arriva Wales and ScotRail. The struggle continues at Northern Rail and Southwestern Railway.

Conclusion

In order to win the fight for the two-person crew, we have to take the bull by the horns. We cannot simply wait for our enemies to launch their attack, but rather, we need to be proactive, preparing and readying ourselves for the inevitable showdown. And when the battle is on, we make use of all tactics at our disposal. We think creatively, we take risks, we seek out allies, we proudly tell our side of the story, and most importantly, we make it clear to the rail carriers that we refuse to accept anything less than the two person crew – a certified engineer and a certified conductor – aboard every train in North America!



Commentary

It's High Time for Disgruntled Rails to Stand Up and Be Counted!

Belated Season's Greetings to all of you in Highball land. So what kind of gifts and good tidings can rails expect from the carriers in 2019? Well, if the scenarios posed by the various articles in this issue are any indication, I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but it looks like we're going to end up wishing it was only a lump of coal. So what are we going to do about it? The way I see it, we basically have two options: 1) Continue to take it, or 2) RESIST. I try to avoid being presumptuous, but I'm going to go out on a limb here and trust that for the vast majority of you reading this, your collective arrow tends to lean towards resistance.

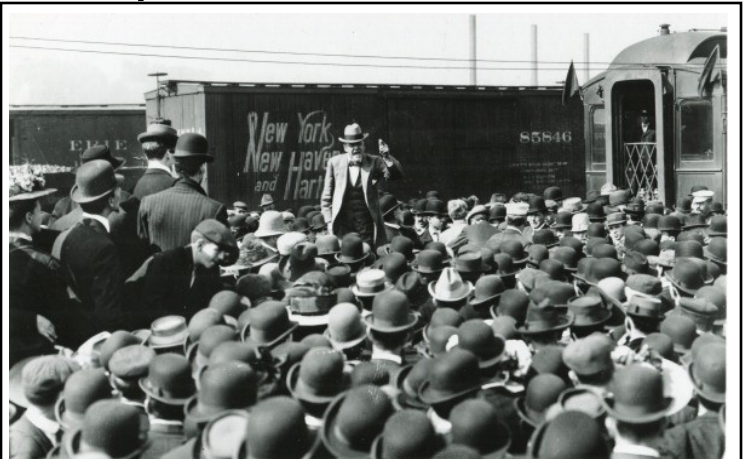
How? What can we do NOW to turn the situation around? One doesn't have to be a certified MD to grasp the common sense concept that, "If we don't accurately diagnose the source of the 'disease', we'll never be able to figure out the most effective 'cure'". Is the problem facing rail labor as simple as a few ineffective leaders of our respective unions? If that's the case, then all we need to do is find a few visionary, militant fighters to replace them and next thing you know, we'll all be singing, "Happy Days are Here Again". Right? Or perhaps the source of our problems is a little more complicated and complex, therefore requiring a bit more thought, creativity, and initiative.

"Here we go, he's going to bring up Debs again." Damn right I'm going to bring up Debs - again! No serious discussion of how rails can effectively resist the carriers' never-ending, ever-increasing assault on our safety, dignity and quality of life, can be the least bit credible without studying the legacy and history of Eugene V. Debs, so that we can learn, process and apply the immensely valuable lessons to our struggles today. I might add that the rest of the working class and all fighters for social justice could learn a lot from Debs, but that's a deeper discussion for another day. Without researching a verbatim quote, one recurring theme in his speeches and writings went something like, "Don't take my word for this. Take it upon yourselves to study, research and learn the facts. If you do, I'm confident that you will arrive at the same conclusions I have." Truer words were never spoken.

Yes I stand accused of "preachin' to the choir" and I plead partially guilty. How the hell does one plead "partially" guilty? To those of you who consider yourselves to be in this proverbial "choir", I trust you understand this simply comes with the territory. Besides that, sometimes a few members of even the most bad-ass choir get a little tired, and could occasionally benefit from a little inspirational boost. If I can simultaneously inspire a few "young-uns" to join the "choir" for the first time, then that's an added bonus to any therapeutic benefit for my tenuous sanity, that I may derive from my quarterly stream-of-consciousness, rant & rage.

So please don't stop me even if you've heard this before, but the bottom line is that the existing infrastructure, direction, tactics and strategies of our unions is broken and failed. It has been for over 125 years since Debs set out to organize ALL railroad workers into ONE industrial union, the American Railway Union. The pathetic futility of being divided into more than a dozen different craft unions has only been exacerbated since then. RWU would not need to exist if this were not the case. I could be experimenting with my new, magical guitar processor, instead of trying to coherently formulate my seething contempt for the bosses, and all their enablers and servile lackeys, in 900 words or less.

When Hunter Harrison (HH) first took over at CP Rail, I described in vivid, hi-def, technicolor detail - both in these pages and from



Eugene V. Debs speaks to railroad workers in New England: "Intelligent discontent is the mainspring of civilization. Progress is born of agitation. It is agitation or stagnation."

the podium at the 2014 SMART-TD Convention - the horrifying manifestations of his reign of terror, as a desperate warning to all other rails: "If this 'cancer' is not stopped NOW, it will spread throughout the entire industry."

The lead, front page article for this issue unfortunately validates those concerns. I don't recall the exact day and time that this all began to go down at CP. Three years after getting out alive, I'm still trying to recover from HH induced PTSD, but here's what I do recall: As HH implemented his attack on us with classic "shock-and-awe" brutality, not ONE leader of our unions made the slightest public protestation. Nor was there so much as a peep from any of the so-called "friends of labor" politicians, endorsed and supported by our union leaders, including their fave liberal, supposedly "progressive" savior - then president Obama. The over-the-top, death-defying speed-up, combined with flagrant contract violations by-the-hour at CP, flew under the radar at the time, compared to the feces storm that played out as HH took "Precision Railroadng" one-step-beyond at CSX.

What is happening in the rail industry is nothing less than a vile abomination to the workers and the public. I could give a bazillion reasons why the union leaders' broken-record mantra of, "Get out the vote for our 'friends of labor'", is one of the ultimate exercises in futility, but for now I'll just refer to my experience at CP as Exhibit A. Beyond the obvious futility, when rank & file workers blindly follow our union leaders, that they often complain about, as if they're the Pied Piper leading us like lemmings off the cliff, we're only setting ourselves up for future defenseless slaughters. The time is long past overdue for ALL disgruntled rails to join RWU, contribute financially to our efforts, and get actively engaged in the resistance. There is really very little alternative.

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

Positive Train Control (PTC) Will Save Lives ... But Will It Cost Jobs?

Railroad workers, trackside communities, shippers, passengers and the nation have won a great victory as PTC nears completion on most rail systems across the U.S., and soon will be implemented on numerous commuter railroads as well. PTC is a proven effective system for preventing some of the worst train mishaps and can enforce the following: temporary and permanent restrictions; Stop, Stop-and-Proceed and Restricting signal indications; Restricted Speed; protection of malfunctioning highway grade crossings; and Work Zone protection of Roadway Workers. Most every train crew can easily recall at least one scenario where such enforcements would have prevented an accident, injury or fatality. Of the twenty or so fatalities in the U.S. and Canada this past year, there is ample evidence that several of them could have been avoided with the power of PTC.

Nevertheless, the industry had long resisted the technology until forced by the Rail Safety Improvement Act (RSIA) of 2008, which was passed by Congress and signed into law in the aftermath of the head-on collision at Chatsworth, CA on September 12th, when a Metrolink commuter train ran into a Union Pacific freight train, killing 25 and seriously injuring many more. This resistance comes as no surprise given that the carriers opposed the universal application of the air brake, Janney coupler, Two-way End-of-Train Device, switch point indicators (never enforced), Electronically Controlled Pneumatic brakes (never enforced) and a host of other technologies that either did, or could have made the railroad a safer environment for workers and the general public. See *The Highball* Summer 2018, "The Rail Carriers' Resistance to Basic Safety Appliances Runs Deep."

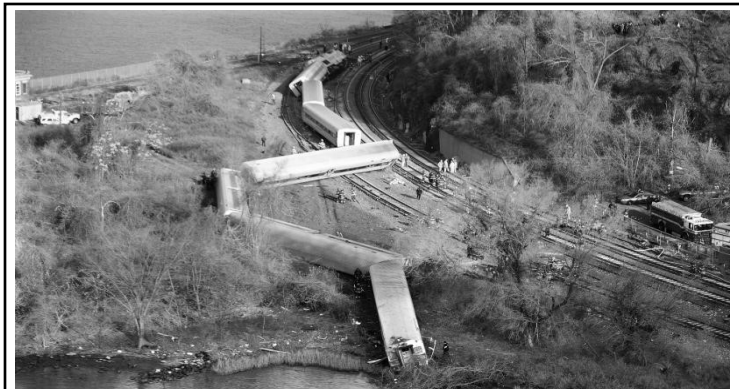
In the coming years and decades, PTC will no doubt save scores of lives, prevent countless injuries, and save tens of millions of dollars in property damage. The rail unions, community groups, passenger advocates, environmental organizations and of course, Railroad Workers United, have all supported the implementation of PTC. We laud the fact that - despite the carriers' opposition and delays - it has finally been placed into service on tens of thousands of miles of mainline track. But unfortunately, the rail carriers may have their own ideas of how PTC - once implemented - can increase their bottom line.

First is the ever present, but looming-in-the-background threat of single employee train operations. Since November 1st, 2004, the rail carriers have advanced the idea to run trains with a single crew member. A few years after their first bargaining proposal, November 2004, they negotiated contracts with, first the BLET, for the use of Remote Control Operations (RCO) on the mainline (BNSF former BN properties 2007) and then for "utility conductors" (CSX 2008) with the UTU, to facilitate such operations. Their assumption was that they would easily play the operating crafts, and their respective unions, off against one another and be able to use either or both techniques to replace the road conductor. In July 2014, the first serious shot across the bow was fired when the BNSF and SMART-GO-1, on the former BN properties, announced a surprise Tentative Agreement (TA) to provide for a limited number of "Master Conductor" (utility conductor) positions to replace thousands of road conductor jobs. Much to the chagrin of the BNSF, the rail industry, its mouthpiece, *Railway Age Magazine*, Contributing Editor Frank Wilner, former UTU President Paul Thompson and the SMART GO-1 officials, the rank & file soundly defeated the TA in an unprecedented 5-to-1 vote, sending the message loud-and-clear that railroad workers do not want single employee train operations, refusing to be

bribed or blackmailed into accepting them so easily.

While a victory for the working railroader, we understand that it was tactical in nature. Remember that in the TA, the BNSF was careful to make the proviso that single employee crews would begin *only* when PTC was cut-in and operational on a specific territory. Expecting victory, they played their hand a little prematurely. As a result, it is clear that the rail carriers plan to make the case that single employee crews are safe, responsible, and efficient on any territory where PTC is in effect. Now that it is nearing completion, we expect a full court press in the coming months/years for single employee crew implementation. We can wait for that day to come, or we can prepare for it now. But one thing for certain is that this long-awaited show-down is coming.

The second major cause for concern comes in the form of discipline and firing of train and engine crews. As Amtrak finally implemented PTC on the various host carriers this past Fall, RWU began to hear reports of engineers being "barred" from various roads for experiencing PTC initiated penalty brake applications. It remains to be seen if the rail carriers will launch an all-out assault on engineers and trainmen, but given the one-two punch of inward facing cameras and now PTC, they may just have the ability to "fire at will." Once the next recession hits and labor is in abundance, we will find out to what extent the carriers plan to use their newfound toys to make our lives miserable.



Disasters like the one on Metro-North at Spuyten Duyvil, NY, five years ago, should become a thing of the past with PTC operational. But what does a PTC future hold in store for train and engine crews?

Finally, railroad workers need to be concerned about the prospects for autonomous train operations (See Page 4). Rail CEOs and others in the industry are already speculating about the prospect and envision a future of "driverless trains." With the assistance of technology like "Leader" and "Trip Optimizer" to efficiently run the train, and PTC to track it and enforce operating rules, the carriers and their ever-demanding stock holders are frothing at the mouth at the prospects of such a workerless windfall. While this scenario may not be possible for another decade or more, the time to organize the resistance is now.

It is ironic, but predictable, that the industry would use a safety device as a weapon against its workforce in order to achieve unrelated financial goals. Rail workers and our unions need to foresee the carriers' skullduggery well in advance and be prepared to act. Until we have control over what technology is implemented, the way in which it is placed in service and for what purpose, we will unfortunately continue to be put between a rock and hard place.



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



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