



Railroad Workers United

Solidarity • Unity • Democracy

The Rank & File in Action!

Railroadworkersunited.org • (206) 984-3051 • info@railroadworkersunited.org

RWU Resolution of Support for Charged Railroad Workers

Co-Chairs

J.P. Wright, BLET #78
CSX, Louisville, KY

James Wallace, UTU #305
BNSF, Lincoln, NE

Jen Walls, BLET #238
BNSF, Seattle, WA

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Ron Kaminkow, BLET #51
AMTK, Reno, NV

Recording Secretary

James Wallace, UTU #305
BNSF, Lincoln, NE

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Hugh Sawyer, BLET #316
NS, Atlanta, GA

Organizer

Mark Burrows, UTU #1433
CP, Chicago, IL

International

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Mark Burrows, UTU #1433
CP, Chicago, IL

Ron Kaminkow, BLET #51
AMTK, Reno, NV

Paul Matchett
WSOR, Janesville, WI

Ahern Owen, IWW #520
MRS, Chicago, IL

Hugh Sawyer, BLET #316
NS, Atlanta, GA

Daniel Scudder, TCU/BRC #6354
NS, Atlanta, GA

John Vitaska, NCFE # 395
CP, Chicago, IL

James Wallace, UTU #305
BNSF, Lincoln, NE

Jen Walls, BLET #238
BNSF, Seattle, WA

Andrew Weil, TCRC-CTY #240
CN, Sarnia, ON

John Wright, BLET #78
CSX, Louisville, KY

Whereas the Montreal, Maine & Atlantic Railway (MM&A) had a record of compromising the safety and security of employees and the communities through which the railroad operated, scoring very low on the indicators of what makes for a safe railroad; and

Whereas the MM&A Railway did not keep its equipment in a state of good repair; operated with single employee crews; did not effectively manage crew fatigue; and had a poor "safety culture"; and

Whereas the MM&A Railway is primarily responsible for the disaster by placing Tom Harding and the residents of Lac-Mégantic in a hazardous situation, placing profit over safety; and

Whereas, MM&A former CEO Ed Burkhart has had a history of buying and selling railroads around the world, attacking the existent unions, and degrading safety and working conditions of the employees; and

Whereas Transport Canada did not effectively enforce its own railroad safety rules through proper oversight, inspections, or relevant operations testing; and

Whereas the relevant laws, operating rules and policies in place at the time of the Lac Megantic, Quebec disaster allowed that a very heavy train carrying a highly dangerous substance could legally and operationally be left on the main line with an unlocked cab on a steep grade, unattended, with only one faulty locomotive running in order to keep the braking system charged; and

Whereas the failure of an employee to perfectly perform all job functions at all times might be grounds for discipline and/or dismissal by the company, but should never be grounds for a civil trial and a murder charge; and

Whereas RWU has continually advocated for railroad safety programs that eliminate hazards rather than blaming victims of railroad accidents;

Therefore, Be it Resolved that RWU once again calls on all North American railroaders and our unions to take an active role in making our nations' rail networks and communities safer by insisting upon rail safety programs which focus on hazard elimination rather than simply worker behavior; and

Be it Further Resolved that RWU believes that in the aftermath of this tragedy, railroaders and our unions must focus on how to prevent future tragedies such as Lac-Mégantic through such efforts as: eliminating hazards; strengthening rules governing movements of trains carrying hazardous materials; adequate and proper track maintenance; restricting the length and tonnage of trains; reducing crew fatigue; and supporting measures to ensure two person operations of freight trains; and

Be it Further Resolved that while RWU does not take a position on their possible role in the train's runaway, RWU considers the civil charges against Tom Harding and Richard Labrie to be outrageous and absurd, an attack on all railroad workers, one that could set a dangerous precedent for all workers involved in future accidents and therefore, these charges should be dropped; and

Be it Finally Resolved, that RWU demands an immediate end to the injustice of this witch hunt and this attempt to scapegoat these fellow workers, and insists that any criminal charges should start with Transport Canada and MM&A CEO Ed Burkhart.

Adopted by the RWU Steering Committee October 7, 2015