Brother Larry Schneider, his wife Becky, and the members of BLET Division 192 are proud to welcome all BLET members to El Paso, Texas, for the 76th annual Southwestern Convention Meeting (SWCM), September 18-22, 2011. Guests will stay at the Camino Real hotel (101 S. El Paso St. in El Paso). Reservations can be made by calling (915) 534-3000 or through the Camino Real website, www.caminoreal.com.

“As with all previous Southwestern Conventions, our primary focus is on the education and training of our members and you will find that the workshops and other activities have something for everyone,” said Brother Schneider, President and Legislative Representative of Division 192. “We have scheduled presentations by several groups that will provide important information that we, as railroaders and the spouses of railroaders, will help further our careers and enhance our hectic lifestyle.”

Continued on page 7

El Paso hosts BLET for 76th annual SWCM
BLET Convention Wrap: Setting a Course for the Next Five Years

The focus of this month’s newsletter is on the 28th Convention of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. The BLET was represented at the convention by its General Committee and I was honored to be one of the delegates representing my home General Committee.

The BLET Convention was held every five years, and in session, the delegates are the governing body of the union with full authority to revise its constitution and the authority to set the union’s course for the next five years. This was the second BLET International Convention since our 2004 merger with Teamsters. I also was a delegate to the 2006 Convention, but as new members of the BLET, our delegation spent more time observing than we did participating. My goal approaching the 2011 Convention was to insure that the BLET, the Rail Conference, and our collective delegates were full participants in the convention. I am proud to report we accomplished that goal, and more.

For example, I was privileged to be appointed to and honored to serve on the IBT Constitution Committee that convened prior to the convention to consider all constitutional amendments proposed by IBT members and locals from across the United States and Canada. While the BLET, as the oldest union in America, has its own proud and storied processes for modifying our governing rules, I was just as proud to serve with the other IBT Committee members to insure that the IBT Constitution truly represents the interests of 1.4 million Teamsters.

The other members of the BLET’s Executive Committee were similarly honored.

First Vice President Lee Pruit also served as a delegate for his home General Committee, and was also honored to serve on the Rules Committee, which established the rules that govern the convention’s activities. Similarly, National Secretary-Treasurer Bill Walpert was honored to serve on the Resolutions Committee, which considered and crafted the resolutions that set the course for our proud International Union into the future. Brother Walpert also served on the Convention’s Sergeant-at-Arms Committee, as did BLET Vice President Steve Bruno. In addition, Vice President and National Legislative Representative John Tolman served on the Convention’s Political and Legislative Committee and on the Convention’s Sergeant-at-Arms Committee while BLET Human Rights Commission Representative Margo Storsteen served on the Convention’s Diversity Committee.

The efforts of these BLET Brothers and Sisters, along with the full BLET delegation, ensured that the voices of rail members of the BLET were heard and their interests fully represented. We in the BLET are part of something bigger as members of the IBT, and we can only strengthen our efforts when we become more closely tied into the activities of the International Union. Labor’s strength is in its numbers; whenever union members unite on common issues our message is loud and our efforts to advance the membership’s interest are more successful.

A personal highlight of the Convention was an invitation to address the convention delegates in session. My remarks centered on our ongoing effort in the national bargaining round, and specifically our attempts to advance the concept of coalition bargaining. Much like our effort to capitalize on our greater strength as part of the 1.4 million members of the BLET, we are working closely with other rail unions to create a stronger and more unified voice in our effort to reach a national settlement with the carriers. As I write this, it is becoming more and more apparent that we will not reach a voluntary settlement in this bargaining round, and could well be headed to a Presidential Emergency Board. To be sure, this was not our first choice; however, I can assure you that we are fully prepared to take your case to such an Emergency Board and to prevail.

The railroad’s goal is to obtain concessions from labor in this bargaining round and is just one more attempt to divert more of this nation’s collective income from the pockets of the hard working citizens of this country and into the treasuries of large corporations. At the same time, all Class I railroads are reporting record profits, proving that the railroad industry’s ability to “right size” its operations makes it all but recession-proof. At some point, all Americans must realize that this escalating transfer of wealth is not in any working class citizen’s best interest, and that is true whether they are union, or non-union workers.

Those who seek to weaken and ultimately destroy the working class of this country benefit when they find ways to divide us. We must not let any social or personal differences that we may have divert us away from pursuing our common interests and goals in unity.

Much like our effort at the Convention to develop new ways to work with our Teamster Brothers and Sisters, we are doubling our efforts at the bargaining table to find new ways to work with our rail union Brothers and Sisters outside of the IBT. As I said at the convention, General President Hoffa has pledged the full support of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters to our cause, and RMWZ President Simpson and I are working together with the Rail Conference to coordinate those energies. Our effort now is to join hands with those other rail unions that have not reached a national settlement and present a united front against these attacks on the working class Americans that we represent and their families. When the time comes for action, you will be called upon to join us in that fight because you are the union and your strength is the backbone of our effort.

Fraternally,
DENNIS R. PIERCE
BLET National President

BLET National Division Electronic Communications Policy

Official communications between BLET members and the National Division require a hard copy of the correspondence, bearing a signature, being received by the National President to be considered an "official communication." This is to provide that the actual question(s) are addressed, and ensures that official interpretations are made they have reference to a specific request and can be used in future correspondence.

The volume of e-mails received makes it impossible for the National President to answer all unofficial communications. Therefore, it is the policy of the BLET that e-mails addressed to the National President will be reviewed and forwarded to the appropriate officer or staff for a timely response; however, an e-mail message is not considered an official communication.

Moreover, anonymous e-mails and e-mails that do not provide sufficient information concerning the sender to enable National Division staff to confirm the sender’s membership status will not receive any reply or acknowledgement. This policy is intended to allow the National President to be aware of the opinions and suggestions of the membership, while at the same time providing a timely response to the member’s unofficial communication, if a response is necessary, without needing expended limited BLET resources.

ADOPTED AT CLEVELAND, OHIO ON JULY 22, 2010, 56
For most Americans, the recession has not ended. Wages are falling and millions of people can't find jobs, even after they've looked for months.

The last thing American workers need right now is a trade deal that puts more of them out of work and lowers their wages. And yet that is exactly what our government is doing to its own people — not once, but four times.

Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood went to Mexico recently to sign a deal that opens our borders to unsafe trucks from that country. In reporting the agreement, the mainstream press was strangely silent about the 40,000 people killed in Mexican drug wars since 2007. The media made no mention of our widening trade deficit with Mexico since NAFTA was signed in 1992, nor did reporters say anything about the 700,000 jobs lost since then.

Congress is now considering trade agreements with Colombia, where trade unionists are routinely murdered with impunity; Panama, a well-known tax haven; and South Korea, in the biggest trade deal since NAFTA. Lately it seems our trade policy is of the corporation, by the corporation and for the corporation.

Take the Mexican truck deal. Upon signing the agreement, Secretary LaHood issued a statement: “By opening the door to long-haul trucking between the U.S. and Mexico, America’s third-largest trading partner, we will create jobs and opportunity for our people and support economic development in both nations.”

I don’t think anyone on the planet believes that. Polls show most Americans are skeptical that globalization is helping the economy. The deal with Mexico will flood the U.S. with cheap labor, further eroding our workers' living standards and their rights.

Opening the border is simply a surrender to the trucking industry and to the multinational corporations whose loyalty is to their own greed — it certainly isn’t to the United States or to its people.

The Teamsters have fought like hell against the unpatriotic, anti-American attempt to undermine our safety, our security and our economy by opening the border to dangerous trucks. We have fought like hell against trade deals that lower our standard of living, erode our national security and contribute to extreme economic inequality. We will continue to fight like hell because we love our country, even if the corporations don’t.

Fraternally,

James P. Hoffa
Teamsters General President

Fighting for our Safety, Security and Economy

TeaMsters Conclude 28th International Convention

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters opened their 28th International Convention on June 27 with plenty of noise and a new resolve to stand up for the American Dream.

The five-day convention in Las Vegas opened in grand style, living up to its theme of “Vision, Solidarity, Action.” Delegates and guests were treated to a raucous tribute to the union that included images and video that were both current and historic. Members celebrated their role in the fight for workers’ rights as drummers, dancers and Harley Davidson motorcycles revved up the opening ceremony on June 28.

Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa announced the Teamsters had organized 135,000 new members in the past five years since their last convention — more than any other labor union in North America. Hours later, he announced that more than 3,000 Republic Airways pilots had just voted to join or remain with the Teamsters by a margin of 2-to-1.

“This is how we fight back — we organize,” Hoffa said.

Teamsters International General Secretary-Treasurer Tom Keegel also set the tone early in the day with a vow: “There’s no way they’re going to bust us or take us down because it ain’t gonna happen.”

BLET National President Dennis Pierce, himself a delegate, lead the Rail Conference delegation made up of 78 elected representatives from the BLET and the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division. As President of the Teamsters Rail Conference, Brother Pierce was seated on stage during the convention’s opening ceremonies with the IBT General Executive Board. Randy Cammack,
Teamsters, Rail Conference resolve to ensure high-speed rail jobs are union jobs

A resolution to support high-speed rail and the union jobs that should go with it was passed on June 30 by 1,800 delegates to the Teamsters 28th International Convention with full support from its 70,000-member Rail Conference.

The resolution states in part that "the rebirth of the middle class in America has the power and authority to modify the Constitution protecting the economic recovery and the rebirth of the middle class in America. The Teamsters Rail Conference represents more than 70,000 men and women working in the railroad industry as locomotive engineers, conductors, trainmen and maintenance of way employees. Dennis Pierce, President of the Teamsters Rail Conference and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, said current plans in Congress to privatize Amtrak would exempt employees of the privately owned railways from important labor protections, such as the Railway Labor Act, Railroad Retirement Act and the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act.

For BLET members, the resolution states that: "any high-speed passenger rail train that operates in this nation must have a certified conductive or protective rail corridor to his political friends, and provide them with massive government subsidies." "There is no tax savings to the American people in this scheme," Simpson said. "It will not produce improved passenger service, good paying jobs, or economic growth. But it will transfer our tax dollars into the pockets of Wall Street speculators and corporate profiteers." Dennis Pierce, President of the Teamsters Rail Conference and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, said current plans in Congress to privatize Amtrak would exempt employees of the privately owned railways from important labor protections, such as the Railway Labor Act, Railroad Retirement Act and the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act.

The Teamsters Rail Conference went on to call for the prosecution of chief executives on Wall Street Greed, the rebirth of the middle class from assault by concentrated power and wealth.

Biden said recent attacks on working people by politicians in state capitols and Congress represent "the most direct assault on labor in modern American history." During the five-day convention, which closed on July 1, Teamsters focused on the war being waged on workers by extremist politicians in the states and in Congress. Biden’s remarks echoed the union’s message that attacks on unions are attacks on the middle class.

"What other institution in America has the power to take on this concentration of power and wealth?" Biden said.

For white-collar workers in the middle class who don’t see any relevance to unions, for my kids, for my grandkids, we can’t lose this war," he said.

Biden said the difference between the Obama administration and Republicans is their commitment to the middle class. "Look at Wisconsin, Ohio, New Hampshire, Missouri, Iowa, Pennsylvania, on and on. Did you ever think that in 2011 you’d be fighting against right to work for less again?" he said.

"In their vision you have no place at all. In our vision you are the place," he said. “Without you there is no American Dream. There is no possibility. We stand with organized labor because you’re standing with the people who are struggling to get a chance."
National President Pierce addresses Teamster convention

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce addressed more than 1,800 delegates at the 28th International Convention of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters on June 30 in his role as the President of the Teamster Rail Conference, which is comprised of the BLET and the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMWED).

In his remarks, President Pierce thanked the International Union and Teamsters General President James Hoffa for the solidarity shown in support of the Teamsters Rail Conference.

The majority of President Pierce’s comments to the delegates involved the status of national contract negotiations under the auspices of the Rail Labor Bargaining Coalition (RLBC) — a group representing the BLET, BMWED and four other rail unions.

Pierce told the delegates that the RLBC’s level of solidarity is stronger than he has ever seen.

“In the current round of bargaining, which is now in its 18th month, the RLBC has reunited to bargain as a united coalition. When we end the company’s ability to play ‘divide-and-conquer’ we give ourselves a much better chance to produce a fair agreement for our members.”

Pierce said that their solidarity will be tested as the rail carriers attempt to force a concessionary contract on Rail Labor, in spite of the fact that railroad companies have made record profits in recent years.

The RLBC has united with almost all other rail labor unions to voice their united opposition to the concessionary contract.

“Together, 11 unions representing 75 percent of the nation’s rail workers told the National Mediation Board loud and clear that we will not accept this contract.”

He closed by telling the delegates that Rail Labor solidarity backed by Teamster Power is the best way to win the strongest possible contract.

“To win this fight, all of the remaining rail unions must stand side by side, in solidarity, because as we all know, united we stand, divided we fall.”

— Dennis Pierce

The delegates and guests in the hall responded by giving him a long and loud standing ovation.

The work of the convention delegates concluded on July 1. Seventy-eight delegates represented BLET and BMWED members from all parts of the United States. The IBT membership includes approximately 1.4 million workers in the U.S., Canada and Puerto Rico.
AS OF FEBRUARY 28, 2011
32 — H. E. Jude
32 — J. A. Kozar
46 — S. S. Purello
53 — W. Boback
71 — C. H. Hunt Jr.
103 — L. G. Wells
259 — J. T. Sullivan Jr.
269 — A. R. Colucci
333 — J. A. Leach
354 — S. L. Watts

AS OF MARCH 31, 2011
94 — J. A. Locken
104 — J. D. Gerdo
195 — L. S. Nielsen Jr.
294 — J. G. Raymond
312 — W. Hayward
391 — J. G. Holvey
484 — R. A. Gibson I
642 — T. H. Anderson
811 — K. D. Barrow

AS OF APRIL 30, 2011
2 — D. L. Cook
43 — M. A. Crawford
78 — N. F. Pierce
81 — R. D. Barnes
130 — C. L. Lucy
186 — C. T. Sexton
192 — D. J. Kelly
197 — E. C. Price
238 — T. J. Kenny
269 — R. M. Craven
303 — A. L. Hanson
325 — M. J. Bayko
444 — J. G. Hadden
511 — D. Leesburg
781 — M. T. Pate
827 — B. W. Langford
858 — C. L. Carter
940 — E. C. McNutt

AS OF MAY 31, 2011
35 — R. E. Sweat Jr.
98 — E. C. Bauers
100 — M. K. Nixon
114 — R. P. Burt
121 — W. L. Barker Sr.
165 — J. J. Bruska Jr.
191 — B. Civitarese
202 — S. J. Backer
219 — J. R. Cook Jr.
259 — J. J. Bruska Jr.
444 — J. G. Hadden
511 — D. Leesburg
781 — M. T. Pate
811 — J. W. McDonald
827 — B. W. Langford
858 — C. L. Carter
940 — E. C. McNutt
Vice Presidents Priester, Davis keep busy in the field

A number of the core items on National President Dennis Pierce's agenda is to increase the presence of National Division officers in the field. President Pierce himself has attended several regular Division meetings since January 1, setting an example for other Advisory Board members.

In June, BLET National Vice President Mike Priester followed President Pierce's lead and attended the regular meeting of BLET Division 776 in Galveston, Texas. As Vice President, Brother Priester is assigned to the BNSF property, among others, and the members of Division 776 are part of the BNSF (areauser & ftp) General Committee of Adjustment.

On April 1, National Vice President Cole Davis attended the regular meeting of BLET Division 527 in Pittsburgh, Kan. Among his other assignments, Brother Davis is assigned to the Kansas City Southern (MidSouthRail, SouthRail, Gateway Western, Illinois & Midland) General Committee of Adjustment.

"A cornerstone of this administration is to increase our outreach and contact with BLET members in the field," President Pierce said. "Attending Division meetings that we are invited to, whenever our schedules permit, is an important job for everyone on the Advisory Board. Interaction with our Brothers and Sisters throughout the year. Registration begins at 8 a.m. and ends at 12:30 p.m. In Huntington at the Ramada Limited, 3094 16th Street Road. In Louisville at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Louisville, Kentucky. 850 Phillips Lane.

October 21, 2011
U.S. Railroad Retirement Board Informational Conferences
HUNTINGTON, W.VA. AND LOUISVILLE, KY.

The Railroad Retirement Board offers free informational conferences to BLET officers throughout the year. Registration begins at 8 a.m. The program begins at 8:30 a.m. and ends at 12:30 p.m. In Huntington at the Comfort Inn & Suites, 707 Interstate 30, Cash/Campbell Banquet Room. In Philadelphia at the Steel Metal Workers Local 19 Union Hall, 1301 S. Columbus Blvd.

October 28, 2011
U.S. Railroad Retirement Board Informational Conferences
LITTLE ROCK, ARK., AND PHILADELPHIA, PA.

Registration begins at 8 a.m. The program begins at 8:30 a.m. and ends at 12:30 p.m. In Philadelphia at the Comfort Inn & Suites, 707 Interstate 30, Cash/Campbell Banquet Room. In Philadelphia at the Steel Metal Workers Local 19 Union Hall, 1301 S. Columbus Blvd.

Plan ahead for 2012!
JUNE 24-29, 2012
85th annual Southeastern Meeting Association
WALT DISNEY WORLD, ORLANDO, FLA.
Chairman Earl Kerper (Division 35) and Vice Chairman Mike Tanner (Division 769) are hosting the 2012 SMA at Disney. For details, visit www.SMA2012.com.
Daughter of BLET member wins Union Plus scholarship

Rachel McWilliams, daughter of BLET member Bobby L. McWilliams, has been awarded a $1,000 scholarship from the Union Plus Scholarship Program.

Bobby McWilliams, a Union Pacific locomotive engineer, is a member of BLET Division 664 in San Luis Obispo, Calif.

Rachel McWilliams is a young woman of unusually diverse interests. The longtime choir member has a passion for singing, and her intended major in college is music education. Rachel has also been involved with her local 4-H program for several years. She likes baking and also enjoys big game hunting. She has explored a wide variety of interests while also giving back to her community as a volunteer.

"My father has remained gainfully employed during such rich and diverse experiences," she said. "Union Plus has provided scholarships to help union members and leaders finish their degrees through the Union Plus Scholarship Program. Union Plus also offers scholarships to help union members and leaders finish their degrees through the Union Plus Scholarship Program. Since starting the program in 1991, Union Plus has awarded $500,000 in scholarships to students who choose to pursue higher education."