As the BLET News was about to go to press, the National Division received a copy of a letter of intent signed by Robert Allen, Chairman of the National Railway Labor Conference, and Paul Thompson, President of the United Transportation Union. The letter, dated Nov. 1, 2004, gives the UTU the right to implement exclusive representation, seniority maintenance fees and seniority retention fees on Burlington Northern Santa Fe, CSX, Kansas City Southern, Norfolk Southern, and Union Pacific.

In essence, the agreement will force trainmen to pay the UTU the equivalent of monthly dues even though they belong to the BLET.

Seniority maintenance fees require train service employees to pay a monthly fee to UTU to “accumulate train service seniority.” Seniority retention fees require locomotive engineers who belong to the BLET to pay to the UTU to retain train service seniority. If they don’t pay the fee, then their seniority in train service is “extinguished.” The latter arrangement will be in effect on properties where the BLET has a seniority maintenance agreement in place.

UTU can implement the letter of intent on a general committee basis on a territory as small as a seniority district, subject to its ratification procedures.

“The way it is written, UTU General Chairmen will take all the blame if the members revolt,” President Hahs said. “The UTU leadership in Cleveland has given them the gun — the General Chairmen will be the ones who have to pull the trigger. They need to think about that.”

The UTU’s action is a last-gasp effort to stop the financial bleeding caused by a huge loss of trainmen membership to the BLET, which recently merged with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

“The UTU is losing members left and right,” BLET National President Don Hahs said. “By implementing a nationwide seniority maintenance fee program, the UTU is attempting to pick the pockets of members and non-members alike.”

“We had an idea that the UTU was up to something when, out of the blue, it issued a press release on October 15 claiming that the BLET had implemented seniority maintenance agreements on Conrail Shared Assets and the Kansas City Southern. BLET has had those agreements in place for quite some time in response to UTU’s seniority maintenance fees on those properties.”

According to President Hahs, what is missing from the October 15 UTU news release is the fact that the UTU was the first union to implement these fees at Conrail and KCS. The UTU pioneered the concept of seniority maintenance fees years ago, requiring engineers to pay a fee or join the UTU in order to maintain their seniority. BLET challenged UTU’s seniority maintenance agreements in the Supreme Court.

“The UTU implemented seniority maintenance only after the UTU did so,” President Hahs said. “We need our members to be protected.”

UTU charges ‘maintenance fees’
Neighborhood evacuated after remote control wreck

Remote control hazmat spill in East St. Louis forces evacuation, sends 75 to hospital

A remote control train wreck in East St. Louis on September 21 is one of several serious remote control accidents in recent weeks, heightening concerns about the lack of enforceable federal regulations to ensure the safety of these operations.

At 3:30 a.m. on September 21, a remote control locomotive was in use when four train cars went off the tracks at an East St. Louis area rail yard, resulting in a major hazardous material release and possibly sickening 75 people at a nearby high school. Approximately 140 people living in the nearby neighborhood were evacuated from their homes as a result of the hazmat release.

According to BLET National President Don Hahs, the Federal Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) were unaware that remote control was involved in the East St. Louis accident until notified by the BLET.

The BLET Safety Task Force received party status from the NTSB to assist in the accident investigation. “How many more derailments, hazmat spills, near misses, and employee fatalities must we endure before the Federal Railroad Administration develops enforceable federal regulations?” President Hahs asked. “The BLET does not oppose this technology, but had hoped to prohibit its use until enforceable federal safety regulations were put in place. The current rush of accidents, coupled with the fact that some are not being reported to the FRA and NTSB, is the result of new technology being deployed without adequate federal safety standards.”

In the absence of federal safety regulations, the BLET is working with Congressman Gene Green (D-TX) to pass legislation that would prevent the use of remote control locomotives in the transportation of rail cars containing hazardous materials. The bill number is H.R. 5119.

“The nation’s major railroads, along with the leadership of a union not affiliated with the ALC-OIF, began implementing remote control train operations in 2002. These operations began under ‘recommended guidelines’ issued by the FRA, which are unenforceable in the protection of worker safety. The BLET petitioned the FRA for enforceable guidelines in November of 2000. A fatal remote control train accident took place on September 2 when BLET member Glen “Skip” York II, 26, was killed while working as a remote control operator at the Burlington Northern Santa Fe yard in Clovis, N.M.

On July 9, the Union Pacific Railroad failed to report a major remote control accident to the NTSB that happened in Pine Bluff, Ark. On October 6, a man lost an arm in a remote control accident at the Cenex Harbour Bio-diesel soybean processing plant in Fairmont, Minn. The local newspaper, the Fairmont Sentinel, reported that “Jeffrey Allen Heupel was injured while operating one of the plant’s rail engines when the remote system malfunctioned... he was using the remote to move the engine and the engine was not stopping.”

Sixty-one communities in the United States have adopted remote control safety resolutions that call upon the FRA to conduct a thorough analysis of the safety of remote control train operations and to adopt enforceable federal safety regulations to ensure the safety of the technology.

BLET tests to stop inspection of U.S. trains in Mexico

Continued from Page 1

said during his oral presentation. “For example, in the Spanish version of 49CFR, there are numerous instances where text is omitted or deleted, ranging from single words or phrases to paragraphs and even entire sections numbering 20 or 30 pages. In addition, the Spanish translation is from an outdated version of 49CFR, one that lacks any mention of locomotive sanitation regulations that have been in effect since 2002.

“These examples are offered as an illustration of the questionable overall quality of the material that is used to train the personnel who will be charged with conducting the inspections in accordance with current FRA regulations. If the regulatory language is incorrect, we can fully expect the quality of the training material to be questionable. It is therefore doubtful that the training employees receive is fully compliant with 49CFR.”

The BLET also testified regarding the issue of accountability for those persons responsible for conducting inspections and tests in Mexico.

“FRA has the authority to impose civil penalties against railroads and their employees for failure to comply with safety related regulations,” Briggs said. “These penalties are in place to act as an effective deterrent against lax inspections and the use of non-compliant or unsafe equipment. Clearly, FRA has no jurisdiction in Mexico and therefore no method of ensuring compliance other than 49CFR’s volume 4 regulations.

“BLET has great difficulty understanding how allowing the TMF railroad, which is based in Mexico, to voluntarily comply with FRA regulations, as would be the case if this waiver is granted, is consistent with FRA’s mission to improve rail safety.”

BLET described these essential testing and inspection requirements to be the living end of over a century of experience with railroad equipment failure and design needs for safety. The regulatory oversight performed by well-trained, qualified, and accountable individuals assures employee and public safety. These vital duties cannot be exported to a place where the safety culture is not equal to that of the U.S. or Canada.

The BLET also cited issues of security in arguing against the UF’s waiver request. “The Department of Homeland Security and Transportation Security Administration, as well as BLET are currently raising awareness of security vulnerabilities that exist in the freight rail system in the United States,” Briggs testified. “With respect to this operation, the inspections that are currently done on trains in Laredo provide an added layer of security. Because approval of this proposal would remove that redundancy, and lessen security on those trains, BLET urges the Department of Homeland Security and the Transportation Security Administration to study this proposal and make their finding a part of this record.”

At the conclusion of the meeting, Grady Cothen, the FRA’s Acting Association Administrator, asked the BLET to provide a more detailed report of the errors and mistakes in the Spanish translation of 49CFR. The BLET also requested that the public record be held open an additional 60 days because of the impact this waiver request may have on matters of security.

In addition to Oberstar, 11 signatures are now on the letter opposing the UF waiver request, including Corrine Brown (D-FL), Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), Carl Blumenauer (D-OR), Peter DeFazio (D-OR), Michael Capuano (D-MA), Elijah Cummings (D-MD), Michael A. Michaud (D-ME), Nick Lampson (D-TX), William Liptinsky (D-LI), Juanita Millender-McDonald (D-CA), Ellen Tauscher (D-CA), Jerry Costello (D-IL), Tim Holden (D-PA), Julia Carson (D-IN) and Ed Pappas (D-NY).

BLET members are asked to contact their Representative in the House and ask them to sign on to the Oberstar letter. A copy of Oberstar’s letter to FRA Acting Administrator Betty Monro is available on the BLET website at http://www.blet.org/pdf/monro.pdf

The entire docket can be seen at http://dms.dot.gov and is listed as Docket No. 1576.

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Retirement Board

Continued from Page 1

over the years to ensure that the railroad retirement system is financially sound... any change in the system that would jeopardize the current and future payments of benefits under the Act must be seen as extremely unlikely.”

The UFC, facing an uncertain future, has resorted to muddling and searing tactics in an effort to stem the tide of dwindling membership. The BLET/Teamsters have defeated the UFC in numerous head-to-head shortline representation elections over the past three years, and an ever-increasing number of former UFC members have joined the BLET/Teamsters each month for the past nine months.

“It should be clear now that the false allegations being spread by the UFC are pure bunk, dreamed up by UFC spin doctors in an effort to discredit the BLET and Teamsters,” said BLET National President Don Hahs. “It is shameful that the UFC’s leadership would resort to such tactics.”

Counsel Bartholow’s legal opinion is available at: http://www.blet.org/pd/rbr.pdf.

Shortline Organizing

Continued from Page 1

ers and Sisters into the House of Labor and thank them for voting for the BLET,” BLET National President Don Hahs said. “We will now begin the process of negotiating a new contract withiesel management to improve the wages, benefits, and standard of living for New England Central’s train and engine service employees.”

President Hahs thanked Tommy Miller, the BLET’s Director of Organizing, for another job well done. He also thanked the Special Reps and especially Brother Ben Martin, New York Susquehanna & Western General Chairman, and Jim Masker, NY/NJ/SW Secretary/Treasurer, for their assistance.

“The New England Central train and engine service employees wanted to be a part of the 1.4 million member BLET, the largest transportation union in the country,” Brother Miller said.

The NECR is owned by RailAmerica and is headquartered in St. Albans, Vt. The railroad operates over 329 miles of track between East Alburgh, Vt., and New London, Conn., handling mostly iron, steel, grain, lumber, wood, pulp and paper products.

Continued from Page 1

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The MetLife Claims Center opened on September 21 to handle short-term disability claims from members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen.

To initiate a claim for a sickness, accident/injury or pregnancy, it will be necessary to call: (800) 856-6506

Call the toll free number if you are absent for more than 14 consecutive calendar days. If the absence is scheduled, such as a hospital stay, you should call prior to your last day of work. If you were disabled on July 1, 2004 or after and expect that the disability will continue through October 1, 2004, please call the toll free number as soon as possible in order to initiate a claim.

When you call, you will be asked to provide the following information:

- Personal Information — name, address, telephone number, Social Security Number, job title, BLET General Committee, and local BLET Division
- Job Information — railroad, workplace location and address, work schedule, telephone number, date of hire on railroad, and date entered engine service
- Sickness/Injury Information — last day worked, nature of illness, how, when and where the injury occurred, when disability commenced, and craft working in at the time of injury/onset of illness
- Physician’s Information — name, address, telephone number, fax number for each treating physician

MetLife will determine eligibility based on information provided by the railroads.

MetLife will mail an “Authorization to Disclose Information About Me” form to you immediately after you report your claim. It is important that you do the following:

- Complete all applicable areas of the form
- Sign the form
- Fax or mail the form as soon as possible to expedite your claim (retain original for your records)

Provide your treating physician (s) with a signed copy.

Failure to follow these steps could delay processing of your claim.

Your physician(s) may also ask you to sign his/her specific authorization form(s). Please do so.

A brochure describing the claims process in detail and a “Question and Answer” document will be mailed to members of the participating railroads in the near future. A link to the “QA” document is on the BLET website at: http://www.ble-t.org/pdf/metlife.pdf

If you need BLET assistance in working with MetLife, please contact: Jim Bradford

BLET Short-term Disability Administrator
Phone: (830) 806-1592
E-mail: Bradford@ble-t.org

The following statement was issued by Edward Wytkind, President of the AFL-CIO’s Transportation Trades Department (TTD) issued the following news release on October 4.)

In response to a Bush administration move to suppress railroad workers from speaking out on critical issues of working conditions, safety, and pay, AFL-CIO rail union and their members have launched a national mobilization which has already generated thousands of protest e-mails to the Bush administration and Congress.

Edward Wytkind, President of the AFL-CIO’s Transportation Trades Department, condemned what he termed the Bush administration’s, “this bureaucratic smokescreen of new ‘filing fees’ to cut down on the number of railroad workers who file grievances demanding workplace safety and security and an end to unfair corporate behavior.”

The proposal being advanced by Bush appointees to the National Media tion Board would only apply to workers, not management, Wytkind said. For over 70 years in the federal government has provided arbitration for labor-management disputes as part of an agreement between labor, management and our government that aims to reduce disruptions in rail service.

“The intent of these ‘reforms’ is crystal clear: silencing workers and tilting the playing field in management’s favor. This one-way tax on workers’ legal rights is yet another example of the bureaucratic smokescreens.”

President has not done the “hard work” toward a plan to better protect airline passengers, to police cargo in our ports, to secure our transportation system and stop the terrorists from using our members’ workplace to spread their hatred in the United States.

“Last night was yet another reminder to all Americans that on November 2 we must choose between four more years of inaction that places travelers and workers at risk or a vigorous commitment to police our transportation system and stop the terrorists from using our members’ workplace to spread their hatred in the United States.”

That is the message we will carry to millions of transportation workers in the next 32 days.”

TDD represents 35 member unions in the aviation, rail, transit, trucking, highway, longshore, maritime and related industries. For more information, visit www.ttd.org.

BLET short-term disability insurance update

Rail workers would have to pay fees for filing grievances under Bush plan

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Phone: (830) 806-1592
E-mail: Bradford@ble-t.org

The Frei Family

Emily Frei, the daughter of BLET Division 239 (Knoxville, Tenn.) member Scott Frei, was involved in a tragic automobile accident on September 21 to handle short-term disability insurance update.

Emily, 17, sustained second and third degree burns over 75 percent of her body, and remains in critical condition at this time. She is currently undergoing treatment at Cincinnati Shriners Hospital. On September 28, Emily underwent her 11th surgical procedure since the accident. She is doing well, but is still in critical condition.

Lucy Frei, the mother of member injured in automobile accident

Brother Scott Frei is spending time away from home and work with Norfolk Southern to stay in Cincinnati with his family during this crisis.

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Lucy Frei, the mother of member injured in automobile accident

Brother Scott Frei is spending time away from home and work with Norfolk Southern to stay in Cincinnati with his family during this crisis.

Donations for the Frei family can be sent to:

Emily Frei
Cincinnati Shriners Hospital
3229 Burnet Avenue
Cincinnati, OH 45229-3095

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Kerry sends loud message on transportation security

The following statement was issued by Edward Wytkind, President of the AFL-CIO’s Transportation Trades Department.

In the September 30 debate, John Kerry told America that he will secure the nation’s transportation system — our ports, airlines, trains and subway systems — that have been badly neglected by President Bush.

John Kerry told the nation — and specifically America’s travelers and transportation workers — that he has a plan to better protect airline passengers, to police cargo in our ports, to protect mass transit and rail passengers from terrorist threats and to give voice to workers who know that the tools and resources they need. George W. Bush’s silence on the topic proves he is consistent — he has been consistently silent for three years since September 11.

“The President refused to answer Kerry’s criticisms and in fact evaded these issues entirely. This comes as no surprise to transportation workers, whose calls for aggressive action have fallen on deaf ears in a White House that has been busy orchestrating photo opportunities while unfortunately missing in action in closing the gaping security holes in our transportation system.

“It is not enough to tell Americans that you are resolution and strong. Frontline transportation workers know that when it comes to protecting the security of our transportation system, the President has been neither resolute nor strong and has been wrong in ignoring the safety of the traveling public. The President has not done the “hard work” to secure our transportation system against terrorist attacks.

“Last night was yet another reminder to all Americans that on November 2 they must choose between four more years of inaction that places travelers and workers at risk or a vigorous commitment to police our transportation system and stop the terrorists from using our members’ workplace to spread their hatred in the United States.”

That is the message we will carry to millions of transportation workers in the next 32 days.”

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INTERNATIONAL WESTERN CONVENTION

The opening ceremony of the 64th annual International Western Convention in Albuquerque, N.M., began with a procession of bagpipe players.

The BLET’s Executive Committee, from left: National Secretary-Treasurer Bill Walpert; First Vice-President Ed Rodzwicz; and National President Don Hahs.

IWC Chairman Pat Lynch, who hosted the event along with his wife, Barbie, and the members of BLET Division 446 (Gallup, N.M.), displays his roping skills.

From left: Randy Saunders, Local Chairman of BLET Division 5 in Los Angeles; Larry Law, Local Chairman of BLET Division 56 in West Colton, Calif.; and Kim Law.

From left: GIA President Onita Wayland; GIA Secretary Anita Caruso; and GIA Vice President/National Legislative Representative Becky Schneider.

From left: Tom Flaskamp, FELA designated attorney; Eddie Sanchez, Local Chairman of Division 134 (Winslow, Ariz.); Scott Gibson, Member of Division 811 (Clovis, N.M.); and Rick Fuller, Member of Division 446 (Gallup, N.M.) and Secretary-Treasurer of the 2004 IWC.

Tim Donnigan, General Chairman of the Union Pacific-Western Region GCofA.

Louis Fernandez, Legislative Representative of BLET Division 383 (Needles, Calif.)
From left: General Chairman Rick Gibbons, BNSF (former STL&SF); and General Chairman Pat Williams (former AT&SF).

From left: Scott Palmer, Legislative Representative of BLET Division 42 (Klamath Falls, Ore.); Bob Harvey, the BLET’s Regulatory Research Coordinator and member of BLET Division 622 (Alliance, Neb.); and Paul Wingo, BLET National Vice-President.

From left: General Chairman Mike Young, Union Pacific (Eastern District); and Dave Geisler, Local Chairman of BLET Division 133 (Denver, Colo.).

Tom McRill, Vice-Local Chairman of BLET Division 777 (Platte City, Mo.) and his wife, Lynne.

From left: Lawrence Kemper, Legislative Representative of BLE Division 94 (Gillette, Wyo.); General Chairman Dennis Pierce, BNSF-MRL; and Craig Schmit, Local Chairman of Division 624 (Sheridan, Wyo.).

Sam Caruso, a member of BLET Division 183 (Omaha, Neb.), and Anita Caruso, Secretary of the Grand International Auxiliary.

From left: Mike Weston, the newly-elected Chairman of the Colorado State Legislative Board, and his wife, Connie.

GIA President Onita Wayland presents a Certificate of Appreciation to Barbie Lynch.

From left: Billy Joe Worth, President of Division 173 (Fond du Lac, Wis.); and John Reynolds, Wisconsin Central General Chairman.
House bill by Rep. Green (D-TX) would prohibit remote control movements of hazardous materials

According to the bill, "No railroad carrier shall operate or cause to be operated on the general system of railroad transportation a remote control locomotive to carry hazardous materials... A railroad carrier that knowingly violates this section or a rule issued under this section is liable to the United States Government for a civil penalty of at least $5,000 but not more than $50,000 for each violation."

In September, a remote control train was involved in a hazardous material spill in East St. Louis that forced 140 people living near the tracks to be evacuated.

BLET members can support this legislation by contacting their Representatives and asking them to co-sponsor H.R. 5119. Members can call the Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3171, or they can contact their Representatives via the Internet at: http://www.house.gov.

The measure currently has seven co-sponsors, including: Kevin Brady (R- TX); Julia Carson (D-IN); Bob Filner (D-CA); Nick Lampson (D-TX); Silvestre Reyes (D-TX); Ciro Rodriguez (D-TX), and Tim Ryan (D-OH).

Railroad Retirement service credits and pay for time lost

The Railroad Retirement Board frequently receives questions from railroad employers, employees, and employees' legal advisors about the Board's treatment of pay for time lost in retirement cases. The Board's position is that the amount of pay for time lost arises out of personal injury settlements. Other types include dismissal allowances, guaranteed wages, displacement allowances paid for loss of earnings resulting from the employee being placed in a position or occupation paying less money, and reinstatement awards which include back pay.

It is important that agreements between employ- ers and employees involving pay for time lost are structured correctly for railroad retirement purposes because they are often intended to provide an em- ployee with additional months of creditable service needed to qualify for railroad retirement benefits. Crediting fewer service months than intended may leave an employee ineligible for benefits, while crediting an excessive number of months may delay the beginning date of those benefits. The following questions and answers describe the requirements for the railroad retirement crediting of pay for time lost.

1. How do the railroad retirement laws treat pay for time lost?

Pay for time lost attributable to lost earnings for an identifiable period of absence from active service is treated as compensation creditable under the Railroad Retirement Act (RRA). The intent of the act is to ensure that pay for time lost correctly provides for time lost to a month or months already reported as service months. Occasionally, an employee will resign to receive the payment, the employment relation ceases upon resignation. Allocation after the resignation date is not allowed because it cannot be considered time lost as an employee. With respect to pay for time lost allocated into the future, service months to which pay for time lost has been allocated must be at least $1,200.

2. What factors should be taken into account to ensure that pay for time lost will be creditable for railroad retirement purposes?

A payment must be made with respect to an identifiable period of time. The specific months during the period of absence from active service must be identified, for example, "the 12 month period beginning September 2003 and ending August 2004." In the case of a payment for personal injury, the entire amount is considered pay for time lost unless, at the time of payment, the employer states that a particular amount of the payment was for other reasons. The employer must make a good faith determination of whether the payment is for time lost, and therefore creditable, to the specified period.

An employment relationship must exist in the months to be credited for pay for time lost. Allocation toward future months is permissible as long as the amount of the award was for other reasons. The Board can determine whether the military service is service months to which pay for time lost has been allocated. In addition, deemed service months should not be considered in the number of total service months when an allocation period is determined if those deemed service months are within the allocation period. A pay for time lost allocation increasing service and compensation will generally eliminate or reduce the number of deemed service months on record for any affected year. Deemed service months are the product of a calculation. If the component parts of the calculation change as the result of an adjustment to service and compensation due to a payment for time lost, then the number of deemed service months to which an employee is entitled is likely to change.

Also, the possibility that an employee has creditable military service should be considered because such military service may not be reflected in the Board’s records and may reduce the number of allo- cated months needed to attain annuity eligibility. Employees are encouraged to file proof of any mili- tary service well in advance of retirement so the Board can determine whether the military service is creditable as railroad service. The Board will include creditable military service in its records, which will expedite the annuity application process and also en- sure that the Board’s records of an employee’s service- are as complete as possible.

4. Is pay for time lost subject to railroad re- tirement Tier I and Tier II payroll taxes?

As with all compensation, pay for time lost is sub- ject to taxation under the Railroad Retirement Tax Act at the Tier I and Tier II tax rates and annual maxi- mum earnings bases in effect when pay for time lost is made. Pay for time lost is not, however, creditable on the basis of when the payment is made, but to the period for which the payment is allocated. Therefore, the taxable amount and creditable amount will some- times differ. The employee’s portion of the railroad retirement tax liability is usually withheld from the gross amount of the award.

5. What effect would pay for time lost have on the payment of a railroad retirement annuity or unemployment or sickness benefits for the same days?

Because pay for time lost is considered earned in the month allocated, an employee is not entitled to an annuity under the Railroad Retirement Act with respect to any months to which pay for time lost has been allocated. If a payment for time lost is made which covers a period for which benefits under the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act were previously paid, the benefits would be subject to recovery.

6. Where can someone get more information about pay for time lost?

Additional information on pay for time lost, as well as other railroad retirement topics, is available on the Board’s Web site at www.rrb.gov. In addition, specific questions can be directed to the Railroad Retirement Board’s Quality Reporting Service Cen- ter, 544 North Rush Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611- 2092. Their phone number is (312) 751-4982. •
BLET, IC&E at odds over contract

National Mediation Board releases parties from mediation; Railroad management refuses to ‘seriously address’ needs of BLET members

The National Mediation Board released the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen and the Iowa, Chicago & Eastern (IC&E) railroad from mediation, opening the door for the next step under the Railway Labor Act.

The National Mediation Board (NMB), the federal overseer of labor-management relations in the railroad industry, released the two parties involved in the dispute on September 3. The NMB organized the property in December of 2002, and workers there have been without a contract for nearly two years. BLET and IC&E have been in mediation for 16 months.

With release from mediation, both labor and transportation management are free to take economic self-help actions. Any job action is also subject to the service of the IC&E’s railroad sister the Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern Railroad (DMEA).

The next step under the Railway Labor Act is arbitration, with the Arbitrator to be appointed by the American Arbitration Association (AAA). All appeals shall be consolidated and decided by the AAA. The arbitrator shall have control over all procedural matters affecting the arbitration. The arbitrator shall give full consideration to the legal arguments presented by the parties, the evidence and the record.

About a week ago, the BLET General Committee on Conrail served notice that, pursuant to its 1996 agreement, it would begin a seniority maintenance fee program, requiring IC&E engineers to pay a monthly fee to the union to continue accumulating trainman seniority. Within 30 days, the BLET General Chairman at the time, Bob Godwin, polled the BLET Conrail General Committee and, as a result, withdrew the BLET’s exclusive right to represent engineers.

The BLET General Chairman Tom Roberts explained the reason behind his General Committee’s action to begin seniority maintenance fees at Conrail.

“UTE Exclusive Representation is my target, not UTM Members,” said the Conrail SAA/CSXT North-South District General Chairman. “On Conrail, seniority accumulation fees are dependent upon UTE exclusive right to represent trainmen. In 1996, the UTM General Committee on Conrail served notice that, pursuant to its 1996 agreement, it would begin a seniority maintenance fee program, requiring BLE engine engineers to pay a monthly fee to the union to continue accumulating trainman seniority. Within 30 days, the BLE General Chairman at the time, Bob Godwin, polled the BLE Conrail General Committee and, as a result, withdrew the BLE’s exclusive right to represent engine engineers.”

The reason behind his General Committee’s action to begin seniority maintenance fees at Conrail.

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Amtrak sets record year

For the second year in a row, Amtrak has posted its highest ridership ever,调味 the federally subsidized railroad transportation system's continual search for debate in Congress, carried 23,053,564 passengers nationwide in the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30. That’s a 4.3 percent increase over last year’s ridership of 22,425,119 — the previous record-setting total for the 33-year-old Amtrak system.

Meanwhile, four state-supported "corridor" routes that Amtrak operates within Illinois each saw increases in ridership. So did cross-country, or long-distance, trains that pass through Illinois, including the San Antonio-Tucson "Texas Eagle" that stops in Springfield. Amtrak racked up its biggest numbers ever, despite having to suspend some train service due to the recent Florida hurricanes.

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Electoral Day: November 2

November 2 may be the most important election day in the last 20 years for America. What we have now is a president who is intent on helping his corporate friends instead of honoring the hardworking men and women who make this country the most productive in the world. The Bush White House has systematically tried to reduce overtime pay for workers, allowed healthcare costs to be out of control and given tax cuts to only the richest people.

Most recently the White House has set its sites on our rail members. Under the guise of new filing fees, some members of the National Mediation Board — appointed by George Bush — are working to silence the voice of rail workers from speaking up about their job or exercising their collective bargaining rights. The NMB is proposing filing fees for arbitrating such labor-management disputes, it something it has never done in the past four years. This is one more reason to give George Bush his pink slip on November 2.

Vote for John Kerry

John Kerry is the working family’s candidate. A vote for John Kerry on November 2 will be a vote to bring back the respect for America’s working families that has been trampled on for the past four years. He and his running mate John Edwards have proved that they understand middle-class values.

Kerry and Edwards promise to work with labor unions to improve workplace safety protections, overhaul the healthcare system so that more Americans have coverage and restore transportation infrastructure funding to higher levels. With the rail corporations constantly looking for ways to streamline their operations at the expense of their employees, we need Kerry as our advocate for a safe, reliable and union-operated rail system.

No data chip, remote control device or other robot will ever replace the eyes and ears of a seasoned rail employee and we must elect a president who understands that.

Join me on November 2 and vote for John Kerry!

James P. Hoffa
General President

IBT Disaster Relief Fund

The Teamsters Disaster Relief Fund is seeking contributions to provide assistance to members in areas ravaged by recent floods and storms. The fund is currently providing assistance to Teamsters in the states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia who were affected by the hurricanes and floods. Please send a donation to the Fund to ensure everyone who is in need gets support and help. Send your check to: Teamster Disaster Relief Fund 25 Louisiana Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20001 Contributions are tax deductible.

BLET NEWS

October 2004 Calendar & Events

October 31-November 5... Advanced Local Chairman Workshop, Silver Spring, Md.

The Education & Training Department of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers will conduct an advanced Local Chairman Workshop on the campus of the George Meany Center’s National Labor College in Silver Spring, Md. For details, contact Ken Kroeger, Coordinator of the BLET Education & Training Dept., at (216) 272-0996 or e-mail: Kroeger@ble-t.org

November 15-19... BLET General Chairman Workshop, Cleveland, Ohio

The BLET Education & Training Department is offering a General Chairman’s workshop in the BLET Arbitration Department offices on the fifth floor of the Standard Building, Room 500, in Cleveland, Ohio, the week of November 15, 2004. For additional details, contact Brother Ken Kroeger, Coordinator of the BLET Education & Training Dept., at (216) 272-0996 or e-mail: Kroeger@ble-t.org

June 12-16, 2005... 78th Annual Southeastern Meeting Association, Montgomery, Ala.

Hosted by Brother David Bowen and the members of BLET Division 740, the 78th annual SMA will be held at the Embassy Suites Hotel, 300 Tallapoosa St., Montgomery, Ala. More details to come.

June 26-30, 2005... 67th Annual Eastern Union Meeting Association, Saratoga Springs

Hosted by Arrangements Chairman Bill Kearsing and the members of Division 315, the 67th Annual EUMA will be held at the Fairmont Palliser, 133 9th Ave. SW, in Calgary, Room rates are $144 per night (Canadian). For details, contact Brother Lindee at blinde535@gmail.com

July 3-6, 2005... 65th Annual International Western Convention, Calgary, Alberta

Hosted by Alisa Liddell and the members of BLET Division 355, the 65th Annual IWC will be held at the Fairmont Palliser, 133 9th Ave. SW, in Calgary. Room rates are $144 per night (Canadian). For details, contact Brother Lindee at blinde535@gmail.com

October 2-6, 2005... 70th Annual Southwestern Meeting Association Meeting, Oklahoma City

Hosted by John Salisbury and the members of BLET Division 141, the 70th annual SWCM will be held at the Renaissance Oklahoma City Convention Center, (405) 234-8000. More details to come.

Advisory Board August Activity

In accordance with the BLET’s Bylaws, summaries of BLET Advisory Board activities are published monthly.

National President Dan W. Hall — National Division office, General supervision of IBT activities; General office duties; Eastern Union Meeting Association. Hosted by John Salisbury, the 70th annual SWCM will be held at the Renaissance Oklahoma City Convention Center, (405) 234-8000. More details to come.

Lydia Mapes — General President’s Office, General office duties; Women’s Caucus; Western Union Meeting Association.

James P. Hoffa — General President’s Office, General office duties.

Michael D. Taylor — Outreach & Public Affairs Dept., at (216) 272-0986 or e-mail: Kroeger@ble-t.org

BLET News Committee

Dan W. Hall, National President
Edward W. Budnick, First Vice President & Alternate President
Raymond A. Holmes, Vice President & U.S. National Legislative Rep.
John K. Kroeger, Coordinator of the BLET Education & Training Dept.
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