NTSB on safety concerns

On February 26, the NTSB conducted a hearing in connection with its on-going investigation into the June 24, 2012 high speed, head-on collision of two Union Pacific Railroad freight trains near Goodwell, Oklahoma. The accident claimed the lives of BLET Division 592 President Dan J. Hall, Division 592 Member John S. Hall and a conductor, and seriously injured a second conductor.

At this hearing, BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce participated in a panel of witnesses who testified about accidents and incidents in which human factors play a role. Pierce informed the Board about the increasing complexity of the locomotive engineer’s job because of new technologies, new regulations, and new operating requirements that force engineers to multi-task more now than ever before. He was also critical of the industry’s punitive approach to discipline.

Several attempts to organize locomotive engineers were made between 1855 and 1860. It wasn’t until April 1863, however, that William D. Robinson, a Michigan Central locomotive engineer, brought 19 men of the craft together at his home in Marshall, Mich., and inspired them to form the organization, which survives to this day. A monument marking the event still stands in Marshall.

At a meeting in Detroit the following month, a dozen men agreed to put their destinies together. They cemented a common bond on May 8, 1863. The name Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLE) was adopted at the 1863 Convention of the Brotherhood of Railway Cyanide Workers. The BLE celebrates its 150th year on May 8, 2013.

Pierce also pointed out that, at a time of legitimate transportation industry concern over distractions from personal electronic devices such as cell phones, BLET members are buried in a blizzard of electronic devices installed to increase productivity and monitor performance in ways that divert their vigilance from the roadway ahead.

A transcript of his testimony appears on Page 2 of this issue.

The BLET’s Safety Task Force was in attendance as the union’s representative at the hearing. The team included National Chairman W. C. Walsh, National Coordinator C. W. Fields, and President’s Message

BLET leaders press

NTSB on safety concerns

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To line goes to work planning on running by a Red Signal

President Pierce with newly-elected Local Chairman Randy Gorzell, BLET Division 197 (San Antonio, Texas). On February 19, President Pierce met brother Gorzell and other new Local Division officers for the joint Local Chairman training class for the Union Pacific-Southern Region GCA (General Chairman Matt Wilson) at a joint Local Chairman training class for the Union Pacific-Southern Region GCA (General Chairman Matt Wilson).

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 beneficial communication, if a response is necessary, without needlessly expending limited BLET resources.

Adopted at Cleveland, Ohio on July 22, 2010.
Creating Jobs Must Be the Priority

Once again, the American people are being held hostage by a Congress that refuses to act. Republican lawmakers’ allegiance to big business and the ultra-rich has caused yet another stalemate in our legislative branch. And once again, it will be America’s working families that will pay the price.

Sequestration will cause thousands of American families to suffer because of $85 billion in automatic spending cuts. These cuts will destroy jobs in education, eliminate critical services for the mentally ill and the elderly, cut health care for military families, threaten food safety and lead to the furlough of federal employees.

Austerity is destroying the economies of Europe and worsening the European debt crisis. Austerity here at home will destroy America’s already fragile economy and increase our deficit unless Congress acts.

The real root cause of our budget crisis is due to decades of misguided trade policy that has hollowed out our manufacturing base, caused wages to fall and starved our government of revenue. Bad trade policy hasn’t hurt the richest Americans at all, in fact, their wealth has continued to climb while working men and women face less opportunities, inflation and stagnant wages. Our trade imbalance is masquerading as a debt crisis.

By not acting to end the sequester, Republicans are telling us that tax loopholes and their billionaire benefactors are more important than creating jobs and stimulating commercial activity in their own country. They prefer to defend an unfair tax code while attacking retiring and health benefits that Americans work all their lives to earn.

Our government must get to work on continuing to strengthen our middle class and restore balance to an economy that favors excessive profits over workplace fairness. Job creation in our country is just starting to pick up steam and it would be a huge mistake to kill what little momentum we have with these wrong-headed and unneeded cuts due to sequestration.

This shameful attack on the American people must end and Congress must act to stop the sequester and get America working again.

Fraternally,

James P. Hoffa
Teamsters General President

By not acting to end the sequester, Republicans are telling us that tax loopholes and their billionaire benefactors are more important than creating jobs and stimulating commercial activity in their own country.

Austerity here at home will destroy America’s already fragile economy and increase our deficit unless Congress acts.

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Cory L. Runion was reelected by acclamation to his third term as Chairman of the Wyoming State Legislative Board following triennial meetings that concluded on February 21, 2013, in Cheyenne, Wyo.

Brother Runion, a member of Division 115 (Cheyenne), is a Union Pacific locomotive engineer who first joined the Brotherhood on December 1, 2000. He was elected Vice Chairman of the State Legislative Board in 2007, and assumed the Chairmanship on September 28, 2008, following the retirement of former State Chairman Terry R. Jones. Brother Runion was reelected by acclamation in 2010.

“I am honored to be elected to serve the Board and look forward to taking on the challenges we will face in the future,” he said. “We have several new members on the Board and the activities during our meetings I believe have helped them as well as our returning Board members to become energized and given them new tools to do their jobs in their local Divisions.”

Also elected by acclamation to three-year terms were: 1st Vice Chairman Terry L. Cooke, Division 803 (Cheyenne, Wyo.); 2nd Vice Chairman Gerald L. Hall, Division 44 (Cheyenne, Wyo.); Secretary-Treasurer Anthony P. Lecholat, Division 624 (Sheridan, Wyo.); and Alternate Secretary-Treasurer George W. Johnson, Division 207 (Casper, Wyo.).

Elected by acclamation as members of the Audit Committee were: Steve S. Dyer, Division 31 (Bill, Wyo.); Jeff M. Leaf, Division 142 (Rawlins, Wyo.); and Eddie R. Sjostrom, Division 869 (Greybull, Wyo.).

Delegates honored retiring Secretary-Treasurer Lawrence F. Kemper (Division 94, Gillette, Wyo.) and recognized his many years of service to the Board. “It has been such a pleasure to work with Brother Lawrence for these past years and he faithfully kept our Board’s records in an exemplary manner,” Chairman Runion said. “We wish him the best in the future.”

The delegates also heard from several members of the Wyoming State legislature, which is currently in session in Cheyenne. Among them was State Senator John Hastert, who is also the Vice President of the Wyoming AFL-CIO.

The meeting was especially proud to welcome State Legislative Representatives Ken Esquibel and Lee Filer, who in addition to their service in the Wyoming legislature are members of BLET Division 115 in Cheyenne. Esquibel’s brother Floyd A. Esquibel, a State of Wyoming Senator, was also in attendance.

Members of BLET Division 56 in Colton, Calif., have submitted a group photo taken at their regular Division meeting on March 13, 2013. A key topic of the meeting was the Article 9 notice for the LA Basin followed by a general discussion for the good of the order. BLET National Vice President Mike Twombly and General Chairman Bill Hannah (Union Pacific-Western Lines GCA) were in attendance. Brother Hannah has been a member of Division 56 since 1982.

Seated, from left: Stokey Durazo, Kent A. Richards; Brian J. Becker, Secretary-Treasurer; General Chairman Hannah, and Chris Madero. Standing: Andrew Henninger Jr., Frank Durazo; Gustavo Durazo Jr.; Charles F. Henninger Jr.; R. Dean Dodson; Scott D. Gonzales; Chris T. Ranford, Legislative Representative; Ken J. Thompson; Vice President Twombly; Bryan A. Millard; Israel Razo; Matt R. Bauman; and Danny L. Holmes.
BLET 150TH ANNIVERSARY

www.ble-t.org/blet150

The impetus for creating the Brotherhood began in Marshall, Mich., with engineers employed by the Michigan Central Railroad. But Detroit is the city where it all began for the Brotherhood. On May 8, 1863, American labor history was made in Detroit with the founding of the Brotherhood of the Footboard. The Organization’s name was changed one year later to Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and then to Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen in 2004. As part of the festivities, members can register for trip to the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Mich., on the evening of May 7. It is one of America’s outstanding museums and museum villages. The trip will include transportation to and from Greenfield Village, a cocktail reception, dinner, and a train ride. Greenfield Village’s “Railroad Junction” area features an operating steam powered locomotive and the Detroit, Toledo & Milwaukee roundhouse, which was moved to Greenfield Village from Marshall, Mich., approximately 10 years ago. It is the only working late 19th-century roundhouse in the Midwest. On May 8, members will enjoy guest speakers throughout the day as well as a specially produced video that explores the history of the BLET and the challenges the Organization has faced over the past 150 years.

In the event that BLET rooms at the Westin Book Cadillac Detroit are sold out, overflow hotel information will be posted at www.ble-t.org/blet150.

The BLET has been comprised of veterans of every major military conflict since its founding, up to and including the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. With BLET members at the throttle, U.S. railroads carried 90 percent of all military freight and 97 percent of all military passenger movements during World War II. Greater safety on the job and greater safety for the shipping and traveling public have always been BLET’s goals. Legislative activities by the BLET and other rail unions have resulted in the Locomotive Inspection Act and statutes requiring the use of air brakes, automatic couplers, electric headlights, power-reverse gears and other technological improvements.

The BLET was again at the forefront in persuading Congress to pass the Railroad Safety Improvement Act of 2008. The legislation calls for the implementation of Positive Train Control technology to make the rail industry safer and more efficient, and contains important whistleblower provisions to protect workers who report unsafe conditions while on duty.

National President Dennis R. Pierce is the 23rd chief in the BLET’s long history. He has held the post since July 1, 2010, succeeding Paul T. Sorrow. The BLET represents more than 55,800 active and retired locomotive engineers and trainmen throughout the United States.

In cooperation with other railroad brotherhoods, the BLET spearheaded the drive to make the 24-hour workday illegal. This was accomplished in 1907 through the Hours of Service Act, which set a 16-hour maximum. The Adamson Act of 1916, providing for the eight-hour day, was also a result of the BLET’s leadership. An original copy of the Act is kept at BLET National Division headquarters in Cleveland, along with the fountain pen used by President Woodrow Wilson to sign the legislation. It was the first federal law dealing with overtime pay.

The BLET also had a leading role in persuading Congress to pass the Railroad Labor Act in 1926. The act, amended several times since then, provides procedures for handling labor-management disputes over wages and working conditions. The Railroad Retirement and Unemployment Insurance Acts, which became effective in 1937, are railroad industry’s counterparts of the Social Security system. They represent another instance of social progress in which the BLET played an important part.

The Brotherhood has always been proud to support America’s soldiers and their families. Our union’s membership has been comprised of veterans of every major military conflict since its founding, up to and including the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. With BLET members at the throttle, U.S. railroads carried 90 percent of all military freight and 97 percent of all military passenger movements during World War II.

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In the early 1860s, U.S. Military Railroad locomotive “General J.C. Robinson” and other equipment at City Point, Va. The locomotive is typical of ones operated by early Brotherhood members. Library of Congress photo

Westin Book Cadillac Detroit: The Brotherhood has held its 75th, 100th and now 150th anniversary celebrations at this same hotel. Photo: courtesy Westin Book Cadillac Detroit

EVENT REGISTRATION FORMS, HOTEL INFORMATION, AND A SCHEDULE OF EVENTS IS ON THE BLET WEBSITE, WWW.BLE-T.ORG/BLET150

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2013

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In honor of its 150th anniversary, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen is publishing a new history book that will be released in May 2013. The book will be mailed along with a commemorative key chain to all active and retired BLET members.

The book describes the difficult working conditions of the earliest locomotive engineers who went on to establish the Brotherhood in 1863, outlining their motivations and drive to form a protective society. The new history book goes on to detail the Brotherhood’s achievements over the past 150 years, while touching upon the organization in 1977 and in 1998. The new book contains updated photography, adding new photography from the modern era along with newly uncovered photographs and artwork from the earliest days of the Brotherhood. A new narrative of events brings members up to speed from 1998 through 2013.

Also, the new book contains a special section chronicling the evolution of the Brotherhood's logo over the past 150 years. "The BLET History Book is something I know all members will be proud of," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. "This new book is the result of countless hours of research, writing, editing, and design. The final product is a beautiful book that will be a keepsake for years to come."

Along with the history book, members will be mailed a commemorative 150th anniversary key chain. The key chain will show the current BLET logo on one side and a historical view of the BLET logo on the other.

A 150th Anniversary Program:

- Lunch
- Reception, Dinner Banquet and Dance with Live Band:
  - Woodward Ballroom, Westin Book Cadillac
  - Includes: Cocktails, Dinner, Dancing, and Live Band

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Richmond to host BLET for 86th annual SMA

All members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLEM) are invited to Richmond, VA, for the 86th annual Southeastern Meeting Association (SMA) from June 23-28, 2013.

SMA Arrangements Chairman Troy Bryant (Local Chairman, Division 532) and Co-Chairman Dave Powers (Secretary-Treasurer, Division 532) have organized a program of entertainment and education for BLET members and their families.

Guests will stay at the Hilton Richmond Hotel & Spa in Richmond/Short Pump, where the BLET has secured a room rate of $129 per night. Reservations must be made by June 1, 2013. Registration deadline for the SMA convention is May 17. Registration is still open after May 17, but the fee will increase by $40. Those who make hotel reservations by May 15 will be eligible for a drawing for a free night's stay to be given away during the week of the convention.


Workshops will feature specialized training for BLET Legislative Representatives, Secretary-Treasurers, Local Chairmen, and Division Presidents. Also available are: a workshop on the BLET mobilization network; a mock Public Law Board; a seminar with the Federal Railroad Administration; and an informational presentation on the BLET health & welfare plan.

Entertainment activities will include a welcome reception to kick off the SMA on June 23, a casino night (June 24), the annual SMA golf outing (June 25), a tour of Virginia's historic Maymont estate (June 25), discount tickets to Kings Dominion theme park (June 25), and the annual SMA banquet (June 27).

"The members of Division 532 are proud to welcome all BLET members to Richmond for the 86th annual SMA," Brother Bryant said. "Our agenda offers something for everyone — educational opportunities for members, shopping and historic tours for spouses, and theme park attractions for families. I hope to see you all in Richmond in June."

For more information, please contact SMA Chairman Troy Bryant or Co-Chairman at the SMA Hotline: (804) 571-0273 or 86thsma2013@gmail.com.

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Photo of the Month: February/March 2013

PROUD TO BE AMERICAN      PROUD TO BE UNION
1863-2013

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ORDER BLET LOGO GEAR AND MORE ONLINE: Go to bletmerchandise.com