BLET Keeps Fighting for Two-Person Crews

In July, the BLET and its members learned that a former UTU General Committee of Adjustment had reached a tentative agreement to allow for one-person train operations on portions of the NSSF Railway. The SMART-TD membership had not voted on the contract as this issue of the Newsletter goes to press. It has been reported that the agreement reached by SMART Transportation Division Committee of Adjustment GO-001 is not necessarily endorsed by the SMART-TD national office, and that SMART will continue working with the BLET National Division to support the issue of two-person crews.

For more in depth coverage on this critical issue, please see page 2 of this issue for a message from BLET National Division President Dennis R. Pierce.

Amtrak’s Pacific Surfliner

On a beautiful sunny morning along the Pacific Coast, Amtrak F59PH No. 458 leads an Amtrak Pacific Surfliner train south towards San Diego from Oceanside, Calif. Photo and caption: Chase Gunnoe

BLET Opens New Education & Training Center

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen is proud to announce the opening of its state-of-the-art Education & Training Center. Located at BLET National Division headquarters in Cleveland, Ohio, the new facility hosted its first class on July 21, 2014 — a workshop for BLET General Chairman. Following the workshop, the National Division also hosted an Open House at the facility for members and guests who were in Cleveland attending the Eastern Union Meeting Association (EUMA) annual meeting.

Construction of and equipment for the Training Center was funded primarily by a grant from the Teamsters Rail Conference. The new technology in the Training Center also gives the BLET the ability to expand training platforms, thanks to Delegates attending the BLET’s 2010 National Convention, who approved a measure to fund the BLET Education & Training Department with an additional $1 per month, per member.

“President Pierce said the new classroom environment will become fully interactive with unrestricted collaboration capabilities, allowing for the inclusion of offsite instructors and officers using video and Internet-based computer technologies. “I am proud of the work that has gone into establishing our new Education & Training Center,” President Pierce said. “This is so much more than a brick and mortar training center. We have established one of the most modern classroom environments available, affording our membership access to the best classroom technology that exists today. Although construction efforts were put on hold until the future of the Standard Building was known, the provisions of the sale agreement have BLET leasing back space in the Standard Building for two to three years. We could not wait any longer to create our Training Center and we worked hard to put the majority of the Rail Conference grant money into technology that will go with BLET once we relocate in the Cleveland area, as compared to actual construction costs.” BLET National Secretary-Treasurer Bill Walpert, who has

Historic Sale

BLET sells Standard Building to real estate investors pg. 3

BLET Photo Albums

Recaps of SMA in Savanna, IWC in Minneapolis pg. 4-5

New Convention Website

National Division launches informational page for Third National Convention pg. 7
**BLET PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

BY DENNIS R. PIERCE

PROTECTING TWO-PERSON CREWS IS STILL OUR GOAL

The following is a statement by DENNIS R. PIERCE, NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND TRAINMEN (BLET) REGARDING RECENT MEDIA REPORTS CONCERNING A TENTATIVE CONTRACT AGREEMENT THAT WOULD OPEN THE DOOR TO SINGLE-PERSON TRAIN OPERATIONS ALONG PORTIONS OF THE BNSF RAILWAY.

The BLET National Division has received many requests for comments following the announcement in July that BNSF and one of the SMART Transportation Division General Committees of Adjustment (STD GCAs) representing trainmen on BNSF have negotiated a new Crew Consist Agreement that allows for single-person crews. The BLET has no intention of discontinuing our efforts on the regulatory or legislative fronts. We will continue our efforts to advance F.R.A's regulation on crew size with every intention of supporting a two-person crew for all over the road train operations.

And on properties like the Wheeling and Lake Erie (WLE), where BLET is the designated bargaining agent for both engineers and conductors, BLET stands steadfastly at the bargaining table, refusing to give up the conductor's position as WLE insists we do. In fact, I authorized a strike against the WLE in late 2013 over their refusal to call conductors when they were available. Our members on the WLE have made it clear through their solidarity that they will not accept an agreement that would eliminate the conductor's position, and they have the full support of BLET's National Division in this fight.

Things are vastly different in the Class I railroad world, where BLET represents the majority of the nation's engineers and SMART represents the majority of the conductors. To preserve a two-person crew through collective bargaining, each union must protect the craft and class that is authorized to bargain for. In 2007, BLET and BNSF negotiated such an agreement, revising the scope of duties belonging to locomotive engineers and, in doing so, preserved the work rights of BNSF engineers well into the future. Similar agreements were negotiated on Norfolk Southern and CSX in that bargaining round. The reasoning behind these agreements is straightforward: neither BLET nor SMART can protect a two-person crew if each union does not collectively bargain agreements that preserve the work rights of the craft for whom it is the bargaining agent.

While BLET’s 2007 agreements recognized that the railroad did not have to bargain further with BLET, it should engineer-only operations ever come to pass, that recognition was hardly necessary as it was merely recognition of the status quo. BLET General Committee of Adjustment, and the BLET at large, were not and are not the NMB designated bargaining agent for trainmen or conductors on the involved rail properties, and as such, have no jurisdictional authority to bargain on their behalf. Instead, that authority is vested in SMART’s Transportation Division, formerly UTU, and only SMART has the jurisdictional authority to bargain for and protect those positions. In fact, when the 2007 BLET/BNSF Scope Agreement was negotiated, engineers had already been required to work engineer-only assignments on BNSF. As a result of SMART being the designated bargaining agent for trainmen and conductors, BLET’s agreements with BNSF have never included crew consist requirements that govern the number of ground crew members required or that prevent engineers from being required to work engineer-only, nor can they. BLET's 2007 Agreement with BNSF was overwhelmingly ratified by a membership vote, a vote to preserve those members' jobs, and it is my understanding that the BLET General Chairs are responsible for enforcing that agreement are reviewing the BNSF/STD proposal to determine whether any portion of it conflicts with BLET's 2007 Agreement. At the same time, SMART’s membership on a portion of BNSF is now in the same position as BLET's membership was in back in 2007; they must decide if the proposals they have been provided actually preserves jobs or eliminates them, and determine if the balance between those outcomes warrants ratification or rejection.

In either event, BLET's National Division remains committed to working to preserve two-person crews as it was a year ago when I commented following the Canadian disaster.

We will continue to work with the National Representatives of SMART's Transportation Division wherever and whenever in an effort to preserve and protect two-person crews.

DENNIS R. PIERCE

BLET NATIONAL PRESIDENT
BLET sells Standard Building

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen has sold its landmark Standard Building to Weston, Inc., Northeast Ohio's largest privately held commercial building owner and manager, in a deal that closed in early July.

Built in 1924 by the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, the Standard Building — originally named the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers Cooperative National Bank Building — is an elegant 21-story tower that overlooks the busy downtown intersection of Ontario Street and St. Clair Avenue. The 400,000 square foot landmark has a grand terra cotta façade and outstanding views of the surrounding city and Lake Erie.

Weston plans to transform the formidable office building into approximately 267 residential one and two bedroom rental suites. (The configuration may vary if office space is introduced on the first four stories.) Development is projected to commence in 12 to 18 months with completion slated for two years out.

"Weston is extremely enthusiastic about this opportunity," Weston CEO T. J. Asher said regarding the purchase. "We are good at making things viable. The Standard Building is a bit of diversification for us as we enter the residential market from the industrial but it speaks loudly of our commitment to Cleveland and our desire to be a viable part of this community."

BLEM National President Dennis R. Pierce congratulated Weston on their purchase of the Standard Building. "The Standard Building is a significant part of the Brotherhood's heritage, but it has reached a point in time where desirable assets are necessary to repurpose the building," Pierce said, "and it is very gratifying that the Asher brothers and Weston have come to the rescue of this asset and will maintain this treasure as a cornerstone of downtown Cleveland life."

The BLET's Bylaws require that the National Office be located in the Cleveland area, and this is unaffected by the sale of the Standard Building. One of the stipulations of the sale agreement is that BLET will lease back the space in the Standard Building that the Brotherhood currently occupies for a minimum of two years and a maximum of three years. "The lease back provision gives the Brotherhood the time necessary for the Advisory Board to select a new headquarters location in the Cleveland area, without disrupting our day to day operations," Pierce said.

The BLET is the oldest labor organization in the United States. Cleveland was selected in 1870 as the union's headquarters city due to its central location for serving U.S. and Canadian members. From 1910 to 1989, the union's national office was located in the Engineers Building, across Ontario Street. That building was sold in 1988 to make way for the Marriott Tower.
More than 200 members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) and their families were in attendance on June 16 for opening ceremonies of the 87th annual Southeastern Meeting Association (SMA) in Savannah, Ga.

SMA Arrangements Chairman D.C. Dickey, his wife Patty and the members of BLET Division 646 hosted this year’s SMA.

Brother Dickey called the meeting to order and delivered the opening prayer. He introduced Lawana Poss, SMA Auxiliary Chairperson, who presided over the annual presentation of state flags by members of the BLET Auxiliary, a tradition that dates back nearly 100 years. States flags presented in the ceremony included Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. Anita Caruso, National President of the BLET Auxiliary, carried the United States flag and later addressed the members and families in attendance.

Brother Dickey introduced Mark Wallace, General Chairman of the Norfolk Southern-Southern Lines General Committee of Adjustment, who led a ceremony to remember BLET members killed in the line of duty. An empty chair was left at the front of the meeting hall to honor the Organization’s departed Brothers and Sisters.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce introduced members of the BLET Advisory Board and National Division staff who were in attendance, and also acknowledged the presence of former BLET National President Paul Sorrow and former BLE International Vice President Paul Wingo. President Pierce also spoke briefly about the Brotherhood’s recent strike at SEPTA in Philadelphia.

The afternoon concluded with a closed meeting for BLET members and open meetings for the BLET Auxiliary. Members took advantage of numerous educational opportunities throughout the remainder of the week. Workshops featured specialized training for BLET Legislative Representatives, Secretary-Treasurers, Local Chairmen, and Division Trustees. Additional workshops focused on the BLET national mobilization network, United Healthcare, Railroad Retirement benefits, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). The 87th annual SMA concluded with a dinner banquet the evening of June 19.

BLET concludes 87th annual Southeastern Meeting Association in Savannah, Ga.
Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton addresses BLET members at 74th annual IWC in Minneapolis

Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton (D) discussed the safety of transporting crude oil by rail as he addressed approximately 150 members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) and their families during opening ceremonies of the union’s 74th annual International Western Convention (IWC) in Minneapolis on July 1.

The Governor discussed several oil train issues impacting the state, including grade crossing problems and potential risks involved in transporting Bakken crude. Governor Dayton said state legislators have recently passed measures to upgrade crossings, increase the number of safety inspectors, and to boost training for emergency responders.

Ken Martin, Minnesota State Democratic-Farmer-Labor (DFL) Party Chairman, introduced the Governor and also delivered brief remarks to the audience.

IWC Arrangements Chairman Dave Brown, who also serves as Chairman of the BLET’s Minnesota State Legislative Board, called the meeting to order and presided over the opening ceremony. He thanked his wife Cheri for her help in hosting the event, along with Arrangements Committee members Mark Anderson and Kevin Foley.

Brother Anderson, Secretary-Treasurer of the Minnesota State Legislative Board, delivered the invocation and led a ceremony to remember BLET members killed in the line of duty. An empty chair was left at the front of the meeting hall to honor the Organization’s departed Brothers and Sisters. Also, Brother Anderson’s daughter Alison sang beautiful renditions of the U.S. and Canadian national anthems as part of the opening ceremony.

Brother Brown then called BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce to the podium. President Pierce introduced members of the BLET Advisory Board and National Division staff who were in attendance. President Pierce also delivered brief remarks regarding America’s changing political atmosphere over the past 30 years. A pro-corporate atmosphere has altered the political landscape to make it much harder for union members and working families to earn a decent living, he said. The anti-union forces have instituted a “divide and conquer” strategy that plays on the base human emotions of greed and selfishness, pitting worker against worker in a race to the bottom.

“Instead of ‘Keeping Up With The Joneses,’ now it’s ‘If I Can’t Have It, You Can’t Have It.’ And ‘If I Can’t Be In a Union, You Can’t Be In a Union.’ That’s not the America that I grew up in. Working class Americans must join together to work on issues of common interest, and to elect politicians who will work to protect the working class of our great country,” President Pierce said.

Also addressing the membership during the 2014 IWC morning session were Anita Caruso, National President of the BLET Auxiliary, and Serena Hegn, Auxiliary Vice President and National Legislative Representative.

BLET members and families were also honored to hear from Tom Dwyer, National President of the National Association of Retired and Veteran Railroad Employees (NARVRE). Brother Dwyer is a long time legislative activist and member of the Transportation Communications Union (TCU).

The afternoon concluded with a closed meeting for BLET members and open meetings for the BLET Auxiliary. Members attended various education and training workshops on July 2. Classes featured specialized training for BLET Legislative Representatives, Secretary-Treasurers, Local Chairmen and Division Trustees. Additional workshops focused on the BLET national mobilization network, United Healthcare, Railroad Retirement benefits, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s whistleblower and safety programs. The 74th annual IWC concluded the evening of July 2 with a dinner banquet.

The 2015 IWC will be held in Denver, Colo.
St. Louis to host BLET for 79th annual SWCM

M

embers of the Brother-

hoo of Locomotive Engineers and Train-

men will convene in St.

ouis for the 79th an-

ual Southwestern Convention Meeting

(SWCM), September 7-11, 2014.

Arrangements Chairman D.W.

Grimes (Local Chairman, Division 42)

and his wife Gail are organizing a week

of educational opportunities for BLET

members and their families. Also hard

at work are members of the arrange-

ments committee, including Division 42

guest: Mike Gurley and wife Lisa, Di-

vision 42 Legislative Representative Mike

McGill and wife Jean, Division 42 Pres-

ident Scott McKinley, Division 42 Sec-

retary-Treasurer Jason Schroeder and

the rest of Division 42. Division 6 mem-

ber David J. Grimes and wife Rachael

and Iowa State Legislative Board Chair-

man Orlando Penrod and wife Anastasia

are also helping with the convention.

Members can download a PDF regis-

tration form from the SWCM website,


The registration fee is $1450 per person

if postmarked after.

For more information, please

D.W. Grimes at (573) 776-8333 or

dgrimes1355@gmail.com

McGill and wife Jean, Division 42 Pres-

ident Orlando Penrod and wife Anastasia

and Iowa State Legislative Board Chair-

man, November 2-7 (Check out Novem-

ber 8); and Secretary-Treasurer, Decem-

ber 15-18 (Check out December 19).

We are looking forward to helping our

members get the level of education they

need, to have an advantage in the field,

and to reflect the strength of this great

union,” President Pierce said. #6

Although the Cardinals will be out

of town during the SWCM, Brother-

Grimes has arranged for a dinner event

at the stadium on September 9. Dinner

will take place on the field between the
dugouts, and the bull pen will be open for

those wishing to test their pitching arms.

Catchers and a radar gun will be on

site for the event.

The 79th SWCM begins on Sunday,

September 7, with the annual SWCM

Texas Hold’Em Poker Tournament.

Proceeds from the event are donated to

the SWCM Scholarship Fund.

The annual SWCM golf tournament

is scheduled for Monday, September 8.

The 18-hole Fair Oaks Golf Club in St.

Louis features a front nine Scottish-style

layout with native prairie grasses and

wildflowers. For non-golfers, there is a

tour of the Museum of Transportation

scheduled for September 8.

Educational opportunities begin on

September 8 with an OSHA training

workshop. The convention kicks off with

opening ceremonies the morning of Sep-

tember 9. Numerous other workshops

will be held on September 10, and the

2014 SWCM will conclude with a ban-

quet and special entertainment that eve-

ning. Instead of a traditional dance at the

banquet, SWCM organizers have sched-

uled a concert featuring an Eagles trib-

ute band.

“Online training will become an in-

valuable part of our future training pro-

grams, providing online modules that

members can visit as often as they wish so

that they may stay up to date on the lat-

est material,” he said.

Wright also said there are three op-

portunities for workshops at the new Ed-

ucation & Training Center throughout

the remainder of 2014. The three remain-

ing workshops are as follows: Secretary-

Treasurer, October 13-17 (Check out to

be announced); Advanced Local Chair-

man, November 2-7 (Check out November

8); and Secretary-Treasurer, Decem-

ber 15-18 (Check out December 19).

“Are you looking forward to helping our

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Transportation workers protecting each other since 1910.

Photos: Captains of St. Louis

Flight

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Policy

• Protect your income and your

family

• Matching accidental death benefit

on most policies, covering both you

and your beneficiary 24/7*

• Receive your full daily benefit if

you are decertified and decline to

exercise your seniority

*Accidental Death coverage is not available in California.

Beneficiary Accidental Death coverage is not available in Texas.

Members of the New York State Legislative Board

get a tour of the new BLET Training Center on August 4.
BLET mourns loss of National Division staff accountant Denise Sears

The National Division is saddened to announce the passing of our colleague, staff accountant Denise Sears following a long battle with illness on July 3, 2014. She was 60 years old. Denise is survived by her beloved son, Joshua Allen, grandson Joshua Allen, Jr., father and stepmother, James and Sylvia Hill, Sr., sisters Terrie Kelly and Deborah (Stephen) Howard and brother James Hill, Jr. She leaves behind many loving cousins and friends. Denise is preceded in death by her mother and stepfather, Janet and Robert Allen and brother, Anthony Hill.

Born in Dayton, Ohio on May 15, 1954, Denise was a long-time resident of Solen, Ohio. She was a 1972 graduate of Roth High School and a 1976 graduate of Central State University. Denise began working in the BLE Compliance Department during September of 2001. In 2006 she moved to the Accounting Department where she took on a diverse group of essential responsibilities, many affording service to and interaction with members and employees, which is what she enjoyed the most. Denise was also an avid basketball fan especially when her son, Joshua was a star center and power forward for a ball fan especially when her son, Joshua Allen, Jr., father and stepmother, James and Sylvia Hill, Sr., sisters Terrie Kelly and Deborah (Stephen) Howard and brother James Hill, Jr. She leaves behind many loving cousins and friends. Denise is preceded in death by her mother and stepfather, Janet and Robert Allen and brother, Anthony Hill.

Denise was a dedicated member of our Brotherhood staff for many years,” BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. “She was a great person with a wonderful sense of humor and will be sorely missed. ‘She was a great person with a wonderful sense of humor and will be sorely missed. She was a great person with a wonderful sense of humor and will be sorely missed. She was a great person with a wonderful sense of humor and will be sorely missed. She was a great person with a wonderful sense of humor and will be sorely missed.”

In early July, the BLET National Division launched a new website — www.ble-t.org/convention — to provide key information to delegates, vendors and guests attending the union’s Third National Convention coming up in late September 2014. The BLET’s Third National Convention will convene at the Rio All-Suite Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada, from Monday, September 29, 2014, through Thursday, October 2, 2014. Delegate registration begins on Sunday, September 28. Approximately 500 delegates will represent over 38,000 active locomotive engineers and trainmen throughout the United States. They will be charged with nominating candidates for National Division office, analyzing and voting on changes to the Brotherhood’s bylaws, and various other important duties.

The new website contains numerous sections containing news and other information for delegates, visitors and vendors. The goal is to smooth the registration process by providing as much information as possible in advance of the convention, and to serve as a one-stop information source for convention-related news, photographs and videos. The delegate section includes a video from BLET National Division President Dennis R. Pierce explaining the convention process. There is a special link directly to the Rio Hotel website that allows delegates to make their room reservations, and another to reserve transportation between the airport and the hotel.

The visitors section provides an online pre-registration form for non-delegates who plan to attend the Third National Convention and observe the proceedings. Advance registration for visitors is encouraged as visitors will be asked to obtain a name badge to wear when they are in the convention visitor seating area. The visitors section also contains links for hotel room and airport ground transportation reservations. Vendors are required to register in advance. A vendor application is available online, and the website provides information regarding vendor booth set up, loading and unloading, security, and other specifics, as well as access to links for hotel room and airport ground transportation reservations.

Additional key elements of the website include a tentative agenda for the both the BLET Convention and the BLET Auxiliary Convention, as well as maps of the hotel and the convention area. In addition to the link allowing delegates, visitors and guest to make hotel and airport ground transportation reservations, the new website also contains weather information for the Las Vegas area.

Lastly, the BLET Auxiliary will hold its Second National Auxiliary Convention at the Rio from September 29–October 2, 2014. Auxiliary delegates will elect national officers and consider important resolutions. A separate section of the BLET convention website focuses on the Auxiliary’s Convention, and similarly includes links for hotel room and airport ground transportation reservations. 

National Division launches 2014 BLET convention website

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

**Photograph**

A heavy Union Pacific manifest freight (M-RVHK) on its way from Roseville, Calif., to Hinkle Yard in Minot, N.D., Aug. 27, 2014.

**8/14**

**E. “Lee” Pruitt, First Vice President & Alternate President**

Robert W. Scott, The National Division’s Third National Convention, which begins in Las Vegas on September 28.

In order to be seated at the convention, delegates must submit their delegate’s credentials to the National Division Office, analyzing and voting on changes to the governing documents, and recommending them to the National Executive Board for approval.

**FIRST VICE PRESIDENT E.L. (LEE) PRUITT**

**Arsenio Forbes, President**

National Division Office, Cleveland; General Supervision of Special Representatives; Supervision of Office Administration; General Supervision of Records Department.

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**T**he National Division has made it easier for delegates to track their eligibility status for attendance at the upcoming Third National Convention, which begins in Las Vegas on September 28.

In order to be seated at the convention, delegates must submit their delegate’s credentials to the National Division Office, analyzing and voting on changes to the governing documents, and recommending them to the National Executive Board for approval.

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