Over 100 members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) struck the Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway (WLE) at 5:00 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time on Friday, September 20 to protest that railroad’s repudiation of the Collective Bargaining Agreements that cover the two operating crafts. About 12 hours later, United States District Court Judge John R. Adams issued a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) in Akron, Ohio, ending the strike. The judge also ordered the Carrier to stop its practice of using management officials to operate single-person trains on the property.

Picket lines were posted at seven primary WLE terminals in Ohio and Pennsylvania. According to court documents filed by the railroad, which normally operates an average of 45-50 trains per day, the walkout stopped virtually all train activity.

The strike was triggered when WLE ignored warnings from the Union that the Collective Bargaining Agreements that cover the two operating crafts expressly forbid it from using supervisors to perform the work of the engineers and the trainmen. The Carrier has been trying to eliminate longstanding crew consist agreements and operate single-person operations so it can eliminate trainmen.

Following the emergency hearing, Judge Adams ordered the strikers to return to work, and to refrain from any
A NEW LINE OF COMMUNICATION
NATIONAL DIVISION PREPARING TO LAUNCH FACEBOOK PAGE

When I first had the honor of being elected your National President, I promised to have an open administration with improved lines of communication with the membership. I’ve followed through on that commitment in part by traveling to many regular Division and Town Hall meetings over the last several years. Additionally, members of the National Division’s Advisory Board have done the same. They have also joined me and members of my staff at dozens of Regional, General Committee of Adjustment, and State Legislative Board meetings since 2010. Our heightened presence in the field and improved interaction with the membership has helped unify our Organization toward the common cause of strengthening our Brotherhood.

To that end, I am proud to announce that we will be opening a new line of communication in the very near future. My travels to the field have confirmed that many of today’s members — especially our younger members — get their news and information through Facebook. This a handy communications tool, and one that I hope to use on behalf of the National Division as a new way to interact digitally with our membership.

Our Division officers have already found innovative ways to put Facebook to use for the betterment of our Brotherhood. For example, some Division officers have set up online Facebook pages to remind members of upcoming Division meetings, thereby increasing attendance. Communication through Facebook can also be used to help spread the word about safety rules. Compliance with operating and safety rules is another way that makes our Organization more effective and our members safer. These are but two examples of how communicating in the digital age can make our Brotherhood stronger.

You will soon see notices about the BLET National Division’s new Facebook page. I hope you will take a few minutes to “Like” us on Facebook when our new page is unveiled. Many of the regular news items that are currently featured on our website (www.ble-t.org) will also be appearing on Facebook. You will be able to access our News Flashes as well as our Daily Headlines through your Facebook page. An informed membership is a strong membership, and I believe our increased use of Facebook will make our membership that much more informed and connected.

Another goal is to post timely announcements regarding our Education and Training Department workshops, reminders regarding upcoming BLET regional meetings, and notices about other important meetings. We will also use Facebook for our mobilization efforts, including get out the vote (GOTV) campaigns and voter registration drives. And I’m sure we will find other ways that Facebook will improve our communications with the membership.

If you have read my columns in the past, you know that I have frequently compared the Union Railway in the past, then you know that I frequently compare union membership to team sports. As I’ve said before, membership in the BLET cannot be a spectator sport — you need to be involved and active on the field if you want your union to work for you. The same holds true for Facebook. I’d like to see our new Facebook page bring our Brotherhood closer together. But it’s not going to be a one-way street. It’s my hope that our members will become active participants in the process and that you will share your thoughts and comments with us. We’d also like to see your photographs, provided they are taken and shared in a manner that does not violate the on-duty electronic device regulations and company rules. You’ll be able to find us on Facebook at: Facebook.com/BELETNational. Implementation will be gradual as we bring Facebook to the field. You will soon see notices about the BLET National Division preparing to launch Facebook page.

If you have good paying jobs with their seniority, they will work for you. The same holds true for America. — DRP

Official communications between BLET members and the National Division require a hard copy of the communication, 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 when 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 members’ unofficial communication. If a response is necessary, without needlessly expending limited BLET resources.

A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR VETERANS

On November 11, I offered thanks to all veterans and active-duty military on behalf of the entire Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen. Even though Veteran’s Day may be over, our veterans and their families deserve our thanks each and every day of the year. In the BLET we have a saying: Proud to be American, Proud to be Union. We are just as proud of these men and women in uniform. Their sacrifices and devotion have protected our way of life and our freedoms for generations.

Founded on May 8, 1862, the BLET marked its 150th anniversary earlier this year. From its founding, the BLET has been proud to represent the rights and interests of military veterans who have gone on to work as Locomotive Engineers and as Trainmen. Many of our earliest members were Civil War veterans who fought in such battles as Bull Run, Shiloh, Antietam and Gettysburg. Today, our active membership consists of veterans who have served in Vietnam, Desert Storm, Desert Shield, Iraq and Afghanistan. These men and women proudly carry on the traditions established by our founding fathers.

We currently represent 853 members who are serving in active military duty. These Brothers and Sisters also have our thanks and admiration. Thanks to BLET contracts and protections, they have good paying jobs with their seniority intact when they return to civilian life. It is one of the many protections our Organization has gained over the past 150 years.

Behind every soldier who serves is a family who also serves. Please join me in thanking not only our soldiers and veterans, but their families as well. Their sacrifice deserves our appreciation and support. If our country remains strong and free, on behalf of the BLET Advisory Board and our 51,000 members, we salute our veterans and their families for everything they have done for us and for America. — DRP

My travels to the field have confirmed that many of today’s members — especially our younger members — get their news and information through Facebook. This a handy communications tool, and one that I hope to use on behalf of the National Division as a new way to interact digitally with our membership.

President Pierce at the 86th annual Southeastern Meeting Association (SMA) convention in Richmond, Va., June 25, 2013.
Caring, good jobs with good wages should be Congress' priority

As you know, Congress reached a short-term deal that returned federal workers to their jobs and ended the Republican-led threat of allowing the U.S. to default on its debts. That was good news for all of us, but especially for millions of public and private sector workers nationwide who have been affected by this government shutdown.

Any joy tied to this potential budget should be short-lived. Now, as part of fiscal year 2014, an additional $82 billion in federal spending is slated to be cut. Most of that is supposed to be a slash in defense-related programs, but House Republicans would like to see that shifted to domestic programs instead. The billion-dollar question is why should regular Americans have to shoulder this burden alone? Those who work hard for a living trying to put food on the table and keep a roof over their families heads are already struggling due to millions of jobs that have been given away as part of lousy trade agreements like NAFTA and replaced with low-wage service jobs.

Instead, wouldn't it make more sense to go after a plethora of companies like Apple, Microsoft, Cisco, Google, Oracle, IBM, Pfizer, Chevron, Exxon Mobile and Berkshire Hathaway who are hoarding more than $1.7 trillion in unused cash instead of investing it into the U.S. economy? Why aren't they being asked to pay more at a time when lawmakers are looking for ways to strengthen the nation's economic ledger?

Workers, as usual, are being seen by GOP lawmakers as a convenient target to pay America's bills. The U.S. should be investing in creating good jobs that will get people back to work earning good wages.

The U.S. should be investing in creating good jobs that will get people back to work earning good wages.

Dehart elected General Chairman of NS-Northern Lines/W&LE GCA

Dewayne L. Dehart was selected General Chairman of the BLET’s Norfolk Southern-Northern Lines/Wheeling & Lake Erie General Committee of Adjustment at the GCA’s quadrennial meeting in Cleveland from September 30-October 2, 2013. Brother Dehart, a Norfolk Southern locomotive engineer, is a member of BLET Division 548 in Peru, Ind. He has held continuous membership in the BLET since February 1, 2001. He was elected 4th Vice General Chairman of the NS-Northern Lines/W&LE GCA in 2009.

Also elected were: 1st Vice General Chairman Robert W. Peters, Division 537 (Fort Wayne, Ind.); 2nd Vice General Chairman Jason S. Shannon, Division 86 (Moberly, Mo.); 3rd Vice General Chairman Lonnie J. Swigert, Division 385 (Toledo, Ohio); 4th Vice General Chairman W. Doug Pope, Division 444 (East St. Louis, Ill.); and Secretary-Treasurer for many years, most recently Lee Pruitt, National Secretary-Treasurer (Cleve- land, Ohio); and 2nd Alternate Vice General Chairman Rodney P. Kanous, Division 348 (Elkhart, Ind.).

Three long-serving officers did not seek reelection due to pending retirements — Robert H. Linsey, Jerry S. Elmore and Rodney K. Cutlip.

Outgoing General Chairman Robert H. Linsey, Division 659 (Buffalo, N.Y.), was elected to the office of 1st Vice General Chairman in 2001, 2005 and 2009, and served as General Chairman from January 1, 2005 through September 13, 2009, and again from January 1, 2011 through October 1, 2013. Brother Jerry
Palmer reelected to 4th term as Oregon Legislative Board Chairman

Scott G. Palmer was reelected by acclamation to his fourth term as Chairman of the Oregon State Legislative Board at the Board’s triennial meeting in Vancouver, Wash., from September 3–4, 2013.

Brother Palmer, a BNSF locomotive engineer, has held continuous membership in the BLET since joining Division 842 (Klamath Falls, Ore.) on June 1, 1994. Brother Palmer also serves the BLET as Assistant Coordinator of the Safety Task Force.

Also reelected by acclamation were: Secretary-Treasurer Rob D. Armstrong, Division 362 (La Grande, Ore.); and Alternate Secretary-Treasurer Michael L. Neale, Division 416 (Salem, Ore.). Brother Gary R. Quick, Division 362 (La Grande, Ore.), was elected by acclamation to serve as First Vice Chairman, filling the vacancy created by the retirement of Brother Don S. Strong, Division 236 (Portland, Ore.).

Representing the BLET National Division at the meeting were National President Dennis R. Pierce, Vice President & National Legislative Representative John P. Tolman, and Vice President Michael D. Priester.

“I congratulate Brother Scott Palmer and all members of the Oregon State Legislative Board and thank them for their service to our Brotherhood,” President Pierce said. “I know they will continue doing an excellent job of representing BLET members in Oregon. Like all of our State Legislative Boards, they have much work ahead of them next year as they prepare for the 2014 madam elections. Also, I thank Brother Strong for his service to the Organization and extend best wishes for a happy and healthy retirement.”

Special guests from the BLET included Vince Verna, BLET Director of Regulatory Affairs; General Chairman Jim Dayton, Union Pacific Western Region; and General Chairman Matt O. Wilson, Burlington Northern Santa Fe/MRL. Steve Novick, a Portland City Commissioner (city council member), was also in attendance.

The Oregon State Legislative Board represents nearly 700 active and retired members in five BLET Divisions.

RRAILROAD RETIREMENT BOARD

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

These temporary benefits do not save or invest these benefits. Rather, they use them to pay for everyday living expenses.

According to the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board, the adjusted reduction amount is based on revised projections of benefit claims and payments under the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act. It will remain in effect through September 30, 2014, the end of the fiscal year. Reductions remain in effect through September 30, 2014, the end of the fiscal year. Reductions will be calculated based on applicable law.

The 7.2 percent reduction in railroad unemployment insurance benefits, President Pierce concluded, “will be calculated based on applicable law. A copy of President Pierce’s Letter is on the BLET Website: www.ble-t.org/pr/pdf/Rail_Conf_Letter_2013.pdf.

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More than 370 members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen convened in New Orleans, La., on August 27 for opening ceremonies of the 78th annual Southwest- ern Convention Meeting (SWCM).

BLEM National President Dennis R. Pierce thanked all participants, noting that attendance at the SWCM was the highest of any of the BLET’s four regional meeting this year.

After presentation of the flags by members of the New Orleans firefighters union, SWCM Arrangement Chairman Arlin S. Todd called the meeting to order. He introduced several guest speakers throughout the morning, including Nick Felton, President of New Orleans Firefighters Local 632, and John Bel Edwards, Louisiana State Representative of House District 72. Edwards is a staunch union supporter who is campaigning to be the next Governor of Louisiana.

David Grimes, Local Chairman of Division 42 (St. Louis, Mo.), led a ceremony to remember BLET members killed in the line of duty. An empty chair, as well as various tools of the engineers’ craft, was placed at the front of the meeting hall to symbolize the Organization’s departed Brothers and Sisters. Brother Grimes also paid respects to Brother Brian D. Wheeler, former President of Division 42, who passed away late last year, and announced plans to establish a scholarship to honor Brother Wheeler’s memory.

National President Pierce introduced members of the BLET Advisory Board and National Division staff who were in attendance. President Pierce also spoke about the Organization’s 150th anniversary and introduced a special video commemorating the historic event. The BLET celebrated its 150th anniversary on May 8, 2013, and the video highlighted many of the Organization’s most important accomplishments since 1863. The video was well received by those in attendance and is available for viewing on the National Division’s YouTube page: http://www.youtube.com/user/BLETUnion.

Anita Caruso, National President of the BLET Auxiliary, also addressed the group and introduced the National Officers of the Auxiliary who were in attendance.

Brothers David J. Grimes and Orlando R. Penrod, both members of BLET Division 6 in Boone, Iowa, hosted the annual SWCM poker tournament on August 25, which is a fundraiser for the SWCM Scholarship Fund. Brother Penrod reported that the poker tournament enjoyed its highest turnout ever in New Orleans.

Members enjoyed a welcome reception the evening on August 26 and a jazz/dinner riverboat cruise aboard the Creole Queen on August 27. One of the most memorable moments from the convention came when members and their families marched to the boat from the Loews hotel in a traditional New Orleans second line parade. Led by a brass band, they marched down the middle of Poydras Street to the boat dock with the help of a police escort, which closed the roads to traffic for the BLET parade.

Workshops began on August 26 for the BLET Safety Task Force and hazardous materials training. There was also a workshop on conductors’ certification. Later in the week, members participated in specialized training for BLET Legislative Representatives, Secretary-Treasurers and Local Chairmen. There was also an informational presentation on the BLET health & welfare plan as well as a workshop on the BLET’s national mobilization network.

The 78th annual SWCM concluded with a dinner banquet and dance the evening of August 28. Next year, the 79th annual SWCM will be held in St. Louis, Mo., from September 7-11, 2014.
1. EMPLOYEES’ RIGHTS

Any employee covered by a union-negotiated agreement in the United States has the legal right to be a non-member of the Union. Nonmembers have the legal right (1) to object to paying for Union activities not related to collective bargaining, con-
tract administration, and grievance ad-
tainment, and to obtain redress in a court for such activities; (2) to be given sufficient information to intelligently decide whether to object; and (3) to be exempted from internal union procedures for filing objections. Employees who choose to object have the right to be apprised of internal union procedures. They may only be made to pay the fees and receiving notices of these pro-
cedures. The objection shall contain the basis for the calculation, and the objection shall be honored.

2. PUBLICATION OF POLICY

The fees objector policy shall be published annually in the BLET’s newsletter to the members and in the membership meetings. It shall inform the members of their rights to object to paying for Union activities not related to collective bargaining, contract administration, and grievance admin-
istration. Each nonmember wishing to continue in the Union as a nonmember must renew the objection each year as of the first of the month preceding the calendar month in which he/she is first subject to a union dues determination.

3. OBJECTOR NOTICE

Objecting nonmembers must provide notice of objection by notifying the National Secretary Treasurer of the objection in writing by first class mail no later than thirty (30) days after the first time paying fees or receiving notices of such pro-
cedures. The objection shall contain the basis for the calculation, and the objection shall be honored.

4. MAJOR Categories of CHARGEABLE EXPENSES

All objectors shall pay their fair share of expenses germane to collective bargaining including:

A. All expenses concerning the negotiation of agreements, practices and working conditions;
B. All expenses concerning the admin-
istration of agreements, practices and working conditions, including grievance handling, all activities related to arbitration, and discussion with employees in the craft or class (or bargain-
ning unit) or employer representa-
tives regarding working conditions, benefits and contract rights;
C. Convention expenses and ever-union internal governance and man-
agement expenses;
D. Social services and union busi-
tness meeting expenses;
E. Publications expenses to the en-
tire coverage relates to chargeable ac-
tivities;
F. Expenses of litigation related to collective bargaining, contract admin-
istration and internal governance;
G. Expenses for legislative and ad-
ministrative agency activities to elec-
tive collective bargaining agreements;
H. All expenses for the education and training of officers and staff as
EEDED to prepare the participants to better perform chargeable activities;
I. All costs of strikes and other law-
able actions.

5. DETERMINATION OF CHARGEABLE SHARE

The BLET shall engage an outside auditor to perform an indepen-
dent audit of the records of the Na-
tional Division annually. Based on the audit, the BLET shall determine the percentage of expenditures that fall within the categories specified in Section 4. The amount of expendi-
tures that fall within Section 4 shall by the basis for calculating the re-
sident fees that must be paid by the objector. The auditing firm will conduct the annual audit of the BLET National Division and give an opinion concerning the adequacy of the ex-

6. REPORT Of CHARGEABLE SHARE And BASIS Of ITS CALCULATION

The BLET shall report the deter-
mination no later than September 30. The report shall include an analysis of the major categories of union expenses that are chargeable and sendable. A copy of the report shall be sent to all nonmembers whose timely objections have not been revoked.

7. CHALLENGING PROCEDURES

Each person entitled to receive the BLET’s report may challenge the valida-
ty of the calculations by filing an ap-
peal with the National Secretary Trea-
surer. Such appeal must be made by filing a written notice of appeal with the arbitrator at the time of the hearing. The appeal shall be in writing and shall be served on the arbitrator at the same time as it is served on the objector.

H. Apprenticeship, any expense, hereinafter called the rep-
resentative of choice. Apprentices need not appear at the hearing and shall be permitted to file written statements with the arbitrator at the time of the hearing instead of appearing.

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9. PAYMENT OF REDUCED FEES

Objectors shall pay reduced fees to the BLET no later than thirty (30) days after the submission of post hearing briefs or within such other reasonable period as is consistent with the rules established by the A.A.A.

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10. ESCROW OF DISPUTED FUNDS

All nonarbitrable payables that objectors shall be placed in an interest bearing escrow account pending final deter-
mination of the chargeable share. Escrow funds shall be disbursed to objectors and the Union upon issue-
ance of the arbitrator’s decision in the appellate period if there is no challenge to the determination.
WHEELING & LAKE ERIE STRIKE
Continued from page 1

form of economic self-help or job action against the railroad, including delaying anyone from performing his or her work for the railroad. However, the judge conditioned the TRO on WLE’s agreement not to use supervisors or other management employees in place of engineers or conductors in the operation of its trains.

That condition remained in effect until October 22, when the TRO was superseded by a Preliminary Injunction, which lifted the ban on the Carrier’s use of supervisors or other management employees in place of engineers or conductors when no engineers or conductors are available.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said, “I hope that the condition imposed by the Judge will lead W&LE to recognize the importance of this issue to our members, who have returned to work with the assurance that while the matter is under consideration by the Court, no further provocative actions may be taken by the Carrier.”

President Pierce also blasted WLE for its actions that led to the strike. “The WLE bankrolled Ed Burkhardt’s failed one-person operation on the Montreal, Maine and Atlantic to the tune of a $25 million loan, so this doesn’t come as much of a surprise. It is clear that WLE’s actions are in outright defiance of its obligations, a major dispute in and of itself. BLET could not idly stand by and allow this totally unsafe abrogation of its collectively bargained agreements.”

Specifically, the Carrier had used management officials to perform the work of bargaining unit employees even though there were locomotive engineers and conductors available. In defiance of the union’s warnings, the Carrier took these actions after serving bargaining proposals to eliminate the restrictions, an outright admission that it had no right to operate that way.

Pierce thanked all officers and members of BLET Division 292 (Beach City, Ohio), including Local Chairmen Kevin Nahrebecki and Lonnie Swigert. He also thanked former General Chairman Bob Linsey and General Counsel Mike Wolfe and his team.

2013
MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

2014 BLET REGIONAL MEETINGS

June 15-19, 2014
87th Annual Southeastern Meeting Association (SMA)
SAVANNAH, GA.
Arrangements Chairman D.C. Dickey, Local Chairman of Division 646, welcomes all BLET members to beautiful Savannah, Ga., for the 2014 SMA. At the Westin Savannah Harbor Golf Resort & Spa. More details to come!

June 29-July 3, 2014
74th Annual International Western Convention (IWC)
MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.
Arrangements Chairman David K. Brown, Chairman of the Minnesota State Legislative Board and Unit of Division 517, will host the 2014 IWC at the Hilton Minneapolis. More details to come!

August 4-8, 2014
76th Annual Eastern Union Meeting Association (EUMA)
CLEVELAND, OHIO
Arrangements Chairman Patrick Redmond, Local Chairman of Division 607, and Co-Chair James K. Blum, Legislative Rep. of Division 526, welcome all BLET members to Cleveland for the 2014 EUMA. Guests will stay at the newly-renovated Westin Downtown Cleveland, within easy walking distance of BLET National Division headquarters. More details to come!

September 7-11, 2014
79th Annual Southwestern Convention Meeting (SWCM)
ST. LOUIS, MO.
Arrangements Chairman Dave W. Grimes, Local Chairman of Division 42, will host the 2014 SWCM at the Hilton St. Louis at the Ballpark Hotel. For more information, visit the SWCM website: bletswcm.org.

The BR&CF is the least expensive protection when disciplined for eligible occurrences. We are affordable. You could save up to $672 each year. A BR&CF membership offers you the best price, value and service. To apply for membership... act today... ask a BR&CF member where you work for an application or visit our web site at www.brcf.org or call us toll free at 800 233-7080.

LECMPA and UTU rates are accurate and effective on date of print.

**Mark Your Calendars!**
**NEW LOGO DESIGN FOR BLET SAFETY TASK FORCE**

The National Division in October released a newly redesigned logo for the BLET Safety Task Force. The new design features the full BLET logo as well as the STF hotline number: (800) 306-5414.

Members are advised to call the hotline number in case of five possible situations: Hazardous materials release; passenger train derailment; fatality; evacuation; or major derailment.

The new logo will appear on specialized clothing, hats and hard hats that Safety Task Force responders wear when representing the BLET at the scene of an accident investigations. It will also be used on stickers and other licensed merchandise.

In related news, the STF was dispatched to the scene of a collision involving three BNSF Railway trains near Amavisca, Texas, on September 25. According to media reports, four crew members suffered non-life threatening injuries.

The National Transportation Safety Board launched a team to the scene of the crash, and granted Party Sta-

tus to the BLET Safety Task Force to assist with the investigation. BLET Primary Investigator Russell W. Eller, Division 197 (San An-
tonio, Texas), and Eric H. Jeske, Division 256 (Denver, Colo.), were on site to represent the Safety Task Force.

The BLET Safety Task Force assists federal agencies in the investigation of railroad accidents, helping to deter-
mine probable causes and making safety recommendations. The STF will study the accident from the viewpoint of the locomotive engineer and train crews to help determine how the accident occurred and how to prevent similar accidents from happen-
ing in the future.

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The image of a photograph, the National Division's Public Relations Department, which produces the News-
letter each month, has received numerous inquiries lately from BLET members volunteering to contribute their images to the "Photos of the Month" section of the News-
letter. If you’d like to submit a photo for consideration, you may call Editor John Bentley at (216) 241-2601, ext.
246, or you can email him by BLET-hq@blet.org.