

Joint ROCU-NPSCAUL Resolution Against Remote and Satellite Controlled Locomotives

Whereas, the rank-and-file of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) and the United Transportation Union (UTU) - trainmen and engineers alike - overwhelmingly oppose the railroad carriers' use of Remote Controlled Locomotives (RCL); and

Whereas, the technology has proven itself to be unsafe to employees, dangerous to the community and highly accident prone; and

Whereas, even from the point of view of the railroads' own drive for greater productivity, RCL technology is highly inefficient compared with conventional switching operations, slowing down yard operations and making for a more congested and less fluid railroad; and

Whereas, given that the productivity of Remote Control operations is less than that of a regular crew, it is clear that the railroads intend to use the Remote Control Device as a means to circumvent any future strike action, not only by engineers but also by conductors and switchmen, by allowing anyone to "operate" a railroad locomotive with virtually no experience, thereby endangering public safety as well as work place safety; and

Whereas, the implementation of Remote Control Locomotives (RCL) by the nation's railroads has served to greatly exacerbate the destructive conflict between the UTU and the BLET; and

Whereas, the active and eager collaboration of the UTU International leaders with the Carriers and the Federal government in the implementation of RCL has served the Carriers' goal of dividing and conquering the UTU and BLET membership, thereby severely obstructing union solidarity; and

Whereas, the BLET National leaders have also been party to this obstruction of union solidarity (e.g., their advocacy of RCL on the Montana Rail Link); and

Whereas, the BLET-UTU membership has suffered from both the destruction of engineers' jobs and the burdening of switchmen's jobs with extra stress, doubled workload and endangerment, resulting in unnecessary injuries and deaths; and

Whereas, had the UTU and the BLET been unified under a fighting leadership and thereby able to mount an effective opposition in 2001, we could have had the strength and solidarity necessary to have successfully thwarted the Carriers' push for the RCL by conducting a national rail strike and by utilizing other means necessary; and

Whereas, even the leadership of both unions have at various times in the past at least expressed opposition to RCL, stating that it is unsafe and will not be tolerated; and

Whereas, the Carriers, now emboldened by their implementation of RCL and the elimination of yard engineers' jobs, intend to expand its usage even further, and also intend to begin operation of single-employee thru freight, with the ultimate goal of eliminating human operators in the cab altogether through satellite so-called "Positive Train Control" (PTC); and

Whereas, the best defense against the Carriers' upcoming attacks is a good offense; and

Whereas, a unified rank-and-file movement against both RCL/PTC and single-employee road operations would serve to unite engineers and trainmen to resist the only thing worse than the current attack: the complete dissolution of rail unions; and

Whereas, the overwhelmingly negative ramifications of RCL/PTC upon both crafts in fact offers us the opportunity to now come together and rebuild solidarity;

Therefore, be it resolved, that the Railroad Operating Crafts United (ROCU) and the National Public Safety Committee Against Unmanned Locomotives (NPSCAUL) oppose any new application of RCL/PTC technology, and demand an end to all current applications; and

Be it further resolved, that ROCU and NPSCAUL encourage all collective efforts to actively work to oppose RCL/PTC; and

Be it finally resolved, that ROCU and NPSCAUL jointly pledge to educate and work together with public organizations genuinely committed to this goal, including environmental groups, anti-nuclear power groups, fire departments, churches, schools and unions.

For more information, contact:

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