



The Highball

Official Publication of
Railroad Workers United

RWU Supports Campaign Against Single Person Crews

Jon Flanders, IAM #1145 RWU Co-Chair

Labor productivity soared in the United States in 2009. According to the Transport Times of December 3, 2009, productivity increased by 6.4% in the second quarter and leaped by 8.1% in the third quarter. Labor costs fell at a 2.5% rate in the third quarter of 2009, capping the biggest 12-month drop in 7 years.

This good news for corporate America is the upside for them of the "Great Recession" that began in late 2007. Clearly, workers who have had the good fortune not to have been laid off are willing to work harder for less, just for the privilege of having a job.

Jared Boehlke may or may not have been aware of these statistics as he worked in the CSX Selkirk rail yard on Mothers Day of 2009, during the second quarter of this dramatic increase in US labor productivity. His job, running a locomotive via remote control, hooking up rail cars in the departure yard, had been created to replace that of a locomotive engineer working with a conductor and/or brakeman to do this work. Jared was working alone, standing on the ground moving cars around with a remote control beltpack doing the work of both the engineer *and* conductor.

The recession had resulted in layoffs in the car department, whose workers physically couple rail car's air lines together and do various repairs. So when Jared found a car with a broken knuckle, he was unable to get anyone to help him from the car department. And with no other crew members to assist, he was ordered to make the repair himself, the cars rolled together, he was crushed between them.

He died shortly after, leaving behind a wife and a three year old daughter. Another worker had paid the price of leaving corporations to their own devices when it comes to staffing and technological changes like remote control of locomotives.

Jared's widow Heather has not been willing to simply accept that his death was one of the regrettable but inevitable consequences of working in a dangerous industry. She is campaigning for changes in the way

this new railroad technology is regulated by the Federal Government, through the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). She is supporting Jared's union's (United Transportation Union) demand that the FRA ban one person crews and that the FRA issue strict regulations on the use of this technology, not the suggested toothless guidelines that currently are in place.

Late in 2009, Heather and a group of rail unionists met with Jared's Congressman, Paul Tonko to urge action on the issue of rail remote control. Following this meeting, a campaign was launched - and supported by Railroad Workers United -- to get letters of support sent to Congressman James Oberstar, head of the House Transportation Committee.

It should be understood that this issue is not just one of safety for rail workers. Rail yards are where all types of hazardous materials are handled when cars are sorted and switched from one train to another. Is it in the interest of public safety that one person, often working alone in the dark, do the work formerly done by two or more workers?

The letter to Congressman Oberstar states "Regulations governing conventional rail operations are in place to protect not only rail workers but also the public from potentially devastating accidents. That protection is *not* in place for any of us as long as rail carriers are able to avoid complying with vital RCO safety and operating regulations."

You are urged to support the campaign to ban one person crews and for FRA regulation of locomotive remote control use. There must be more to working for a living than the relentless drive for corporate profits. Don't allow Brother Boehlke's death to be in vain!

To get involved in the campaign, see the RWU website at www.railroadworkersunited.org and click on the link "Campaign Against Single Employee Crews". We have sample letters, articles, flyers and copies of the Resolution.



Railroad Retirement Reform Initiative Moves Forward

Ron Friend, BMWED #1509 Chair, RWU Retirement Reform Committee

It has been 12 months since we began our campaign to reform railroad retirement. The rank and file of every rail labor organization, their families, and management have responded positively to this campaign with nearly 12,000 signatures in favor of the proposed changes to date (January 1, 2010). That represents all major railroads in the United States plus many shortlines. However, we have received no positive feedback from any rail labor leaders. And the Chief Actuary of the Railroad Retirement Board has yet to provide a complete financial study of all of the proposed changes. A complete study would prove that this proposal would in fact be financially feasible.

Thus we must get the attention of all rail labor leaders, the upper management and board of directors of all railroads, our Congressmen and Senators, as well as President Obama and Vice-President Biden and we must do so aggressively. The following are but a few of the things we must all be willing to do to move the proposed changes to the forefront:

- * Generate copies of the proposed changes to every railroad worker along with requesting their signatures on either paper, or online, petitions.
- * Everyone, railroad workers and their families, contact their labor leaders, their Congressmen and Senators, Presidents and CEOs of all railroads, President Obama, and Vice-President Biden with copies of the proposed changes and letters requesting they endorse and legislate the proposed changes.
- * Develop phone trees/email lists to keep our co-workers and families current on all information.

- * Send delegates to our union conventions to bring the proposed changes to the floor for a votes of endorsement from their respective labor organization.
- * Bring forth the voice of the rank and file at each and every local union meeting. Speak up and be heard!
- * Send written requests to every labor organization to publish the proposals in union journals and on web-sites for everyone to read and discuss.
- * Post the proposed changes on local union web-sites, on bulletin boards, online, in magazines, or any other source to inform the rank & file.
- * Send letters to National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees (NARVRE). We will be the next generation of Retired Railway Employees!
- * Make copies of this and every future email update on the progress of the campaign. It is up to each of us to make copies and get the word to everyone. Education and true facts will make our campaign move and we are the only ones that can do that.

The changes embodied in the Railroad Survivorship Act of 2001 took nearly 4 years to accomplish. We had to force the labor leaders to move and then they didn't listen to the rank and file. We don't need to wait that long this time and we don't need to have them try to sell us a compromise. It is up to us, the railroad workers and our families. Now is the time to raise our voices and move the leadership of rail labor, the carriers, and our nations leaders to get behind this proposal and make it happen!

Railroad Workers United

Railroad Workers United was organized in April 2008 at a Founding Convention in Dearborn, MI. RWU grew out of decades of struggle within the craft unions for unity, solidarity, and democracy. We are carrying on a tradition of rank-and-file activity which dates back to the 1890s and the time of Eugene V. Debs.

RWU is a cross-craft inter-union caucus of rail labor activists across North America. All rail workers of all crafts from all carriers who support our Statement of Principles are welcome to join in our efforts. Please write, call or email the address below.

Statement of Principles

- *Unity of All Rail Crafts*
- *An End to Inter-Union Conflict*
- *Rank-and-File Democracy*
- *Membership Participation & Action*
- *Solidarity*
- *No to Concessionary Bargaining*

Railroad Workers United P.O. Box 1053 Salem, IL. 62881

International Steering Committee

Jon Barron	UTU #662	CSX	Richmond, VA
Ron Davison	UTU #194	CP	Elkhart, IN
Steve Desavouret	TCU #6608	CN	Chicago, IL.
Jim Eubanks	UTU #656	UP	Little Rock, AR
	BLET #182		
Jon Flanders	IAM #1145	CSX	Selkirk, NY
Ron Kaminkow	BLET #51	Amtrak	Reno, NV
Brian Lewis	UTU #239	UP	Oakland, CA
Ed Michael	BLET #724	UP	Salem, IL
	UTU #979		
Hugh Sawyer	BLET #316	NS	Atlanta, GA
Matt Weaver	BMWED #2624	CSX	Toledo, OH
Chet Whyers	UTU #979	UP	Salem, IL

www.railroadworkersunited.org

206-984-3051

info@railroadworkersunited.org



Railroad Workers United

Special Supplement

“UNION DEMOCRACY”

Building Strong Unions Starts with Democracy

This supplement to the Winter 2010 issue of *The Highball* is dedicated to rank-and-file democracy and the struggle to achieve it inside of our unions. Sadly, it is all too common to hear academics, union leaders and even rank-and-file union members decry the need for democracy. As with many people who are engaged in a struggle, a cause, there is a tendency to say to the ranks, "We are your leaders, and we are in struggle on your behalf, you must not criticize us but trust us, pay your dues and shut up." Don't be tempted by this autocratic line of bullshit.

Democracy is important. It is not just a pretty sounding idea that a bunch of old guys came up with a few centuries ago. Without democracy it is impossible to have effective unions. Period. Here's why:

First, if the members are involved, if their opinions and votes matter, if they are consulted about their views on issues, contracts, leadership, finances, etc., they will be more likely to be involved. Once they are involved, they will identify and take ownership of the union. They will now go to the wall for the union. They are part of it. On the other hand, if they are excluded, denied access, have no right to an opinion or to dissent, then they will sit the whole thing out on the sidelines. And no union has power without its membership.

Second, if there is a failure of democracy in the union, the leadership will invariably stray from the wishes of the membership. They have no way of knowing what the members want without democracy. And they will have little interest in properly representing their members if they are not held accountable at every turn.

Third, without democratic accountability, the union leadership will invariably come to see the world more from the view of the employer rather than that of the membership. Union leaders spend a lot of time in the company of politicians, lawyers, and worst of all, the employers. They

come to identify and see themselves as "equals" with these suit-and-ties. Being "responsible" partners, seeing things from "the company's point of view", and striking deals and compromises all become more important than forcefully representing their membership. Without rank-and-file pressure - democracy - even the best leader can quickly degenerate into this roll of "labor statesman".

Finally, if not reined in, union leaders can fall victim to the lure of their all-too-often cushy jobs. They no longer work in their old craft; they don't have to work weekends, nights or holidays; they have more flexible schedules; they no longer work under the contracts they negotiate; they make more money than the members they represent; and in most cases, once they have climbed to the level of international labor leader, they know they are no longer going to *ever* work again in their old craft, effectively insulating them against rank-and-file pressure. Us rank-and-file union members need to consider reforms -- salary caps, limits on perks, mandates to rotate back into the craft every so often or even term limits, as necessary and democratic constitutional provisions to keep our union leaders accountable to us.

When union leaders know they will be held accountable by educated, informed and active members; when they know they will have no special perks and privileges; and when they know they will have to rotate back into the craft to work and live under the contracts that their regime negotiates with the employer, only then will we have more effective and honest union leaders. Only the best will rise to the top then, not the opportunists and careerists who wish to escape from the ranks. As the great rail labor leader Eugene V. Debs once said, "When I rise it will be with the ranks, and not from the ranks!"

Make no mistake -- democracy is central to the struggle for effective unions, good contracts and all the rest. We have a lot of work to do. Let's get started!

I am not a Labor Leader; I do not want you to follow me or anyone else ... I would not lead you into the promised land if I could, because if I led you in, some one else would lead you out. You must use your heads as well as your hands, and get yourself out of your present condition.

-- Eugene V. Debs: Speech in Utah, 1910

HEAD END: A Few Words from the Association for Union Democracy

Herman Bensen, Secretary-Treasurer, AUD

The Association for Union Democracy is a pro-union civil liberties organization which focuses on the rights of members in their unions. As American citizens we are all entitled to free speech, free press, fair elections, and due process in the country. AUD holds that as union members we should be entitled to similar democratic rights in our unions. And so, for the last 40 years, we have been campaigning to strengthen those rights. That explains why we welcomed the efforts of railroad workers to assure fair procedures in voting in referendums and why we have supported those efforts.

We are convinced that a democratic labor movement will be a stronger labor movement. Toward that clear goal, we remain non-political and nonpartisan. We support the democratic rights of unionist from left to right against abuse from right to left, regardless of political or social philosophy.

AUD supported the right of miners to a fair election in 1972, the election that led to the ousting of a murderous union regime by the Miners for Democracy. We supported the battle of Steelworkers reformers for free elections, led by Ed Sadlowski, in the 1970s; we intervened in court to assure fair elections for Teamsters in the 1991 election that led to the ousting of a racketeer-dominated officialdom. And we continue in that spirit today, support-

ing the rights of reformers in the labor movement.

Our support comes from union activists like you, and from civil libertarians, labor educators, and other supporters of the labor movement. Without that support, we could not continue. We hope we can count on you. You can learn more about AUD, learn more about your own rights under federal law and, at the same time you can help others simply by subscribing to our [Union Democracy Review](#).



www.uniondemocracy.org
info@uniondemocracy.org
 718-564-1114

When Hailing Rich Trumpka, Remember Jock Yablonski and the Miners for Democracy

Reprinted with permission from the [Union Democracy Review](#), Issue #181, Sept/Oct 2009

Rich Trumpka, now AFL-CIO President, replaced John Sweeney who retired at the recent AFL-CIO Convention. Trumpka had a fine reputation when he was president of the United Mine Workers, and he has been a good militant voice for the AFL-CIO as Secretary, and he will probably be a good workers' representative as AFL-CIO President. In any event, it is hard to think of a better choice at this point.

But as Rich ascends, it is a proper time to remember where he came from and how he got there. If not for Jock Yablonski, Trumpka probably would be forgotten, if ever noticed.

In 1969, Joseph Yablonski, announced that he was insurgent candidate for President of the UMWA. Incumbent Tony Boyle, successor to John L. Lewis, had continued Lewis' autocratic regime, with added ingredients of incompetence and corruption. "Union democracy", Yablonski declared, "is the single most important issue in the campaign for election of a new UMW president." By year's end, Yablonski -- together with his family -- had been murdered. (A few years later, Boyle was convicted of ordering the murders and died in prison).

After the murders, the Miners for Democracy (MFD) was formed to continue Yablonski's reform battle. Led by Joseph Rauh, Yablonski's attorney, a team of volunteer attorneys was recruited to back the MFD. At the time, Rich Trumpka, by then a young attorney and obviously on his way out of the mines, became one of that team. The MFD defeated Boyle and democratized the union. It was Yablonski's battle to the death and the MFD's courageous continuation of that cause that opened the way for Trumpka to the UMW presidency, from there to the AFL-CIO secretary, and up to the presidency.

This summer the United Steelworkers endorsed Trumpka in a two page declaration in its magazine. They tell us that he became a miner at 19, went to law school, became a lawyer, and served as staff attorney for the UMW in 1974. They neglected to mention that he became a UMW attorney only because Yablonski had led the movement that ousted the UMW old regime led by the murderous and crooked Tony Boyle, and that as a young lawyer, Trumpka served the insurgent Miners for Democracy.

Continued on Page 6

What Would A Model Union Constitution Look Like?

In 2005, a group of union activists came together to form ROCU, Railroad Operating Crafts United. Its purpose was to revisit the failed merger attempt of the UTU and the BLET a few years earlier, and search for ways to conclude a successful merger of the operating craft unions. Believing there was still hope for a single united and powerful union of the operating crafts, ROCU activists set out to draft a model democratic merger agreement and constitution that could be a guide to such a UTU/BLET merger.

While these documents were written with a merger of the operating crafts in mind, they could easily be a template for any merger agreement and/or constitution for any rail - or other -- labor organization(s). Originally released in January 2007, the full copy of each document is available on the RWU website. Below, we present "highlights" from the proposed democratic Constitution for a merged BLET -- UTU labor organization.

Highlights from the Proposed ROCU Constitution for a Merged BLET & UTU

Article 8 - Officers, Boards and Members - Reduces the number of National Union elected positions to maintain an efficient officer-to-member ratio.

Article 10 - Requirements for Officers to Maintain Their Craft - Requires union officers to work their seniority position on a regular basis. Union officials will maintain contact with the rank-and-file, work under the agreements they sign, and be regularly reminded that they are still railroaders, and are accountable to their members.

Article 13 - Location of Union Conventions - Mandates that conventions will be held in locations more convenient for the rank-and-file to attend (no more Alaska, Hawaii, or Las Vegas conventions).

Article 14 - Delegates - Establishes a proportionate system of delegates. This is more democratic and better expresses the will of the membership at convention.

Article 18 - Election of Officers - Establishes a system of elections based on the principle of One Member – One Vote for ALL union officers including General Chairmen.

Article 20 - Initiative, Recall and Referendum - Insists that between conventions, the REAL democratic power is placed where it belongs, in the hands of the members.

Article 22 - Dues and Assessments - Enacts proportionate dues for members on reduced pay scales. If you're not making 100%, you shouldn't have to pay 100% of dues. This gives the union a REAL reason to do away with entry-level pay and poverty-level training pay.

Article 33 - Salaries and Vacation Benefits of Officers, Board Members and Staff Members – Creates an equitable salary structure tied directly to members' daily rate of pay and benefits.

Article 81 - Preservation of Craft Autonomy - Provides guarantees that make sure each craft will control its own agreements and grievances.

Article 31 - Mobilization - Builds a structure at every level of the union to harness the power of the membership to fight the carriers and win.

Article 32 - Peer Review Board - Provides for an impartial board of rank-and-file members to ensure a fair and equitable settlement of internal union disputes. No longer will internal politics settle disputes; the Peer Review Board will have the final say.

Strikes - Makes the leadership accountable to the rank-and-file in all strike decisions.

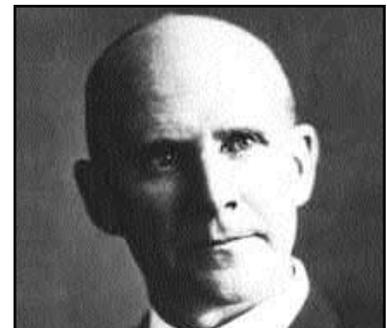
Secret Ballots - Requires ALL elections and referendums by the members be by secret ballots. This includes Initiative, Recall & Referendum.

Checks & Balances - Gives the General Committees a voice on the Executive Council.

Observer Rights - Establishes the right for members to observe all ballot counts.

"If working men are betrayed and defeated and made to suffer, it makes little difference if their misfortunes are due to dishonest, or ignorant and incompetent leadership. The question is not: Are these leaders honest? Let that be conceded. The question is: Are they true to the working class? If their official attitude does not square with the working class as a whole, then they are not in line with the true interests of their own union and are not in fact the friends, but the enemies, of labor; not serving but betraying those who trust and follow them."

-- Eugene V. Debs: "*You Railroad Men*", *Appeal to Reason*, Feb. 3rd, 1906



Our Union Leadership: Salaries and Other Compensation

Any discussion of union democracy - in fact, democracy in general - would not be complete without visiting the issue of leadership compensation. Views on the matter run the gamut, from those who believe that leadership deserves no monetary compensation at all for their efforts on up to those who feel that their leadership should be compensated lavishly.

However, most proponents of union reform hold that union leaders only become more and more out-of-touch with the wishes and needs of their membership the more those leaders are compensated. Some feel that leadership compensation and salary increases should be tied to rank-and-file membership compensation and wage increases. Perhaps leadership compensation should be no higher than the highest paid rank-and-file member. Or maybe officials should be paid the average pay of all rank-and-file members. Whatever the case, reformers are of general agreement: leadership compensation that is way out of proportion to the compensation of the membership undermines union democracy.

By federal law, all labor unions must report financial information to the federal government. The Office of Labor-Management Standards (OLMS) of the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment Standards Administration adminis-

ters and enforces most provisions of the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act of 1959 (LMRDA). The LMRDA was enacted primarily to ensure basic standards of democracy and fiscal responsibility in labor organizations representing employees in private industry. By visiting the Department of Labor website at <http://erds.dol-esa.gov/query/getOrgQry>, any union member has access to the financial information of their union.

On the site, the salaries and compensation of all union officers and employees in the United States are listed. We have listed a few top union officers below, but due to space limitations, most officers are not shown. But it takes just a few minutes to search for your officials' statistics.

Take a look at the numbers below. What do you think? Too high? Too low? Just right? You decide.

LATE BREAKING NEWS: *It has come to our attention that in addition to the salary and compensation package paid by their own union, certain rail union officials also receive compensation for their position in the Teamsters parent union in addition to the numbers below. These include Fred Simpson \$98,324; Roger Sanchez \$18,638; William Walpert \$8,000; and Paul Sorrow \$16,000.*

ATDA

Name	Title	Gross Salary	Official Disbursements	Total Comp.
Crawford L Boggs	Vice President/C	\$115,454	\$30,456	\$145,910
Francis L Mccann	President/C	\$114,577	\$19,853	\$134,430
Gregory A Pardlo	Vice President/C	\$106,479	\$17,404	\$123,883

BLET

Name	Title	Gross Salary	Allowances	Disbursements	Total Comp.
Edward W Rodzwick	President/N	\$168,757	\$27,876	\$11,773	\$208,406
William C Walpert	Natl Secretary-Treasurer/C	\$144,087	\$25,168	\$9,558	\$178,813
Paul T Sorrow	Vice President/C	\$141,250	\$23,773	\$16,498	\$181,521
Edgar L Pruitt	Vice President/C	\$134,328	\$19,664	\$14,825	\$168,817
John P Tolman	Vice President/C	\$134,328	\$21,157	\$11,926	\$167,411
Marcus J Ruef	Vice President/C	\$134,328	\$23,576	\$17,541	\$175,445
Richard K Radek	First Vice President/N	\$134,328	\$9,004	\$29,164	\$172,496
Stephen D Speagle	Vice President/C	\$134,328	\$23,936	\$13,779	\$172,043

BMWED

Name	Title	Gross Salary	Official Disbursements	Total Comp.
P K Geller Sr	Secretary-Treasurer/C	\$139,608	\$39,094	\$178,702
F N Simpson	President/C	\$132,814	\$13,760	\$146,574
L R Fenhaus	Vice President/P	\$118,398	\$36,000	\$154,398
H W Wise Jr	Vice President/C	\$105,076	\$29,967	\$135,043
J R Cook	Vice President/C	\$104,376	\$55,187	\$159,563
R D Sanchez	Vice President/C	\$104,376	\$54,114	\$158,490

BRS

Name	Title	Gross Salary	Official Disbursements	Total Comp.
Willard D Pickett	President/C	\$120,595	\$99,750	\$220,345
Walter A Barrows	Secretary Treasurer/C	\$98,269	\$39,800	\$138,069
Dennis M Boston	Vice-President/C	\$93,687	\$54,940	\$148,627
Floyd E Mason	Vice-President/C	\$93,687	\$64,641	\$158,328
George E Jones	Vice-President/C	\$93,687	\$39,808	\$133,495

TCU

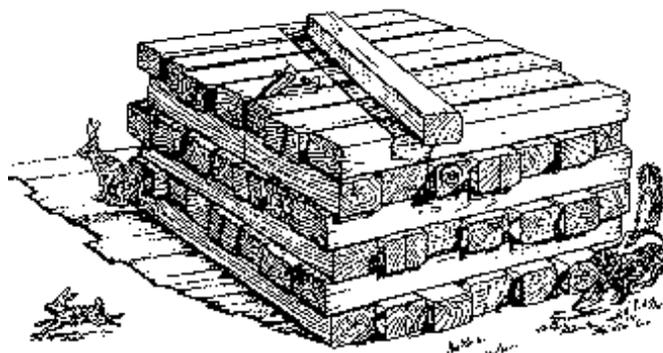
Name	Title	Gross Salary	Official Disbursements	Other Disb.	Total Comp.
Robert A Scardelletti	International President/C	\$258,303	\$357,343	\$4,468	\$620,114
Daniel L Biggs	Intl Secretary-Treasurer/C	\$163,280	\$277,476	\$7,266	\$448,022
Joel M Parker	Special Asst To Ip/Int'L/C	\$163,280	\$94,593	\$4,564	\$262,437
Leonard C Bauman	Board Of Trustee/ Inter'L/C	\$154,089	\$23,590	\$694	\$178,373
David L Steele	Intl Vice-President/C	\$146,904	\$121,735	\$5,939	\$274,578
John F Lydon	Intl Vice-President/C	\$146,904	\$78,793	\$3,848	\$229,545
Joseph P Condo	Intl Vice-President/C	\$146,904	\$136,606	\$5,589	\$289,099
Richard A Johnson	Intl Vp-Carmen Div Pres./C	\$146,904	\$148,334	\$2,895	\$298,133
Robert F Davis	Intl Vice-President/C	\$146,904	\$79,844	\$5,883	\$232,631
Russell C Oathout	Intl Vice-President/C	\$146,904	\$118,044	\$269,329	\$534,277

UTU

Name	Title	Gross Salary	Official Disbursements	Total Comp.
Malcolm B Futhey, Jr	President/C	\$287,120	\$22,270	\$309,390
Arthur Martin	Assistant President/C	\$199,416	\$17,621	\$217,037
James A Brunkenhoefer	Nat'L Legis. Director/C	\$194,952	\$15,524	\$210,476
Kim N Thompson	General Sec'r T & Treas./C	\$180,016	\$17,053	\$197,069
Costantino A Iannone	Vice President/C	\$157,098	\$42,227	\$199,325
James R Cumby	Vice President/C	\$157,098	\$44,189	\$201,287
Roy G Boling	Vice President/C	\$157,098	\$50,069	\$207,167
John W Babler	Vice President/C	\$156,448	\$52,335	\$208,783
Robert D Kerley	Vice President/C	\$154,316	\$34,799	\$189,115
John D Fitzgerald	Vice President/C	\$152,270	\$20,364	\$172,634
Victor G Baffoni	Vice President/C	\$148,752	\$43,438	\$192,190
David B Wier, Sr	Vice President/C	\$147,592	\$22,164	\$169,756
John Previsich	Vice President/C	\$147,251	\$42,488	\$189,739
James A Stem, Jr	Alt. Nat'L Legis. Dir./C	\$128,093	\$43,157	\$171,250

"I never had much faith in leaders. I am willing to be charged with almost anything, rather than to be charged with being a leader. I am suspicious of leaders ... you will find that almost all of them claim, in glowing terms, that they have risen from the ranks to places of eminence and distinction. I am very glad I cannot make that claim for myself. I would be ashamed to admit that I had risen from the ranks. When I rise it will be with the ranks, and not from the ranks."

Eugene V. Debs, Secretary-Treasurer BLF, and founder of the American Railway Union (ARU)



Union Members Demand: "One-Member-One-Vote!"

Ron Kaminkow, BLET #51 RWU Secretary

For years, Division #316 of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers in Atlanta, GA. sought to win a "one-member-one-vote" system of elections for the top officers of their international union. After the Teamster merger in 2004, the division kept on trying, and using a unique provision of the BLET constitution that allowed the membership the right of "initiative", Division #316 set out to get the necessary support of "divisions that represent at least 25% of the membership". They sought out allies along the way and found a ready friend in a forerunner to Railroad Workers United called ROCU - Railroad Operating Crafts United - and together, they were able to get the necessary support to place their idea on a "ballot initiative" much to the chagrin of the BLET leadership. When the ballots were counted in June 2006, the measure passed by a 2:1 margin, despite the fact that BLET President Don Hahs could not resist editorialize against the measure in a statement that was actually included with the ballot mailed to each member!

Later that summer, the members of the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference (TCRC) voted likewise, and changed their by-laws to require direct election of their national officers. The result was overwhelming, with 88 percent supporting the change! (And back in 2005, delegates to the convention of the Maintenance-of-Way Division of the TCRC had also changed their by-laws to provide for direct elections).

Gerry Ranson of Division #320 in Vancouver first circulated the Canadian proposal in May. "Having the right to vote was one of the big reasons we joined the Teamsters in the first place," says Ranson. "Every



Teamster power point presentation and flier talked about that. So we felt it made sense to have this same right with respect to our national officers."

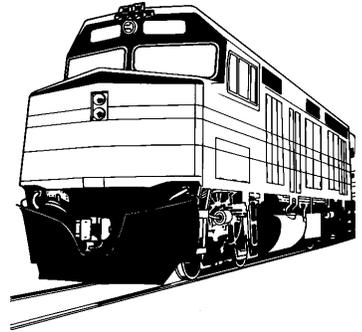
Divisions that supported this reform also want direct elections at the General Committee level as well. "The General Chairmen are the ones who actually bargain our contracts, so we feel it's extremely important to hold them directly accountable to the membership," says Division #320 member Craig Brown. "When they bargain our contracts they don't say 'look what we got,' they say, 'look what we didn't give away.' That's got to stop."

It comes as no surprise that union members would like the right to vote for their top union officials and for their general chairmen. We vote in civil society for representatives at all levels of government. When you vote in a

municipal election, you don't just vote for city council members and then let them pick the mayor. No, you vote for the council members AND the mayor. In statewide elections, you don't just vote for your assembly representatives and let them choose the governor. No, you vote for your assembly reps AND the governor. And when voting in national elections, you don't just vote for senators and congresspersons and let them pick the president. No, you vote for your senators, congresspersons, AND the president. Why should the union be any different?

In fact, we DO have one-member-one-vote at one level of the union - the local, division or lodge level. Here it is expected and institutionalized that we vote in a one-member-one-vote fashion for everything from local chairman to local president, to chaplain and guide! However, when it comes to the upper echelons of the bureaucracy, most unions continue to operate under the antiquated notion that the members cannot be trusted to vote directly for these union officials.

Railroad Workers United - and the majority of the BLET rank-and-file - disagree. It is high time that these constitutions and bylaws be brought up to date. Amendments are in order. We think that the members should run the union and have the knowledge and wisdom to do so.



We call on ALL railroad workers to rise up and be counted. Demand that your international union officials and your general chairman be elected by direct vote of the members concerned. We should all be inspired by the efforts of the BLET rank-and-file and mount similar efforts in our own unions. Stand up and be counted!

Rich Trumka and the Miners for Democracy

Continued from Insert Page 2

In the course of new events and with the burden of new responsibilities, Rich may disremember. But this generation of labor activists must remember Jock Yablonski. Trumka can be where he is today because Yablonski, at the cost of his life, inspired an insurgent reform movement in the UMW. Trumka's rise and Yablonski's martyrdom reminds us of those union activists who fight for union democracy today because they understand its importance to the future of the labor movement. The labor establishment ignores Yablonski's sacrifice for democracy in the UMW because they distrust insurgent democracy in their own unions.

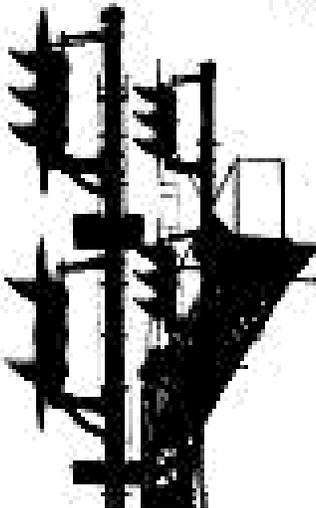
GUEST COMMENTARY -- Democracy Within Your Union

By John Hasenauer, UTU #286 "Save Our Union"

It is becoming fashionable, even among some activists and labor-oriented intellectuals, to derogate (take away) internal union democracy as an impediment to the great cause of reorienting and rebuilding the labor movement as well as restructuring the organization. "...[T]he crusade for union democracy", writes one advocate of a labor-intellectual alliance, "seems interminable and futile to follow. Workers want their lives to be changed. They want strength and a voice, not some purist, intellectual, historical, mythical democracy." And so the Change to Win Coalition, which some labor leaders seek, proposes to reorganize the labor movement on a new basis, often without concern for the rights of workers inside their unions.

If there was no real interest in union democracy, why would you need so many niggling petty rules to suppress it? Why suppress both those that do attend lodge meetings and then also effectively exclude over 90% of union members from having a voice at the making of work rule changes, internal union changes, dues increases or even for running for office? Why impose burdensome articles of a constitution that would limit the freedoms and voting rights of the members. Why make it more difficult or near-impossible to petition aspiring candidates for office? Why try to restrict information or independent access to internal information or data? Why resist informing members of their democratic rights under federal law? Why restrict the vote of delegates? Why allow the front office of the union to determine your dues? Why, if no one really cares or listens, bother to worry about control over every union meeting with procedures that starve out independent-minded members who speak their minds. Why if there is so little interest in union democracy, are so many union leaders afraid of it? Is it because they want more power and control? Maybe even more \$\$\$.

One might dismiss the whole idea of "union democracy" as a delusion and those in power may ridicule reformers or agitators who would raise to the demand of Democracy in their unions. C. Mill Wright writes: "Apathy, reigns too widely and a connected stratum of members simply delivers their votes in exchange for jobs and job security." In support of that notion, he states: "Democracy within the unions, as within the nation as a whole, is usually a democracy of machine politics imposed upon a mass number of apathetic members."



Those who minimize the importance of democracy because members may sometimes be apathetic have matters upside down. Democracy is especially important precisely where there may be apathy! In any social institution involving many people, and the labor movement is one such institution, the vast majority of our fellow brothers are pre-occupied with the tough tasks of daily life, such as trying to earn a living, maintain a household, raise kids, etc. Overwhelmed by what deep-thinkers might consider these trivial pursuits, they're forced to neglect other important but less pressing matters, like union affairs. That is, they tend to become "apathetic to the union" only because they have placed their priorities. Where there is a robust democracy, an activist, vociferous (outcry), gadfly (provoking) minority can there be an available shake up of that apathetic majority that are then forced to face up to the critical issues of the times. Democracy is an indispensable means to overcome apathy.

Those union officials, even those who are contemptuous of others who speak of "union democracy" are fully aware of all this. When they see fit to move an "apathetic" membership, they will utilize the standard tools of democracy. They orate at length to induce members to come out and vote on an election day, a crisis to raise their dues, to vote to strike or not, to adopt a new contract or to confront the evils of our enemies for some

goal. They fill the pages of their captive union media with exhortation on the carefully selected subjects of the day.

Come out on Labor Day, with me at the head of the parade! They are not exactly inveterate (liars) of the idea of democracy. They simply feel more secure when they, themselves, enjoy a monopoly of those democratic rights. They get nervous when it is available independently to other union members not under their control. In our labor organization (United Transportation Union), there are hundreds of active, loyal unionists, and potentially many hundreds more, independent-minded, conscious of their rights, insistent on dignified treatment in their union and on the job.

Union democracy is one means of releasing that spirit as an energizing force to help overcome "apathy" in the labor movement. Each of must know what our real objective and commitment shall be. Giving up our freedoms and rights to autocracy will only weaken our future and perhaps even our profession. Giving a Blank Check to those that wish to rewrite your Constitution would be a great loss of democracy, freedom of expression and your union rights.

COMMENTARY: Internal Caucuses -- Essential to Union Democracy

Unions are one of the backbones of a democratic society. They facilitate the participation of millions of working people in the day-to-day decisions that affect one of the most important aspects of their lives - their workplace. Without unions and the democratizing effect they have on society, the working class would be all but reduced to serfdom. All fascist dictatorships - Mussolini's Italy, Hitler's Germany, Franco's Spain, Pinochet's Chile - all of them - have persecuted unions, their leaders and their rank-and-file activists. Those who advocate rule of a small cabal of the rich know that unions pose a major obstacle to their elitist world view.

However, unions all too often do not live up to the ideal of democracy when it comes to their internal affairs. Union leaders may become divorced from the day-to-day realities of their membership, they may be much better paid, they may have special perks and privileges that the members do not enjoy, and they may become complacent and cozy in their official positions. They may come to share a world view that has more in common with that of the employers, lawyers, and politicians rather than that of their own members. And the nature of large cumbersome bureaucracies often mitigates against nurturing a militant, progressive leadership that fights for the interests of its members. Instead, the union can become sterile, lifeless, reactionary and moribund.

As a result of this degeneration, rank-and-file workers may become aroused and incensed, rise up individually and collectively and demand leadership accountability and meaningful representation. This is in fact the history of practically every trade union that has ever existed for any length of time. Just as Thomas Jefferson called for a revolution in civil society every 20 years, were he alive today, he would no doubt support the efforts of rank-and-file unionists to rise up and remake their unions more to their liking.

In recent times, mass movements of union members have taken place in most of the established unions. In the 1960s and 70s, The Miners for Democracy, a union-wide effort of the rank-and-file to "take back their union", ran candidates for office and ultimately replaced the entrenched leadership with new blood. Numerous reforms were made. A similar effort in the Steelworkers union developed and was denied - some say through fraud - a national election victory in 1976. Around this time the Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) coalesced from a number of reform movements inside the Teamsters and by the early 1990s successfully challenged the "old guard" leadership in national elections, winning the national presidency and a majority on the international executive board. Other rank-and-file movements or "caucuses" include the New Directions Movement and the Soldiers of Solidarity inside the Auto

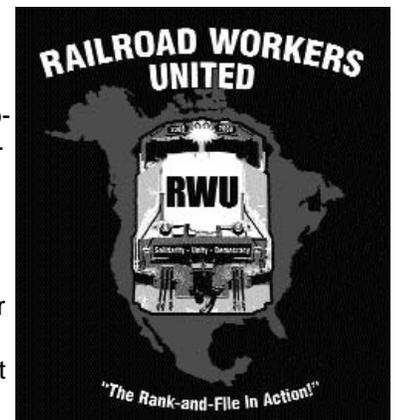
Workers Union; REAP, inside the United Food & Commercial Workers Union (UFCW); the Longshore Workers Coalition (LWC) inside the International Longshoremens' Association; and in the UTU, the group Save Our Union, designed to block the "SMART" merger with the Sheet Metal Workers Union.

It is useful to look at these formations as "parties", just as civil society invariably aligns itself into political parties. As we know in the greater society in which we live, citizens develop organizations called political parties in order to better achieve their goals and objectives. It is no different in unions. When rank-and-file members (citizens) feel isolated and powerless in the face of a union leadership and bureaucracy (city Hall, Congress, the White House, etc.) that they see as unresponsive to their needs and wishes as a dues paying member (taxpayer), they invariably seek out their fellow workers and attempt some form of collective action to mitigate the problem. Often, this discontent expresses itself as a rank-and-file caucus. And just as political parties are legitimate and democratic expressions of the people's will, so are internal union caucuses.

Railroad Workers United, organized in 2007 and formally established in 2008, is a similar caucus group. Like any other caucus, RWU is a grouping of rank-and-file union members that have come together around a common program and a common set of ideals (see the website for a history, the

Statement of Principles, current leadership, bylaws, etc.). What differentiates RWU from most union caucuses is that we are a "cross-craft" caucus, one that unites workers across craft and union lines. Because many of our problems stem from the fact that we are divided into more than a dozen competing and often hostile unions that represent railroaders, we need a rank-and-file effort to build solidarity at the worker-to-worker level.

Like any caucus, RWU encourages all rail workers to get involved in their union. Attend your meetings, learn about what is going on. It's your worklife. Voice your opinion, and if you don't like the way things are being run, don't just whine about it, DO something! This is the nature of democracy. Organize together with your fellow union members. If you are upset, perhaps they are too. Form a local union caucus, state your case, build your cause, run for office, raise hell! And if you think RWU might be able to lend you a hand, by all means give us a call!



RESOLUTION: Opposition to Single Employee Operating Crews

Whereas, the rail carriers have made it clear in their words and actions that they wish to conduct operations to the extent possible, "conductor only" in RCL yard operations, and "engineer only" on road trains; and

Whereas, the rail carriers have long stated their intentions to operate road trains with a single employee, and as long ago as 2004 made their intentions known to both the BLET and the UTU, stating that, "All train and engine service positions should be consolidated," and that "the work formerly performed separately by the train and engine service positions be performed by 'qualified transportation employees'" and that "crew size shall be based on operational needs as determined by the railroad."; and

Whereas, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has now failed all of rail labor by denying the joint UTU-BLET petition for an emergency order prohibiting the use of one-person crews in conventional and remote control yard switching operations; and

Whereas, in the wake of the FRA ruling, the rail carriers have already begun to greatly expand their use of single employee crews on RCO jobs; and

Whereas, in the words of the BLET - UTU Joint Petition filed in June 2009, "That no conditions exist where one-person operations are safe," and

Whereas, the implementation of single employee operations will invariably result in a serious degrading of worker safety, security, and quality of work life;

Therefore, Be it Resolved, that RWU opposes any current use, and further expansion of, single employee operations anywhere in North America, in the yard or on the road; and

Be in Further Resolved that RWU will undertake a continent-wide Campaign for A Two Employee Minimum on Every Crew; and

Be in Further Resolved that RWU commends the respective leadership of the unions of the operating crafts - the United Transportation Union (UTU) and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLET) for their joint action and petition to obtain an emergency order prohibiting the use of one-person crews; and

Be it Further Resolved that RWU now calls upon the BLET and the UTU to redouble their efforts and launch an all-out rank-and-file campaign to put and end to the practice of single employee operations; and

Be it Finally Resolved that RWU calls upon all rail union members - particularly those of the operating crafts - to become involved in their organizations and resist any and all efforts of the carriers to implement single employee crews.

--Adopted by the RWU Steering Committee January 5th, 2010 --

BLET Officials Launch Attack on One-Member-One-Vote

In December, a handful of BLET Divisions launched an effort to turn back the tide of democracy in the BLET. In the Spring of 2006, BLET members won the right to vote for their top officers in a ballot initiative. (See Page 6 of the Insert of this issue of [The Highball](#) for more info on the BLET One-Member-One-Vote). Now, certain officials want to utilize that same machinery to negate this newly won right before the rank-and-file even gets the chance to put it to use.

In response, rank-and-file members of the BLET have come together to form "BLET Members for Democracy", a national grouping designed to "Save the Right to Vote". The group has organized nationwide conference calls, produced a series of flyers and a document of "Questions & Answers" to provide information to assist the BLET membership to make

an informed decision in the upcoming months, should the motion come to the floor of their union meeting for a vote.

"Four years ago, BLET members voted by 62% for the Right to Vote for our union's top officers," notes Hugh Sawyer, whose Division #316 sponsored the original proposal to win the one-member-one-vote. "The Right to Vote would hold our union's top officers accountable directly to the members." Given the recent rash of scandals at the highest echelons of the union, Sawyer points out that, "We need that accountability now more than ever."

For more information and/or to get involved in the campaign to Save the Right To Vote, contact BLET Members for Democracy at info@bletmembersfordemocracy.org.



Railroad Workers United Membership Application

Railroad Workers United needs you! If you believe that our unions should fight the carriers and not each other, then RWU is for you. If you believe that the carriers' "Behavior Based Safety" Programs do more harm to us than good, and If you want real union-based safety committees built upon cross-craft solidarity and rank-and-file control, then RWU is for you. If you want to help reform Railroad Retirement; if you wish to see an active, informed and mobilized union membership -- of all rail labor -- then RWU is for you. Please fill out this Membership Application form and mail it in today!

Sign Me Up!! *I want to join and help RWU build labor unity, democracy & solidarity!*

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Email Address _____

Union _____ Local # _____ Employer _____

Terminal _____ Craft _____ Years of Service _____

Union Position (if any) _____

I'd like to join for (check one):

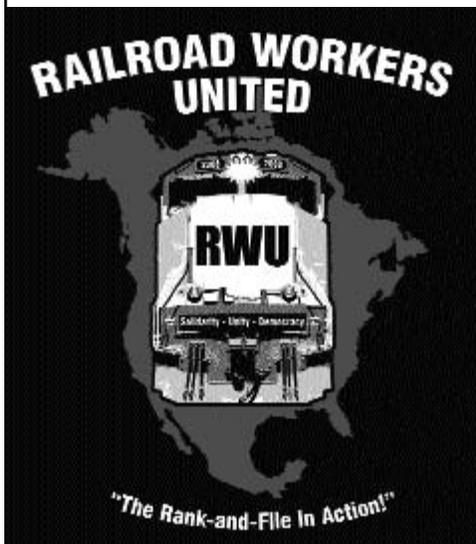
___ 1 year \$50.00 ___ 2 Years \$90.00 ___ 3 Years \$120.00

Clip and mail together with your dues to:

Ron Kaminkow, RWU Secretary P.O. Box 2131 Reno, NV. 89505

OR join on-line at www.railroadworkersunited.org

Get Your RWU Union-Made-in-the-USA T-shirts and Hats



T-shirts now available in Black or Gray in S, M, L, XL, 2XL, 3XL, or 4XL. RWU logo at left is on the front of the shirt.

Hats are available in Black, Gray or Red, one-size fits all. RWU Logo on the front is stitched embroidery.

Both T-shirts and hats are union made in the USA, 100% cotton and include the RWU 4-color logo.

T-shirts and hats cost \$20.00 each (\$15.00 for RWU members).

Postage Paid By RWU if mailed to addresses in the U.S.

Make your check to RWU and mail with your order to:

Ron Kaminkow, RWU Secretary P.O. Box 2131 Reno, NV. 89505

OR

Order and pay with your paypal or credit card via our website at

www.railroadworkersunited.org