RWU Resolution in Support of Dignity & Respect

Whereas, all working people deserve dignity and respect on the job; and

Whereas, unions have historically been the means by which workers have collectively banded together to defend their dignity and to win respect of their employers; and

Whereas, the North American rail carriers have undertaken a concerted effort in recent years to demean and degrade rail workers along with their sense of dignity; and

Whereas, this effort by the rail carriers includes but is not limited to:

- Constant surveillance upon and interference with railroad workers in the course of their daily duties;
- A major increase in discipline for all sorts of “infractions”, both in number of workers disciplined and in the severity of the discipline meted out;
- A record number of firings and terminations;
- Harassment and reprisal taken against workers who report injuries;
- Failure to abide by OSHA findings when cited by the regulatory agency for violations;
- Implementation of draconian attendance policies which restrict workers from taking needed time off work and which call for harsh discipline if/when a worker violates such a policy;
- Relentless violation of the union agreement, accompanied by endless denials of claims;
- Blaming workers for every accident and injury rather than fixing the underlying hazards.

Whereas these attacks are detrimental to our mental and physical health, make for a stressful, dangerous and unsafe work environment, erode our sense of self-worth and endanger union solidarity; and

Whereas, constantly responding to discipline and “individual” problems on an individual basis diverts union resources -- in terms of time, energy and finances -- into a defensive posture, eroding the power and effectiveness of the union; and

Whereas, since these attacks are universal and involve the entire railroad workforce, it must be met with a concerted defense by the collective effort of the workforce;

Whereas, filing paper – whether it be claims, grievances, complaints, whistleblower complaints, etc. – is an important tactic but is clearly not enough to deter the carriers from escalating this wholesale attack;

Therefore, be it resolved that Railroad Workers United (RWU) condemns this arrogant and despicable attack by the rail carriers upon our dignity, integrity and solidarity; and

Be it further resolved that RWU calls on all railroaders to resist this universal attack by creative means; and

Be it further resolved that RWU calls upon the union leadership to acknowledge the reality of this omnipresent situation and commit resources to organizing their membership to fight this scourge; and

Be it finally resolved that RWU constitute a Committee on Workers’ Dignity & Respect that will identify and address issues that demean and degrade workers.

This Resolution adopted at the Fourth Biennial RWU Convention
April 3rd & 4th, 2014    Chicago, Illinois