



# *The Highball*

Official Publication of  
**Railroad Workers United**

## *The Wreck of Amtrak #188: Another Needless Tragedy*

On May 15th, Amtrak Train #188 derailed at Frankfurt Junction, PA. The deadly wreck represents the latest tragedy in a series of high profile crashes in recent years. While the rail carriers, politicians and the media predictably want to blame "operator error", there are many deep underlying factors that combined, contributed to this – and every – train wreck.

Every single time that an industrial accident occurs, it is very easy to say "someone messed up." Well of course someone messed up! But it is way more complicated than that. Was it the engineer? Or perhaps the conductor? The dispatcher or perhaps the signal maintainer or maintenance-of-way foreman? Maybe the track inspector? Perhaps the trainee instructor or the rules examiner? It could have been the supervisor? Perhaps all of these individuals played some role or another in creating the background that would result in a train wreck.

We can choose to focus our attention on the *individual*; or we examine the institution, the structure, the framework, and the corporate culture within which the accident took place. RWU believes the way to a safer railroad is to "fix the hazards, not blame the victims." As such, we focus on the latter.

Please see pages 4, 5 and 7 of this issue to gain a deeper understanding of this latest wreck, and a commonsense strategy to prevent such tragedies in the future.



*Despite the finger pointing and the calls for in-cab cameras, the wreck of Amtrak Train #188 this past spring has once again revealed that underlying issues and hazards – some of which could have been fixed and/or ameliorated years ago – are ultimately to blame for the tragedy. See the full RWU editorial on what we can do to eliminate train wrecks on Page 7.*

## *Next RWU Rail Safety Conference Scheduled for Chicago in September*

As the summer draws to a close, RWU plans to sponsor another safety conference very similar in tone and content to those held this spring on the west coast (See *The Highball*, Spring 2015). In order to build these conferences, RWU came together with community and environmental organizations to sponsor all-day events that drew 225 participants from diverse backgrounds. The upcoming Chicago conference hopes to build up on those conferences and to pave the way for others in the Midwest and throughout North America.

In addition to developing a website, an online fundraiser, and other infrastructure useful for future conferences, the West Coast conferences have laid the foundation for a labor – community alliance where unions and workers' organizations join together with community and environmental groups to better defend our mutual interests. Citizens and workers are realizing their common goals around rail safety. The Chicago conference is poised to build on this momentum. Please join us!

### **"Railroad Safety: Workers, Community & the Environment" Chicago Conference**

Saturday, September 19th, 2015  
United Electrical Workers (UE) Union Hall  
37 South Ashland Ave, Chicago, IL.

Registration: 8:00 AM – Call to Order: 9:00 AM

Lunch: Noon

Adjourn: 5:00 PM

Dinner to Follow

More info: [www.railroadconference.org](http://www.railroadconference.org)



## ***RWU Members Appointed to Fill Steering Committee Vacancies***

This Spring there were a number of changes to the RWU Steering Committee. Paul Jenvey, an electrician who works for Union Pacific resigned his post on the ISC for personal reasons. And long-term member Mike Matson has resigned as an alternate to make way for up-and-coming new RWU members who wish to serve. Both Brother Paul and Brother Mike continue as RWU members in good standing.

Ryan Cornia, a Union Pacific trainman and Local Chairman of SMART-TD #1554 In Salt Lake City, UT will be added to the

Steering Committee as an alternate, as will Ross Grooters, a Union Pacific engineer, member of Division #778 working out of Des Moines, IA. Both Brother Ryan and Brother Ross have 12 years' experience on the railroad and have been active members of their respective unions.

Railroad Workers United welcomes these two brothers - and their ideas, values, experiences, and energy - to the RWU Steering Committee.

## ***RWU 5th Biennial Convention Scheduled***

The 5th Biennial Convention of Railroad Workers United has been set for the first week of April in Chicago, Illinois at the Hyatt-Regency O'Hare Hotel. All RWU members in good standing are encouraged to participate in this important event. As we have done in the past, we will conduct the Convention in conjunction with the Labor Notes conference which attracts roughly 2,000 union activists from across the nation and around the world.

Those RWU members present at the Convention will decide upon a new Steering Committee for the next two years, debate and discuss resolutions and bylaws changes, and take part in a series of workshops and discussions geared towards issues of concern to railroad workers across North America. At the conclusion of the conference we will conduct a social

*Ryan Cornia (UP) of Salt Lake City, Utah and Ross Grooters (UP) of Des Moines, Iowa (pictured here) are the most recent additions to the RWU Steering Committee. The Steering Committee has a total of 14 members in all including the three Alternates. Any RWU member in good standing is eligible to run for a seat that consists of a 2-year term of office.*



and hospitality room complete with live music, lively discussion, food and drinks, and a raffle fundraiser. For those members wishing to stay the entire weekend, the Labor Notes conference offers countless trainings and workshops, discussions, and plenaries on all aspects of union organizing.

### **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 & 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 Among All Railroaders***
- No to Concessionary Bargaining***



### **International Steering Committee**

- Mark Burrows, UTU #1433, CP, Chicago, IL
- Ron Kaminkow, BLET #51, Amtrak, Reno, NV
- Paul Matchett, WSOR, Janesville, WI
- Dreadsen Owen IWW #520, MRS, Chicago, IL
- Hugh Sawyer, BLET #316 NS, Atlanta, GA
- Daniel Scudder, TCU/BRC #6354, NS, Atlanta, GA
- John Vitaska, NCFD #395, CP, Chicago, IL
- James Wallace, UTU #305, BNSF, Lincoln, NE
- Jen Wallis, BLET #238, BNSF, Seattle, WA
- Andrew Weir, TCRC-CTY #240, CN, Sarnia, ON
- John Wright, BLET #78, CSX, Louisville, KY

**Phone: 206-984-3051**

**Email: [info@railroadworkersunited.org](mailto:info@railroadworkersunited.org)**

**Website: [www.railroadworkersunited.org](http://www.railroadworkersunited.org)**



## ***Struggle on the W&LE Enters Next Phase***

This spring, in response to the news that the trainman and engineers on the Wheeling & Lake Erie (W&LE) might resume strike activity, Railroad Workers United (RWU) engaged in a mini-fundraiser on behalf of those besieged brothers and their ongoing struggle against single employee train crews. With a very limited effort – and no strike activity to date from the workers – within a few short weeks RWU was able to passively raise \$831.39, exceeding the target of \$700.00.

In September 2013, W&LE engineers and trainmen struck this Midwest regional carrier when the company began running some trains without a conductor, a practice which the union said was a violation of the agreement and which constituted a “major dispute” under the Railway Labor Act (RLA). The carrier of course disagreed, sought and won a federal judge’s temporary restraining order (TRO) within 24 hours, and the employees were ordered back to work. From that day until April 24th, 2015 they were barred from striking by the same judge’s injunction. But on that date, a unanimous three-judge panel of the Sixth Circuit ruled in the workers’ favor, stating that the issue was in fact a major dispute, and released the workers to strike again should they elect to do so.

Upon learning the news, RWU Co-Chair John “J.P.” Wright immediately discussed the matter with officials of BLET #292, the union that represents both trainmen and engineers and offered financial assistance from RWU, its members and supporters network. Within hours, RWU launched a “crowd sourcing” online campaign that began to raise funds. “The results of what really was a low intensity effort shows the solidarity and support that other rails are willing to lend when called upon in such a time of need,” stated Brother J.P. He went on to point out that if and when the strike is actually resumed once again, that with an all-out high intensity effort waged by

RWU – with all of rail labor joining in – tens of thousands of dollars needed to sustain the strikers could be garnered very quickly. “This really was sort of a trial run. When and if these fellow workers resume their strike against single employee operations, RWU is pledged to mobilize whatever resources are at our disposal – financially and otherwise – to help them win. And we urge the trade unions – particularly the BLET and SMART-TD to mobilize their far vaster resources and to do the same.”

### **RWU is pledged to mobilize whatever resources are at our disposal to help them win.**

While a workers victory on the W&LE should be of keen interest to the BLET National Division, Brother J.P. notes that it should also be of concern to the SMART-TD. “While these fellow workers happen to be members of the BLET, in some ways their fight is even more the concern of the SMART-TD. If the W&LE were to get its way and win this fight, SMART-TD represented trainmen along with the union as a whole have as much to lose – if not a lot more – than the BLET!”

The W&LE trainmen and engineers have gone without a contract for seven long years now. The carrier is attempting to starve them into submission and accept a contract that – while allowing a much needed and deserved raise in pay – would have them working alone all day. Their future is uncertain. It is not clear if and when the strike will resume. But one thing is for sure: every trainman and engineer, in fact every railroader of every craft needs to stand at the ready to aid, abet and assist – financially and otherwise – these embattled union brothers when called upon. *Solidarity forever!*

## ***RWU Observes 7th Railroad Workers Memorial Day***

On Fathers’ Day Friday, railroad workers wore black shirts to work to honor and remember our fellow workers who were killed in the line of duty during the previous 12 months since the last such event on June 13th, 2014. RWU introduced Railroad Workers Memorial Day in 2008 and has been observing the Friday prior to each Fathers’ Day since that time.

Because of the high number of fatalities among the contract and non-union sector of the railroad workforce, this year’s observance focused on this group of workers. In recent decades, more and more railroad work has been contracted out to non-union sub-contractors. Class I railroads have contracted out everything from locomotive servicing to track construction, weed spraying and brush trimming to car repair, rail inspection and train and engine crew transport. It is hard to say just how many jobs have been contracted in this manner, in the tens of thousands perhaps. This is bad news for all railroad workers and it is an issue of grave concern to the future of our industry, working conditions, and pension, and crucially, our safety and health.

The railroad industry proudly touts its safety programs. However, this disingenuous posturing ignores the fact that the railroad is engaged in contracting out work to outfits that often have poor safety records. These contractors employ workers to do the same work that was once performed by unionized railroad employees. But now the railroad takes no responsibility for these workers because they are no longer directly employed. The rail carriers’ attitude is that the corporation is not responsible for their health and safety – even though they are on the property, performing the same work that was once done by rail employees, working in safety sensitive jobs, making profit for the company’s bottom line.

**RAILROAD WORKERS  
MEMORIAL DAY**

**“Black Shirt Friday”**



**Fathers Day Friday**

**A time for all railroad workers  
to mourn for the dead  
and fight like hell for the living.**

For more information, call 206-994-3051; see the website: [www.railroadworkersunited.org](http://www.railroadworkersunited.org)



# Our Members Speak Out

## *Safe Sustainable Work Schedules are the Starting Point for Safe Train Operation*

By Karl "Fritz" Edler

It seems like the only time the public or politicians think about rail safety is after a big crash. This time it's the deadly Amtrak train #188 crash on the Northeast Corridor (NEC). Anybody who has been part of a railroad operating crew knows we think about it all the time. That's why some of us are so angry that all the attention has been on cameras and cell phones and new technology when there was another big safety hazard that day that has yet to be given the attention it deserves; i.e., new unsafe and unsustainable work schedules.

Amtrak engineers and conductors tried to stop Amtrak from imposing these new work schedules. Sadly we failed. These more dangerous schedules are still in effect, so getting rid of them has to be at the top of the to-do list for all of us and for our union leaders.

### Here's the Short Version of What Happened

- Amtrak imposed new "optimized" work schedules on the Northeast Corridor on March 23, 2015 over the strong objections of operating crew representatives. These schedules completely removed all traditional human factor considerations and prioritized only cost.
- We told them the new schedules made the railroad less safe, made a tough job unnecessarily tougher and increased the risk of a major tragedy. They did it anyway, telling us there was nothing we could do to stop them.
- The tragic crash of Amtrak #188 took place just seven weeks later. The crew was operating under the more risky schedules. All NEC crews are still forced to work these unsafe work schedules.
- Amtrak management says there is no connection between these two facts. They want the focus on ATC, PTC and new cameras, not their new hazardous work schedules. But the undeniable fact is that whoever ran Amtrak 188 that night had a harder more difficult job than they should have because of the changed schedules.

### Management Made the Railroad Less Safe

Safe schedules are no mystery. Railroad science has shown that operating crews need adequate time between runs, especially on runs like the congested high-speed Northeast Corridor. We also know that the human body works better with as regular a time as possible to wake up and to go to sleep, with a regular work schedule in between these two.

Before March 23, 2015 we had sustainable layovers and more consistent starting times. Amtrak went the other way. Management relied upon a computer program that was never used on a railroad before and ignored the warnings of operating crew representatives who have run these trains every day for years. Safety was specifically ruled out as a consideration in the program. Cost, not safety or even sustainability, informed management's decision as to which run sheet to use.

Since March 23<sup>rd</sup> the middle, sustainable layover times were decimated. Way too many couplets are too short to provide either rest or dependable turns. The number of unnecessarily long jobs were quadrupled. The computer generated couplets dictated that the starting times on way too many assignments



*The safety and security of both freight and passenger rail is best addressed by utilizing well rested train and engine crews who work reasonable hours on predictable schedules.*

jump up to 6 and more hours every week from day to day. All unprecedented and all unnecessary based on timetables. You hear about schedules like that at non-union places like Walmart and McDonalds. Now we have them at Amtrak.

### The Fight for Safe Schedules is Not Over

Management did not have to answer any of our safety concerns. Since work schedules are not part of our Collective Bargaining Agreements they had the last word. But we can only ignore the role of "optimization" in chronic fatigue at our peril. They forced us to work these unsafe schedules but they can't force us to be quiet about them.

Every time any representative of railroad operating crews meets with management or with political leaders or the media we must bring up the issue of these new unsafe work schedules. We owe it to our families and our passengers.

The BLET General Committee on Amtrak is in negotiations with Amtrak for a new contract. We know how the complexities of the Railway Labor Act can tie us up in legal knots, but this is a good time to ask management about schedule changes and call on them to defend their reckless actions. They told the NEC operating crews "fatigue is not a safety issue." Let's make them defend that statement in public.

Safe layovers and same time element starting times should be part of the BLET contract so Amtrak management can't ever force unsafe changes on us ever again.

*For more details check out <http://tinyurl.com/p5c6nz5>*

*Fritz Edler retired as working Local Chair of BLET #482 in May, 2015. He was a leading participant in the ongoing fight against risky crew schedules on Amtrak. He served 20 years on the Local Committee of Division 482 and led numerous successful defense efforts. Previously active in the UTU and the BRC, he now lobbies and organizes for Safe Quality Nationwide Passenger Rail: Advocacy for rail workers in Washington D.C.*





# ***Inward Facing Cameras Are Not the Answer... But if they are to be installed, they must be strictly regulated!***

With each high profile train wreck in recent years (e.g. Chatsworth, CA 2008; Spuyten Duyvil, NY 2013; and now Franklin Junction, PA 2015), the cry for inward facing locomotive cab cameras grows ever louder and sadly, ever more irrefragable. Following both Chatsworth and Spuyten Duyvil, Metrolink and Metro North respectively installed such cameras in their locomotives. Now in the face of the Amtrak #188 crash in April, that carrier has now proclaimed its intentions to similarly equip its locomotive fleet. On the freight side, Kansas City Southern is well on the way to outfitting its fleet with cameras as the other railroads begin to follow suit.

While Railroad Workers United has consistently opposed such cameras and will continue to do so. However, the writing appears to be on the wall at this point. As such, we need to do our utmost to ensure that the rail carriers are not able to use such cameras to intimidate, harass, discipline and distract train and engine crews while in service to the company. The rail carriers may believe that the video footage of these cameras is theirs to observe anytime they please. They may believe that such footage could allow them to discipline any employee for whatever reason they may find. We must insist that this not be allowed to be the case.

In early July, the RWU Steering Committee adopted the resolution below. The resolution is to be sent out to the news media,



***Spectacular train crashes like this one in Chatsworth, CA fuel outcries from the rail industry, politicians and the public for inward facing cameras. But railroaders know such gimmickry does nothing to eliminate the underlying hazards that cause such wrecks and truly improve the safety of railroad day-to-day operations.***

the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), and the myriad rail unions.

## ***RWU Resolution on Inward Facing Cameras on Locomotives***

**Whereas**, recent train wrecks have fueled the cry of politicians, pundits and railroad executives for inward facing cameras on railroad locomotives; and

**Whereas**, this push for inward facing cameras is ostensibly to better understand after-the-fact what actions the crew may or may not have taken that might have contributed to any given train wreck; and

**Whereas**, the rail industry's first prerogative is to make a profit and as such, has a long history of resisting safety improvements that in its view, could be overly expensive and cut into those profits; and

**Whereas**, as a result of the nature of the rail corporation as described above, its managers and supervisors cannot be trusted with the contents of these cameras and should not be part of the post-accident investigation; and

**Whereas**, without their strict regulation, the rail carriers could easily use footage from such cameras to spy on, intimidate, harass, discipline and terminate railroad employees for reasons that have nothing to do with any train wreck; and

**Whereas**, such actions by railroad managers would represent abuse of the cameras and represent a digression away from their intended use; and

**Whereas**, the aviation industry has agreed to a cockpit voice recorder model that makes use of data for purposes of federal accident/incident investigation, while disallowing the industry from using the data to routinely discipline or otherwise harass or intimidate employees; and

**Whereas**, these cameras, if not strictly regulated in such fashion, could likely distract train and engine crews from speaking candidly with one another and safely performing their duties;

**Therefore, Be it Resolved**, that RWU supports rules that restrict the rail carriers from abusing this technology and using it to harass, intimidate and discipline train and engine crews; and

**Be it Further Resolved**, that RWU supports the elimination of filmed records within a reasonable length of time following the conclusion of each train crew's tour of duty during the course of which no accident or unusual event has taken place; and

**Be it Finally Resolved**, that RWU insist that the cameras' contents only be viewed only by members of the team engaged in a post-accident investigation and only then when an accident that requires such investigation has occurred.

***Adopted by the RWU Steering Committee July 8th, 2015***



# Opinion & Commentary

## What Would Eugene V. Debs Do Today?

*Whenever, wherever I'm interacting with other workers, be it in the shanty, on the picket line or in a union convention hall, this question serves a constant guide: "What would Eugene V. Debs — the great railway union leader — do today given our current circumstances?" It was in that spirit I gave the following speech at the 2014 SMART-TD convention in Las Vegas, NV. Many delegates, as well as some officers, complimented me personally following the warm fraternal response I received. This deepens my convictions that there is an increasing openness to our vision, ideals and principles.*

I'm running for the office of International President because I'm convinced that rail workers need a new bold, aggressive vision, as does labor in general. I started railroading in 1974, so I can accurately state that I have 40 years of perspective. When I hired out, 3 men on the ground made for an equitable division of labor, and sometimes the engineer had an assistant (AKA- the fireman). Now, most of the time 1 man does the work of 3, and if they could get away with single employee train crews, they would.

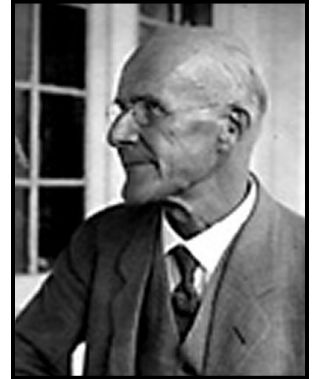
On the Wheeling & Lake Erie, a regional short line running through Ohio and Pennsylvania, (represented by the BLET), a strike last September, over this very issue, was put on hold with a temporary restraining order. Negotiations have been at a standstill, and it is quite possible that they may be forced to strike again. Rail labor needs to take an "all hands on deck" approach to this, or any other struggle posed, like we should have during the mid 60's, instead of letting the unions at the Florida East Coast Railway be busted. As the carriers pick us apart, ramming through concessions at various properties, their conquests ultimately spread throughout the industry.

Last summer, I was threatened with termination on the spot, because I had the audacity to plead the case for my conductor, who was being pulled out of service because he refused to keep going after 9½ hours on a 110 degree heat index day. Yelling at me like I was a stray dog who had just scarfed down a slab of ribs off the grill, when he asked, "Have I made myself clear, Mr. Burrows?", I wanted so bad to say, "Yes Master Tom." Make no mistake, in spirit and intent, this was the psychological equivalent of the master's whip, because in that moment I had to just take it or get fired. Never had I felt such humiliation and indignation. My own parents never talked to me like that, even in my most rebellious, hellion days. Now at age 57, some punk trainmaster 25-30 years younger, is going to assault my dignity because I'm fighting for the safety and well being of my co-worker. The very essence of unionism is human solidarity, because an injury to one is an injury to all, and he's going to make human solidarity a terminating offense by decree?!

This is just one of thousands of stories, but it's symbolic of where we're headed if we don't go on a counter-offensive, resolve to fight by any means necessary, for the safety, dignity, respect and quality of life, on & off the job that WE are ENTITLED to. We, the workers, move the freight thru 110 degree heat index days to 50 below wind chills, rain, sleet and snow. Why should we continue to unconditionally accept

whatever wages and working conditions the carriers are gracious enough to give us? We do the work, we create the wealth; "the pie", why should we accept begging for crumbs?

Time does not permit me to describe all the gory, sordid details of what's happening at Canadian Pacific, but suffice to say we are being busted in slow motion.



Eugene Debs in 1922

It's as if the contract doesn't even exist. This is no exaggeration. The atmosphere is a hybrid of a slave plantation and a prison industrial complex. The new management team is simply taking by force what they want, and if we don't voluntarily sign on the dotted line, then they'll most likely provoke us into a strike that they've been preparing for and without the national support we need, it could be very ugly for us.

Do as you're told, file your grievances later. The carriers hide behind the skirt of the Railway Labor Act (RLA), which gives them the right to assault us while simultaneously dictating to us how we can defend ourselves. Trying to defend our contract, and by extension our union, limiting ourselves to the grievance process is the equivalent of running out on the battlefield of class warfare with a pistol, given to us by the carriers, when you pull the trigger a flag comes out that says "BANG". What do we expect when we allow the enemy to dictate the terms of engagement?!

We, the rank and file, need to educate ourselves on labor history and the economics of the profit system. We need to organize and mobilize ourselves to fight alongside, not only any rail workers under attack, but any workers under attack. Eugene Debs said, "... without solidarity, nothing is possible, and that with solidarity, nothing is impossible." We need to have a stone-cold sober discussion to at least question the moral and ethical legitimacy of the RLA, and we need to break from the dead end trap that the only way to defend ourselves is to work harder to get out the vote for our so-called "friends" of labor, within the two party political system.

Again, we need to set the agenda and dynamics. Imagine if the forces that mobilized in Madison, WI back in 2011, and the millions more that those 100,000+ demonstrators represented, were galvanized into an independent political party, that could use our numerical majority and economic power to fight for - not only our interests as rail workers - but for the best and righteous interests and needs of society as a whole.

Thank you.

**Mark Burrows currently serves as the Organizer for Railroad Workers United. He is a member of UTU Local #1433 and works as an engineer for CP Rail in Chicago. He first hired out in 1974. This is the 12th installment in this series.**





## Opinion & Commentary

# Why There Are Train Wrecks ... and How to Prevent Them

On May 12th, Amtrak Train #188 derailed at Frankfurt Junction just east of Philadelphia, PA. Since then, we have been subject to endless speculation as the official investigation into the cause of the derailment continues apace. Those of us in the rail industry anxiously await the findings. Meantime, regardless of what the NTSB, the FBI and other government agencies discover and conclude about the tragic wreck, there are a number of facts that we believe are worth considering.

1 – It is roundly agreed by railroad executives, union officials and industry insiders that had Positive Train Control (PTC) been in place and in effect on this section of track, the wreck would more than likely not have been possible. PTC would have resulted in a train brake application in order to slow the train, recognizing that its speed was excessive and therefore unable to negotiate the curve ahead. PTC has been mandated by Congress, but its complete implementation has been delayed on the Northeast Corridor (NEC) and elsewhere for a myriad of reasons. In Amtrak's case, one reason being a lack of adequate funding from Congress.

2 – Amtrak has been underfunded for decades and forced to scrape by, cutting corners and deferring maintenance, ever under the microscope by a budget cutting Congress more concerned with ideological and political expediency than with safety and security. On the busy Northeast Corridor where the wreck took place, Amtrak faces a backlog of drastically needed repairs, estimated at \$4.3 billion over the next 45 years.

3 – In a cost-cutting measure on March 23rd, six weeks prior to the wreck, Amtrak unilaterally implemented a new scheduling arrangement for NEC train & engine crews over the vehement objections of its operating craft unions. The new schedules – intended to save \$3 million by reducing layovers – were condemned by both unions as a disaster in the making. Amtrak scrapped a proven scheduling system for NEC crews that had been in effect, with little modification, for decades (See Page 4). Prior to March 23<sup>rd</sup>, schedules adhered to the 90-minute layover minimum and provided additional time for difficult runs. Now, not only has the 90-minute layover been scrapped, but crews have no guarantee of any break whatsoever. Also, crews now may have varying on-duty time each workday, and these start times may now be any time of the day! (Note: the engineer of Train #188 had experienced a non-routine westbound trip earlier that day, causing delays to his train, thereby shortening up an already diminished layover).

4 – Basic "Train Control" technology has existed for nearly a century that can assist in preventing accidents such as this one. As with the wreck at Spuyten Duyvil, NY on the Metro North railroad 12/1/13, a simple transponder could have easily been located west of the curve that would have prevented the train from entering it at such an excess speed. This being one of the tightest and most restricted curves on the corridor, it seems an appropriate location for such a life-saving device.

5 – Amtrak Train #188, operated by a lone engineer, entered the permanent speed restriction at the curve, way too fast. Whether it was fatigue, the result of a projectile that hit the train (and possibly the engineer), inattentiveness, or other factors at play, despite the investigation, we may never know.

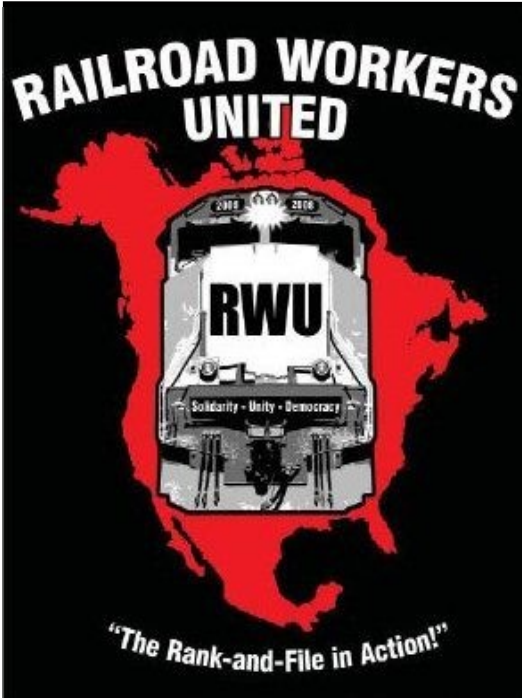
But we do know this: had there been a second crew member in the cab of the locomotive that day, it is very likely that such an additional crew member would have taken action to prevent the wreck that – for whatever reason – the engineer was not able to. (Note: commercial airliners routinely have two qualified and certified crew members in the cockpit. Perhaps trains should be operated similarly).

In the past seven years we have witnessed a series of tragic train wrecks, all of which have resulted in countless injuries and loss of life. Four wrecks – Chatsworth, CA (9/12/08); Lac Megantic, Quebec (7/6/13); Spuyten-Duyvil, NY (12/1/13); and now Frankfurt Junction, PA (5/12/15) have all been attributed to some form of "operator error". (Note: There is one factor that *all* four of these incidents had in common; i.e. the employee in question was working *alone* in the cab of the locomotive or was the *lone* crew member). While operator error may in fact have played a role, simply pointing the finger at the worker does little or nothing to assist in understanding why the error was made in the first place; nor does it help us to prevent similar such wrecks in the future. Since workers are human beings and as such, are prone to make mistakes (regardless of how many rules are written up, what discipline may be threatened, or how many observation cameras may be pointed in their direction), we must implement safety features and backups that take this reality into account.

Railroad Workers United believes that a series of simple common-sense applications would go a long way to preventing devastating train wrecks in the future. These include:

- 1 – The application of Positive Train Control (PTC) as soon as possible on major rail routes.
- 2 – In the meantime, application of off-the-shelf readily available "automatic train control" technology at critical locations where passenger trains are particularly vulnerable.
- 3 – A minimum of two qualified employees – at least one certified locomotive engineer and one certified train conductor – on each and every train.
- 4 – A guarantee of adequate and proper rest, together with reasonable attendance policies and provisions for necessary time off work, for all train and engine employees.
- 5 – Limiting the length and tonnage of freight trains to a reasonable and manageable level.
- 6 – The implementation of safety programs on all railroads that focus on hazard identification and elimination, rather than simply focus on worker behavior.
- 7 – Strengthening of OSHA "whistleblower" and other laws to empower employees to report injuries, workplace hazards and safety violations without fear of company reprisal.

If we are serious about preventing future catastrophes of this nature, we must equip railroad workers with the necessary tools – including but not limited to those outlined above – to enable them to perform the job safely. Pointing fingers at this or that employee (at any level in the company, union or management) might make some folks feel better, but it does little or nothing to prevent future accidents. Railroad Workers United believes it is time we learn from these terrible tragedies and get serious about implementing the necessary measures to ensure safe railroad operations.



### Get Your RWU T-shirts & Hats Now!

T-shirts available in Black or Gray in various sizes. RWU logo at left is on the back (or front) of shirt. See the RWU Online Store for sizes/colors.

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

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)

Shipping & Handling is just \$1.00 if mailed to addresses inside the U.S.

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

RWU P.O. Box 2131 Reno, NV. 89505

OR

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

[www.railroadworkersunited.org](http://www.railroadworkersunited.org)

Click on RWU Store

*"The important thing to impress upon the mind of the trade unionist is that it is his duty to cultivate the habit of doing his own thinking. The moment he realizes this he is beyond the power of the scheming politician, the emissary of the exploiter..."*

*Eugene V. Debs, Founder of the American Railway Union (ARU), 1904*



# Railroad Workers United



## Membership Application

*Railroad Workers United needs you! Please keep your membership dues current. If your membership is about to expire or has already expired, please renew today and remain in good standing. And if you are not already a member of RWU, please consider joining; then fill out the application below and mail it in with your dues. Thanks!*

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: **Railroad Workers United P.O. Box 2131 Reno, NV. 89505**

**OR join on-line at [www.railroadworkersunited.org](http://www.railroadworkersunited.org)**