

# Special Report - RWU 5th Biennial Convention

## *Convention Adopts Nine Resolutions on a Wide Array of Topics*

The Convention adopted nine resolutions on a wide variety of topics. While proclamations and resolutions do not change the world, it is nevertheless important to make it clear to our own membership, railroad workers in general and the working class and society as a whole just where we stand on major issues of the day.

Below is a brief summary of the rationale for each resolution. To read them in their entirety, see them (along with all other RWU Resolutions adopted by RWU since 2008) on the website [www.railroadworkersunited.org](http://www.railroadworkersunited.org).

### **1 – Opposition to CP Takeover of NS**

RWU joined the crowd of other unions including the BLET and the TCU in condemning the CP attempted takeover of NS. In addition to potentially initiating another “final” round of rail mergers, the CP’s anti-labor antics of the last three years or so has not endeared itself to railroad workers. Mergers as a general rule are bad for workers and unions, and result in job losses, contract abridgements, displacements, and division among railroaders. They are of course not designed to help workers, but the profits of the big rail carriers.

### **2 – Support for \$15/hour minimum wage**

While most railroad workers make more than \$15 an hour, this is an issue of deep importance to all working people, and that includes rails. As long as there is a vast army of workers making low wages, this puts a downward tug on the wages of all workers. In addition, low paid workers have traditionally been recruited to break strikes and scab on union workers. Finally, low paid workers rely on various supports for health care, nutrition, etc., all necessities that should be affordable with a “living wage”. The labor movement can only be as successful as its lowest paid workers. We cannot go forward while a huge sector of the working class is left behind.

### **3 – Support for a "Just Transition"**

Railroads have historically hauled lots of fossil fuels, but that is rapidly changing. Coal is not longer king as a result of cheap natural gas, environmental concerns, etc. And oil has grave environmental problems as well. How do we shift from a fossil fuel based economy to one based on clean environmentally sound renewables and not devastate workers’ jobs? RWU believes that we can have good union jobs *and* a safe and healthy environment if we can muster the political will for a “just transition” to a renewal energy economy.

### **4 – Insistence upon RWU Autonomy & Independent**

This resolution was previously adopted by the RWU Steering Committee in Fall of 2015. But we wanted to run it past the delegates to the Convention to make it crystal clear to our members, rails in general, and any and all of our allies in the environmental, labor and social justice movements that RWU is adamant on our insistence to remain autonomous and independent of any union, political party or organization.

### **5 – Opposition to the Trans-Pacific Partnership**

So called “free trade” agreements like NAFTA have been a boon to corporations but have not been so kind to workers.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), if approved, would decimate workers rights and working conditions in the countries that are party to it. RWU joins with the rest of organized labor and says a resounding NO to the TPP.

### **6 – Support for Railroad Worker Whistleblowers**

Railroads are 7 of the 10 worst corporations that violate the rights of workers when it comes to reporting workplace injuries, accidents and unsafe conditions. Thousands of rails have suffered harassment, discrimination and termination as a result of this illegal behavior. RWU points out the weakness of the law and suggests ways for us to rectify the problem.

### **7 – Support for a Worker - Passenger Alliance**

Railroad workers and passengers have a lot in common. We both want safe, efficient, well run transportation. To get it requires a political alliance between us. It is high time that workers and passengers understand their common goals and their common adversaries and unite for our common good. This resolution addresses this question.

### **8 – Solidarity with Other Worker & Social Movements**

This resolution is tied to Resolution #4 above on RWU autonomy and independence. To win our goals and objectives, RWU must align ourselves with various worker and social formations, groupings, and movements. That said, we must remain autonomous and independent of them.

### **9 – Position on the U.S. 2016 Elections**

In face of corporate control of the two-party system in the United States, RWU calls for a break with both of the major parties that have a stranglehold on political life in the country. It is time for us to explore other avenues - including but not limited to, the founding of a new political party in order to achieve our goals.



**New RWU Co-Chair Ross Grooters speaks to the Resolution on the Floor at the RWU 5th Biennial Convention in Chicago.**