

## ***CSX Meltdown a Crisis for Shippers, Passengers, Workers and the General Public***

Once railroad boss Hunter Harrison had made a fortune for Canadian Pacific stockholders over the last few years, he has been in higher demand than ever. Despite failing health, the 72-year-old railroad CEO was named CEO and then President of CSX earlier this year by the Board of Directors, which took its cue from stockholders drooling at the prospects of short term super profits that they are all convinced he can and will deliver. They want his services so bad that they are paying him multiple salaries, a combined total of a whopping \$300 million!

Sure enough, once Harrison took the helm, the stock value shot up. The industry was all in a flurry about Hunter's soon-to-be next shining success story. By late Spring, it was apparent that something was amiss, and by summer, even the industry mouthpiece *Railway Age*, opined that in fact, all is not well at the railroad. Following the closure of most of CSX's hump yards, where much of CSX's traffic had traditionally been classified, the railroad went into a tailspin. By late summer, the NTSB had scheduled hearings to investigate service problems.

In an effort to offset the damage done to the decrease in train velocity, increase in dwell time, and overall transit delays, Harrison simply abolished a series of rules that had been in place for decades. Now - without training or experience - crews are kicking cars, performing flying switches, getting on and off moving equipment and taking other risks that until a few months ago, would have gotten them (and still will get most North American railroaders) severely disciplined and likely

fired. And when workers have had the audacity to speak out against unsafe practices, unwarranted layoffs, harsh discipline, and the general chaos and malaise extant on the property, in an unprecedented display of finger pointing and condescension, Hunter Harrison publicly chastised the CSX workforce, *blaming them for the failures and shortcomings that the railroad was experiencing!*

Workforce morale is at an all-time low amidst rumors that the worst is yet to come. Trainmen and engineers are concerned that they will be routed down a similar path that both CP and CN workers before them took under Harrison, whereby most work rules are eliminated and the workday expanded. Shop crafts await notice that their facility will be shuttered and their work eliminated. Maintenance forces brace for further contracting out of their work. Meantime, there is extraordinary talk of ripping up the second main track of the busy artery west of Albany, New York as a cost-saving measure, leaving most CSX employees in a state of incredulity.

Like the various debacles and meltdowns we have seen before throughout the years of endless railroad mismanagement (e.g., the Conrail carve-up, UP/SP merger), this debacle will come to an end as well. Yards will no longer be plugged, dwell time will decrease, train velocity will improve, and the railroad will recover. But at what cost? How many more times must we be subject to this irresponsible, short-sighted mismanagement of our nation's railroads?