Railroad Workers Memorial Day

For eight years, RWU has observed Railroad Workers Memorial Day on the Friday prior to Father’s Day. Each year on that day, we asked that all railroad employees wear black to the workplace in honor and remembrance of our fallen fellow railroaders, killed in the line of duty.

As a general rule, RWU focuses the spotlight on a specific incident, issue, or rail property that is deserving of attention. In 2017, there were more than a dozen fatalities in the U.S. and six in Canada, demonstrating once again that the railroad culture, combined with existing workplace environment, and that the carriers continue to fail us in providing the safe workplace we are entitled to.

In 2017, Railroad Workers Memorial Day was not observed on Fathers Day. Because so many railroads are on the same time as Workers Memorial Day. In 2017, there were more than a dozen fatalities in the U.S. and six in Canada, demonstrating once again that the railroad culture, combined with existing workplace environment, and that the carriers continue to fail us in providing the safe workplace we are entitled to.

RWU Facebook Page

The RWU Facebook Page continued its growth and expansion in 2017. As of 1/10/18, we had 14,105 followers. The Page continues to be controversial, with the myriad members and non-members alike having differing expectations and desires for what the Page should be and should be. The Facebook Committee and the Steering Committee continue to grapple with the complexities of providing the best possible Facebook Page to serve both RWU and railroad workers in general.

RWU Store

The RWU Store continues to offer a full line of items. All proceeds from the Store benefit RWU. This year we continued to offer most of our previous items, plus we added the Rail Workers Labor History Calendar and vinyl stickers.

RWU International Steering Committee

Ross Grooters, BLET 777, UP, Des Moines, IA
Ron Kaminiski, BLET 51, MTK, Reno, NV
Bernie Maloney, BRS 16, CSX, Fort Stockton, FL
Paul Matchett, BLET 316, NS, Atlanta, GA
Cameron Stick, UTU 911, CP, Saint Paul, MN
Dan Stroup, BLET 188, CN, Superior, WI
John Vitaska, NGO 395, CP, Chicago, IL
James Wallace, UTU 305, BNSF, Lincoln, NE
Andrew Weir, TCR 240, CN, Sarnia, ON
John Wright, BLET 79, CSX, Louisville, KY

RWU Steering Committee Alternates

Brian Clark, TCR 3050, CN, Champaign, IL
Robert Hill, UTU 596, BNSF, Tacoma, WA
Alan Thompson, UTU 316, UP, Clinton, IA

RWU Defense of Scapegoated Canadian Railroad Workers

On July 6th, 2013, an oil train rolled away down a steep grade, derailed and exploded, killing 47 people in a small Canadian town in Quebec. The railroad - the Montreal, Maine & Atlantic (MMA) - had a terrible safety record, was headed by notorious union-buster and renegade CEO Ed Burkhardt, employed single crew operations, deferred maintenance of track and rolling stock, and instructed crews to leave on a steep mainline going without making a single emergency stop.

The ongoing Campaign for One Big Bargaining Coalition

RWU has consisted of the actions of the MMA & the Canadian government. Throughout 2017, we cam

RWU Strength in Numbers - One Big Bargaining Coalition

RWU is as an archives for all RWU newsletter and elsewhere, and have written key letters to various newspapers. Our special envoy made numerous appearances on the Fall TV, and has compiled a major safety issue for all railroad workers, the evidence of the public's resolve, and that the railroad unions are furthering all of us from the reckless and irresponsible actions of the railroad leaders who put profits above us, that blame us when something goes wrong, in the coming year we will continue to fight this trend of criminalizing railroad workers.
RWU’s quarterly newsletter The Highball, is possibly the best rank & file union newsletter in the country. It features networked contributors, writers, and distributors continues to expand. Some members choose to create a bundle of the newsletter (generally 10, 25, or 50 copies) each issue, while others make their own copies at home, work, or the copy shop. Thousands of copies get distributed each issue now. In addition, the newsletter is available online as a pdf on the website, Facebook and through the list serve for our on-line readers. All members are encouraged to help distribute The Highball. If you are interested in helping to spread the word, email secretary@railroadworkersunited.org.

The Highball - RWU’s Newsletter

We try to keep the newsletter topical and focused on issues that matter to railroad workers. Each issue covers RWU efforts, and it functions as a mouthpiece for the organization. Topics covered include: the developing cross-craft movement in rail labor; the ongoing persecution of the Amtrak #188 engineer; the worker electronics effort for scab-proofing Canadian railroad workers; the meltdown at CSX and the saga of Hunter Harrison; the organizing efforts of rail crew van drivers; May 3rd cross-craft “Day of Action”; National Handling and the contract fight with the long-distance couriers; the snarled and failed building rail - community alliances; the struggles of rail workers overseas; train crew staffing and the ongoing fight against single employee crews; elections and their effect on organizing and the railroad industry; opinion, commentary, and editorials on a number of the above topics. See the website for all issues/articles.

The RWU newsletter provides a progressive analysis of events and developments in the rail industry and the larger labor movement and society in general. We criticize the captains and union officials who promote insurance companies, and we offer alternative solutions. We refrain from frivolous “feel-good” topics (e.g., golf tournaments, scholarship funds, officer re-elections, etc.) and provide a much needed source of information that can inform, inspire, demonize and often starve for news and information from a perspective that they can easily read and relate to.

Rail Workers Labor History Calendar

The Rail Workers Labor History Calendar hit the streets Labor Day, 2017, and was a huge success. A small amount of work on National Labor History Day, May 15th, RWU ordered a total of 650 copies. While some were given away as premiums for joining/and/or donating to RWU in December, the vast majority were sold, primarily to railroad workers, but also to labor unions, activists, family members, history buffs, and various allies of railroad workers.

Each month of the Calendar depicts a scene from rail labor history - a strike, picket, demonstration, rally or other action involving railroad workers over the course of the last 150 years of struggle, from the Great Railroad Strike of 1877, until the most recent photo, the BMWED led all-crafts Day of Action rally for a good contract on May 3rd, 2017. More than 150 significant dates from railroaders’ history are included. The Calendar is a brief history book that outlines the railroad workers movement over the years.

The purpose of the calendar was to raise awareness of rail labor history among our members and railroad workers in general, to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the role that collective struggle has played throughout the ages in winning rank & file rail workers wages, benefits, and working conditions. As the saying goes, “they who forget the past are bound to repeat its mistakes,” Rail workers accompanied by this calendar in 2018 will better understand and appreciate where they come from, and be better equipped to fight for a bright future.

New Resolutions Adopted in 2017

RWU adopted five Resolutions throughout the course of 2017. These resolutions can be found along with all previous resolutions on the RWU website at the Resolutions Page. They are:

1. - RWU Resolution on Sleep Apnea.
2. - RWU Resolution in Opposition to “Right to Work”.
4. - RWU Resolution in Support of Cuban Workers and Unions.
5. - Resolution Against Fascism, Nazism & White Supremacy.

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After considering the question for a number of years now, RWU decided the time has come to begin the process of contracting with a paid staff person. A “job description” was created, a budget was set, and expectations set. Then we did a three month trial period for the new staff person, J.P. Wright, to assume the position.

The job is currently funded for just 20 hours a week until which time RWU will achieve the adequate financial resources necessary to increase the hours. At that time, RWU would decide on an extension of a staff person’s work, a second person with an additional skill set.

The four main areas for the staff person to focus are on: Clerical, Organizing, Networking and Fundraising. The clerical aspect includes processing new membership applications, managing dues from new members along with membership renewals, as well as attendance at the monthly meetings of the RWU Steering Committee.

The Organizing component is geared towards building membership and plugging them into the organization as well as organizing with the media. Networking entails the cultivation of various social media contacts with our various partners in labor, community, passenger advocacy, environment, etc. Fundraising. We are planning to reach out to rail advocacy groups and those who forget the past are bound to repeat its mistakes,” Rail workers accompanied by this calendar in 2018 will better understand and appreciate where they come from, and be better equipped to fight for a bright future.

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