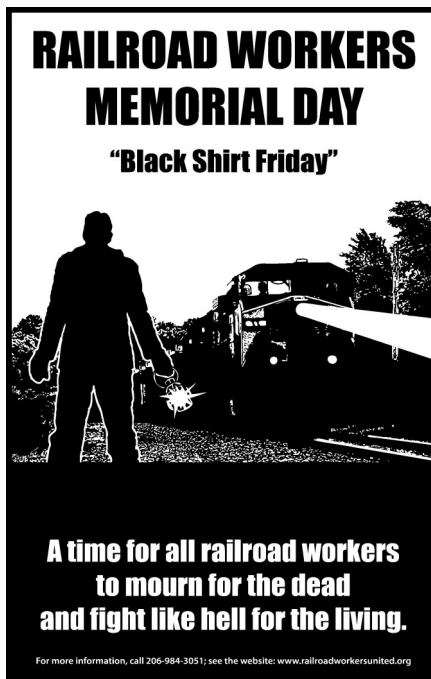


Railroad Workers Memorial Day

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 continues to be a very dangerous 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 Friday. Because many rails are distracted with the holiday, and because the national AFL-CIO and its affiliated unions observe "Workers Memorial Day" on April 28th each year, the RWU Steering Committee voted to change the date. Now Railroad Workers Memorial Day is observed at the same time as Workers Memorial Day. In doing so, we intend to attract the atten-



tion of railroad workers and others alike, and build a more robust and more visible day of remembrance and action for our fallen fellow rails.

RWU Steering Committee

The RWU International Steering Committee (ISC) continued to meet on the first Wednesday of each month for much of 2017. ISC members do not get paid, nor do they have rights to mark off "union business," so meetings are scheduled when most members are able to attend. Making it to meetings is not easy given the nature of railroad work. Other RWU members have attended as well, some becoming regulars. All RWU members in good standing are welcome to attend, listen and/or participate. By invitation, guests attended throughout the year - friends from other unions, worker organizations and citizens' groups.

The current Steering Committee (elected in April 2016 with two vacancies filled mid-term) is largely drawn from the operating crafts — represented by the Sheet Metal, Air, Rail & Transportation union (SMART) and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen (BLET). We continue to have representation from the non-ops as well, including members of the National Conference of Firemen & Oilers (NCFO), the Transportation Communication Union (TCU), and the Brotherhood of Railway Signalmen (BRS). The ISC also includes a member of the Teamster Canada Rail Conference (TCRC).

RWU International Steering Committee

Ross Grooters, BLET 778, UP, Des Moines, IA
Ron Kaminkow, BLET 51, AMTK, Reno, NV
Bernie Mahoney, BRS 16, CSX, Port St Lucie, FL

Paul Matchett, WSOR, Janesville, WI
Hugh Sawyer, BLET 316, NS, Atlanta, GA
Cameron Slick, UTU 911, CP, Saint Paul, MN
Dan Stroup, BLET 188, CN, Superior, WI
John Vitaska, NCFO 395, CP, Chicago, IL
James Wallace, UTU 305, BNSF, Lincoln, NE
Andrew Weir, TCRC 240, CN, Sarnia, ON
John Wright, BLET 78, CSX, Louisville, KY

RWU Steering Committee Alternates

Brian Clark, TCU 3060, CN, Champaign, IL
Robert Hill, UTU 556, BNSF, Tacoma, WA
Alan Thompson, UTU 316, UP, Clinton, IA



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, as the myriad members and non-members alike have differing expectations and desires for what the Page could 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.

Check out the RWU Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Railroadworkersunited/>. If you have comments, concerns or notice a railroad manager trolling the Page, contact Andy Weir at tcrc.cty.240@gmail.com.

The 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.

We continued to use the "Store Envy" platform, which is very user-friendly and can accept Pay Pal or Stripe credit/debit card payments online.

Rails and non-rails alike ordered shirts, hats, stickers, bumper stickers, pins and more throughout 2017. In addition, members of the general public, various organizations and unions, attorneys and others are free to make purchases. This provides RWU with much needed funding, publicity, and good public relations. Mark Burrows has served as Storekeeper throughout 2017 and plans to continue on in that capacity.

Official Website

The RWU website continued to expand and develop. Plans to reinvent the website on a new platform did not materialize, due to limited resources and the fact that the website is performing adequately. It remains a great resource for all to learn about RWU, our ideas and actions, rail labor, the rail industry, and labor history. The website is as an archives for all RWU newsletters, articles, resolutions, and more. The website contains additional information on practically everything that is contained in this *Annual Report*.



Annual Report of Railroad Workers United

2017

RWU Leads the Struggle for ONE Coordinated Bargaining Coalition

At our Founding Convention in 2008, RWU adopted a resolution in support of One Big Bargaining Coalition of all rail labor. While this position has been maintained, and was one of three original ongoing campaigns of the organization, it has gained limited traction - until this year. The BMWED's call for united action and support for an all-craft coalition gave legs to what has been a position we have held for a decade. Coalitions are finally starting to come together - principally in large rail terminals like Kansas City and Chicago - and RWU helped assist to build them where we could, and are committed to the process.

While some unions and members may see the building of such a coalition as a purely tactical maneuver, RWU sees the creation of such a coalition as a strategic endeavor. The old craft union structure is in a state of decay, and the need for all crafts and all unions to stick together as a matter of course - if not completely merge into one railroad workers union of all - is

imperative if rail labor hopes to achieve its goals and objectives.

As 2017 drew to a close, the RWU Steering Committee was deciding upon new slogans and designs for a whole new series of stickers, buttons, posters and flyers, all designed to push forward the issue of the "all-craft coalition", and the need for one big bargaining coalition.



While rail union leaders hurled insults at one another in the Fall, RWU pleaded the case for rail labor to become inextricably united through universal and permanent coalition, alliance and/or merger, in order that we are unified and powerful - not weak and divided - from this day forward!

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 (MM&A) - had a terrible safety record, was headed by notorious union-buster and renegade CEO Ed Burkhart, employed single crew operations, deferred maintenance of track and rolling stock, and instructed crews to leave trains on a steep mainline grade without making use of the automatic (train) brakes. Despite all of this and more, the Canadian government continues to scapegoat the train's engineer and train director (dispatcher) rather than hold the carrier and the regulatory agency (Transport Canada) responsible.

RWU has consistently condemned the actions of the MM&A and the Canadian government. Throughout 2017, we cam-

aigned vigorously for the workers' defense, raising funds and consciousness, pointing out the carriers' recklessness and the government's culpability. We have publicized the case in the pages of our newsletter and elsewhere, and have written key letters to various newspapers. Our special envoy made numerous appearances at the trial throughout the Fall. Just prior to the trials' conclusion, we co-sponsored demonstrations at Canadian Consulates nationwide.

RWU believes this is a major safety issue for all railroad workers and that the defense of these workers is crucial in defending all of us from the reckless and irresponsible actions of the rail carriers who put profits above our lives, then blame us when something goes wrong. In the coming year we will gear up to fight this trend of criminalizing railroad workers.

RWU Efforts to Build Rail Safety by Elimination of Hazards



The ongoing Campaign for real safety programs and opposition to "behavior based safety" (BS) continues to make headway. With each accident, injury, fatality, and disastrous wreck, it becomes clear that the BS ideology is failing to keep the rails safe for workers, passengers or trackside communities. Rather than focus on worker behavior, RWU fights to pin-

point hazards and find ways to eliminate them. This is, of course, what every union and every rail carrier should be doing as well. While there is a lot of entrenched resistance to this perspective, over the course of a decade we have made tremendous progress. Railroaders are overwhelmingly opposed to BS, and want real safety programs that identify hazards and address ways to get rid of them. RWU targets such things as fatigue, short-staffing, inadequate qualifying time, insufficient training, deferred maintenance, single employee crews, task overload, and failure to use existing technology, (and BS safety programs themselves!), all of which are hazards that MUST be eliminated if we are to achieve a safe workplace. Please join us in the fight!

The Highball - RWU's Newsletter

RWU's quarterly newsletter *The Highball*, is possibly the best rank & file union newsletter in North America. Our network of contributors, writers, and distributors continues to expand. Some members choose to receive 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.



We try to keep the newsletter topical and focused on issues that matter to railroad workers today. In addition, the newsletter covers RWU efforts, and it functions as a mouthpiece for the organization. Topics covered in 2017 included: the developing cross-craft movement in rail labor; the ongoing persecution of the Amtrak #188 engineer; the worker defense effort for scapegoated 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 NCCC; the sleep apnea and fatigue issues; 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 railroad workers; 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 carriers and union officials alike, providing 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 and inspiration for a workforce that is demoralized and often starved for news and information from a perspective that they can easily read and relate to.

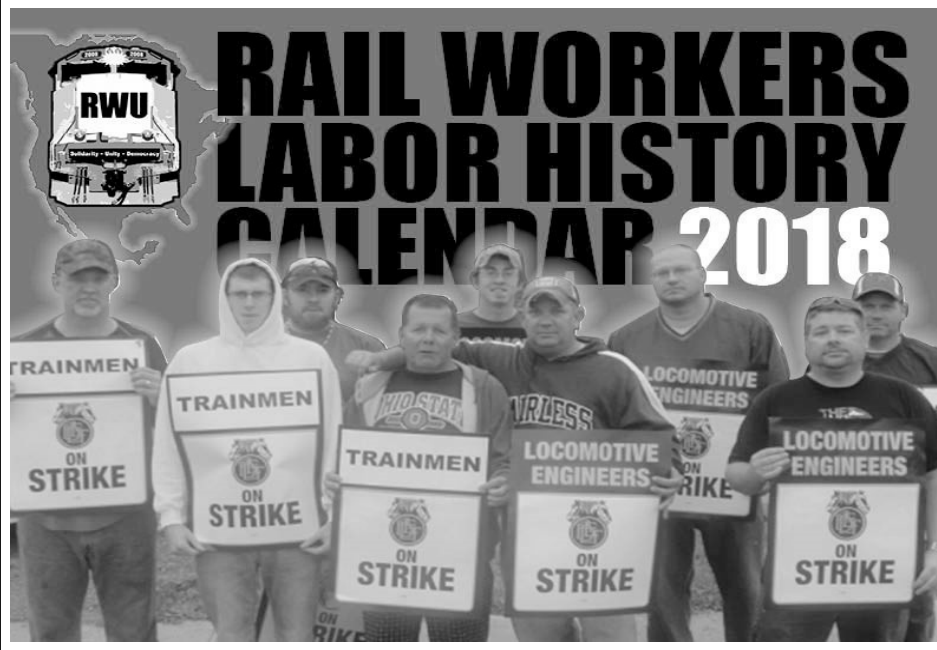
Rail Workers Labor History Calendar

The Rail Workers Labor History Calendar hit the streets Labor Day, 2017, and was on sale right on through January. 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 union 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 in effect, 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 rails better wages, benefits and working conditions. As the saying goes, 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.



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".
- 3 - RWU Resolution in Support of a Rail Worker - Rail Advocates Alliance.
- 4 - RWU Resolution in Support of Cuban Workers and Unions.
- 5 - Resolution Against Fascism, Nazism & White Supremacy.

RWU is under no illusion that these resolutions will change the world. They are largely symbolic statements of support of - or in opposition to - a specific issue, event, struggle, organization, etc. But these Resolutions outline the trajectory of the organization, give it depth and principle, and stand as testament to what we as RWU believe and stand for. We make it clear who our friends and allies are, and also who our adversaries are. If you are a railroader and find yourself in agreement with many, most, or all of our basic Resolutions, then perhaps it is time for you to join RWU! See ALL Resolutions on the website *RWU Resolutions* Page.

Support Staff

After considering the question for a number of years now, RWU decided the time was ripe for the organization to finally begin the process of contracting with a paid staff person. A "job description" was drawn up, and the logistics, parameters, 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 that RWU can achieve the adequate financial resources necessary to increase the hours. At that time, RWU would decide on an expansion of hours and/or to contract with a second person with an additional skill set.

The four main areas for the staff person to focus on are: Clerical, Organizing, Networking and Fundraising. The *Clerical* aspect includes processing new membership applications and requests for information as well as tending to membership renewals. The *Organizing* component is geared towards building membership and plugging them into the organization as well as working with the media. *Networking* entails the cultivation of alliances and coalitions with our various partners in labor, community, passenger advocacy, environment, etc. Finally, the *Fundraising* aspect includes online crowd sourcing, grant writing, building donor campaigns, increasing membership, and building the number of RWU "Sustainers" (see more under "RWU Sustainers Fund" entry, this *Annual Report*).

Finances

At the January 2017 meeting of the Steering Committee, RWU reported a combined total of \$14,414.80 in the bank. By the December 2017 meeting it was reported that the figure had risen to \$21,960.39.

Throughout 2016, our assets ranged between the above figures. The vast majority of this came in the form of membership dues from new members along with membership renewals. Sales of merchandise (see RWU Store), along with donations account for the remainder. While these sources provide support, membership dues continues to be far and away our number one source of income.

We have begun to make more use of our sister organization, the Railroad Workers Education & Legal Defense Foundation (RWF), a 501c3 non-profit tax-exempt organization. We have solicited donations and launched a concerted fundraising campaign in the Spring of 2017. Plans are afoot to do more fundraising in 2018.

Organizing

RWU continued to reach out to different sectors of the railroad workforce, particularly the non-operating crafts. The number of rails joining RWU nearly doubled from 2016.. This can be accounted for partly because of a flurry of activity around the master contract bargaining in freight. As in the past, the majority of the new members were drawn from the operating crafts, but we also saw a significant uptick in the number of new members joining RWU from the ranks of the "non-ops", including electricians, track workers, machinists and signal maintainers. In addition, a handful of workers from related industries joined as "Solidarity Members".

While some rails occasionally join through the mail, the lion's share of new members now join RWU on-line. This trend is expected to continue, greatly simplifying and streamlining the membership process.

In addition to new members, RWU developed many new "contacts" with railroad workers and others, who - while they have not yet decided to join - support the organization and have taken an interest in our efforts. Many of them signed up for the Google Groups list serve and/or have become active on the RWU Facebook Page. Others have bought RWU merchandise, offered to hand out information, or assist with community outreach. As struggles grow and intensify in the coming years, we hope to count on these folks to join and become active in RWU.

Solidarity Actions

Throughout 2017 RWU continued to promote the struggles, battles and strikes of other workers, unions and communities in their efforts to win justice.

We continue to make token financial donations to our friends and allies at the United Electrical union, *Labor Beat*, *Workers Independent News*, and to other worthy efforts of the working class. While this represents a tiny fraction of our budget, these donations go a long way in building solidarity with allies and friends.

When significant organizing efforts, strikes, boycotts or other actions take place, RWU recognizes them and forwards information of these actions to our list serve so RWU members and supporters can join in solidarity.

The new "RWU International Solidarity Liaison" position which was recently created, will be codified in the Bylaws in the coming year at the Chicago Convention.

RWU Sustainers Fund

With all the issues confronting rank & file railroaders in 2017, RWU has dramatically increased our level of activity. We are literally taking our organization "to the next level", developing much needed staff personnel to assist in building up the organization. To succeed in our efforts, RWU decided this Fall to get serious about fundraising. Letters were sent out to our most loyal members and supporters, urging them to become "Sustainers" by donating a small amount each week, each pay period, or each month to RWU. Those who wish their donations to be tax-deductible are encouraged to donate to our 501c3 tax-exempt sister entity - Railroad Workers Education & Legal Defense Foundation (RWF). Steering Committee members are engaged in follow up phone calls to talk one-on-one with potential Sustainers. The effort was just breaking ground by the end of the year, and it remains to be seen how successful it might be. See the website Page: *Become an RWU Sustainer*.

Ongoing Campaigns

Three of our ongoing campaigns are highlighted on the front cover of this Report. In addition to these, RWU continues to promote a whole series of ongoing efforts. Here is a listing of the current campaigns that RWU is actively involved in promoting among rail workers:

- Opposition to Single Employee Crews.
- Defense of Scapegoated Railroad Workers Targeted for Legal Action.
- Defense of Railroad Worker Whistle blowers.
- Coordinated Bargaining of Rail Labor.
- Opposition to Behavior Based Safety Programs.
- Opposition to Excessively Long and Heavy Trains.
- The Fight Against Chronic Fatigue.
- Support for a "Just Transition".

Flyers, resolutions, press releases and other information is available for each of these campaigns at the RWU website. Please see the *Campaigns* Page.