A Message from the Outgoing RWU General Secretary Ron Kaminkow

By Ron Kaminkow

It is with great enthusiasm and excitement that after 14 years serving as the General Secretary of Railroad Workers United, I step aside and welcome another RWU member to that position. Jason Doering, a Union Pacific engineer with many years’ experience in both his union and in RWU, has assumed the position as of June 17th. I am sure he will do a great job as the new General Secretary and make the organization proud. Please make him welcome. Meantime, I have moved over to the position of RWU Organizer. I will be working closely with Jason to get him oriented to and assist him with the position and its myriad responsibilities.

In 2008, when RWU conducted its founding convention, it was apparent that someone had to step up and keep the organization together, answer correspondence, process new members applications and membership renewals, and generally keep the organization running smoothly. That someone turned out to be me. I committed to serve for two 2-year terms ... but ended up serving a decade longer than I expected! Yes, it has been a lot of work, but it has been an honor and a privilege to serve the organization and help to build and grow it into maturity. I consider this to have been the most important work of my life. As I approach retirement from the rail industry after more than a quarter century, it is imperative that the important position of General Secretary be passed along to a working railroader.

For the last 14 years I have been actively building up the infrastructure, membership and finances of RWU. I vacate the position knowing that it can and will be filled by very competent younger rail workers in the years to come who will inherit a well-functioning organization, complete with a sound financial structure and support staff to get the ever-expanding work accomplished. Meantime, I will spend the next two years “in the field” recruiting new members and building up the legion of activists to create a new generation of railroad workers who are dedicated to building Rank & File power on North American railroads.

Thank you to the RWU members and supporters out there for your support and encouragement over the years, your patience and generosity. I have the utmost faith in the new General Secretary and the new Steering Committee to lead the organization forward in the years ahead. We have a dedicated and disciplined organization, one that is having an effect far greater than our limited numbers might suggest. This year just may prove to be a defining moment in the history of rail labor. The battle lines are drawn. The long-held goal of RWU – unity of all crafts and all unions in bargaining – is at hand. The labor movement is rebounding across the board. Workers are organizing and fighting back. I encourage every rail worker in North America to join and get active in RWU. Help us to keep pushing our agenda for “Solidarity, Unity, and Democracy” forward!

Left: Outgoing RWU General Secretary Ron Kaminkow has held the General Secretary position since the founding of RWU in 2008. Right: New RWU General Secretary Jason Doering, former Co-Chair of RWU, assumed the position on June 17th.