NMB to decide on Union Pacific representation election by March 1

CLEVELAND – A final decision is expected by March 1 on whether there will be a representation election on the Union Pacific Railroad between the United Transportation Union (UTU) and Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLE).

A special three-member panel of prominent labor-relations professionals appointed in early January by the National Mediation Board (NMB) will issue its decision by the March 1 deadline. If the BLE had agreed to resume voluntary negotiations with the UTU the deadline would have been March 29.

The BLE, however, refused to hold any further talks with the UTU. In a December 30, 1999, letter to the UTU and BLE, the NMB suggested, but did not require, that the two unions resume voluntary discussions to resolve their dispute through mutual agreement. The NMB also recommended the use of Thomas Donahue, who had acted as AFL-CIO facilitator when the two unions signed a unification agreement in November 1998. In its letter, the NMB determined to refer the resolution of the representation dispute to a three-member panel of prominent labor relations professionals.

UTU opposes BNSF/CN deal

AUSTIN, Texas – The UTU is opposing the merger between the Canadian National and Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroads.

At a meeting of International officers held here in mid-January, International President Charles L. Little said that North America’s largest rail-transportation union will “continue in the U.S. to oppose this merger.”

The UTU was the first major union to publicly oppose the CN/BNSF merger. Charles L. Little said that North America’s largest rail-transportation union will “continue in the U.S. to oppose this merger.”

The panel members chosen by the NMB to resolve the UTU/BLE dispute are noted for their knowledge and wealth of experience in labor relations.

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Arnold M. Zack, Richard L. Bloch and

Continued on page 8

Unions, carriers reach RRA deal

WASHINGTON – Full retirement benefits at age 60 with 30 years of service, parity for widows, and five-year vesting are three of the cornerstones of an historic agreement that will benefit railroad retirees if Congress passes legislation this year to improve the Railroad Retirement Act.

On January 14, the UTU joined a coalition of nine other rail labor organizations in an agreement with freight rail carriers representing the National Railway Labor Conference (NRLC) on proposed amendments to the Railroad Retirement Act (RRA) that will significantly benefit railroad retirees.

The agreement now must be drafted into legislation and passed by Congress. If enacted

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Member saves life

Pete Bonaroti, a 25-year veteran trainman with the Union Railroad and member of Local 1628 in Pittsburgh, Pa., might not be alive today if not for the quick actions of UTU member Darrell Johnson.

Bonaroti recently had both his legs severed by moving equipment, which could have meant certain death except for the life-saving skills of Johnson, as well as BLE-represented engineer Russ Linn. Johnson had the necessary emergency medical response training to deal with Bonaroti’s severe injuries. He used his own belt and one of Bonaroti’s to fashion tourniquets around Bonaroti’s legs. “Without Johnson’s action, Bonaroti could have bled to death at the scene of the accident,” said Union Railroad General Chairperson J.J. Tierney, Jr.

Johnson said that he “did what anyone would have done in the same situation.” He admitted that emergency response training is helpful in knowing how to deal with such life-threatening situations. “With so many lives at stake in this dangerous business, it would make sense if everyone would be trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and emergency first aid,” he said.

Yardmaster wins lottery

A UTU-represented yardmaster from Local 1973 (Chicago, Ill.), working for Union Pacific in Clinton, Iowa, recently discovered he could retire earlier than he had planned. While working the third shift on Saturday, January 8, Larry Haslen discovered he won a Powerball Lottery drawing that night with a jackpot of $32 million. According to reports, when asked how he decided to retire, he said, “When they announced the last number!” Because he had decided to retire, he said, “When they announced the last number!”

After taxes, he’ll find himself ahead by about $11 million.

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Continued on page 8
Local 318, Hornell, N.Y.

Vice Local Chairperson and Legislative Representative Robert A. Hagen has enjoyed great results in bringing new workers on the Norfolk Southern (NS) into the UTU, as reported in the UTUIA Special Representative Dave Murphy, who cites Hagen’s hands-on approach and availability to lend assistance as instrumental to his success. The local represents engine and train service workers employed on NS between Buffalo and North Jersey.

Local 324, Seattle, Wash.

Contract negotiations have begun for part-time train drivers at Everett & Trains, who recently joined their sisters and brothers working full-time on the property by electing the UTU as their representative. Heading the negotiating team is General Chairperson Britan Doman. Meanwhile, Steve Snyder has taken over editorial duties from Larry Kutdle and now serves as Editor and the UTU, as reported in The Informant. Contact Snyder at 19805 121 St. Ct. E., Summer, WA 98390, or send e-mail to him at <lkoh321@aol.com>.

Local 343, Hamilton, Ont.

The local is grateful for the support of General Chairperson Ronald Long and Canadian Legislative Director Tim Secord, who backed them up when CN Rail recently attempted to strong-arm members into participating in the development designed to circumvent the duly elected union representatives, EAPF representatives and safety committee. Local Chairperson Scott Montani. “Brothers Long and Secord made it quite clear to CN’s legislative director that the local would not allow this attempt at union busting,” said Montani.

Local 492, Sacramento

Members are reminded to familiarize themselves with the Federal Railroad Administration’s final rule, effective January 1, amending requirements for qualification and certification of locomotive engineers. Secretary/Treasurer Daryl Stinchfield said copies of the portion of the Federal Register in which it appeared were forwarded to each California local for public posting by State Legislative Director J.P. Jones. For information, contact Stinchfield at (916) 624-7426. Copies may also be obtained from the local’s website at <http://www.calweb.com/~whbird/unr/92.html>.

Local 507, Van Buren, Ark.

A dinner was arranged by members, employed by the Union Pacific, to honor retired Engineer Charles O. Graves, who celebrated his 100th birthday January 19, according to State Legislative Director Don Beavers. Brother Graves, who began his career in 1923 as a brakeman on the Missouri Pacific, retired in 1972 as a conductor with 49 years of service. At the event, attended by Beavers, UTUIA Field Supervisor Joe Cunningham and numerous friends and local members, Graves received a variety of gifts, including a brass lantern presented by U.S. Alternate Vice President (South) Jerry L. Batten.

Local 933, Jefferson City, Mo.

Members are mourning the loss of 80-year-old former Local 933 member and Missouri Pacific engineer James H. Holmes, who held the highest seniority on the former Southern Pacific line (now Union Pacific) Gulf Division.

Local’s pride holds highest seniority date

The members of Local 1957 in Silsbee, Tex., are justifiably proud of their charitable activities, their new website, and their contributions to community youth development, but are equally proud of fellow member James H. Holmes, who holds the highest seniority on the Gulf Division.

“James has been working the engines since he was 12,” said Holmes, who tried to explain why he has no plans to retire from his job as a conductor. “It’s just a part of me. I’ve been around it all my life, and I’m a firm believer in passing along some of the knowledge.”

Holmes is four years old when his father, who became the first African American man to work as a conductor on the Gulf, Colorado & Santa Fe, first started taking him on runs. “Also, I was lucky enough to live a block from the Texas Pacific shop. As a kid, I’d go for rides with the hostlers.”

Learning has always played a central role in Holmes’ life. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Bishop College in Marshall, Tex., in 1921, before serving two years with an Army tank battalion in Korea.

But his greatest teacher has always been experience. Holmes once worked on a train in Kentucky, and in the early 1990s, took instruction as an engineer. “I scored a little better than what I needed,” he said. “But it was a useful experience, because I make more money than an engineer does.”

Holmes advises younger railroad operators to learn all they can and to take care of themselves. “I worked with a man with a seniority date of 1901,” Holmes said. “He said for longevity, get plenty of rest, and if you desire to have a lady, have just one.”

Local 1393, E. Buffalo, N.Y.

Members wish to give special recognition to Secretary/Treasurer Bob Zimpfer, whose efforts have resulted in a 300% increase in TEF contributions. Zimpfer also contributed time to a peer training program that gives new CSX workers a safe start in the industry, and has been invaluable to UTUIA Field Supervisor Tom Aznino.

Local 1469, Oakland, Cal.

Instead of the usual holiday party, this year members employed as yardmen by Union Pacific hosted a luncheon with fellow members on December 30. Meanwhile, the local participated in a joint “Millennium Party” last month to honor those who have been with the company the longest. The celebration on December 30 featured a visit from the UTU’s mobile education and training lab. Membership, according to New York State Legislative Director Sam Nacsa for his assistance.

Local 1582, Albany, N.Y.

Custodians, building maintenance personnel, and operations employees of the AGI group were set to vote on a three-year agreement as this edition reached deadline. The pact calls for a one-time, $50 per month increase retroactive to December 1999 and another $1-an-hour over the next two years, as well as a reduced time frame for receiving vacations. It also calls for the company to contribute an additional $50 per month into employees’ 401(k) plans, increase its contribution to the defined-benefit pension plan, boost safety payments, and expand the definition of those entitled to receive reimbursement for safety shoes, all without any give-backs required. Vice President and Director of the Rail Department Bernie McElis congratulated LCA Chairperson Ron Palka and members of the negotiating team.

Local 1778, N. Vancouver, B.C.

About 300 members employed by BC Rail recently involved in a nine-day company lock-out were voting as this edition reached deadline on a tentative agreement that is retroactive to December 31, 1997. Secretary/Treasurer David Morhouse said members had laid down picket signs to join their families on New Year’s Eve and Day, less than an hour before CN Rail tried to make a pick-up from an interchange track behind the picket line. Acting quickly, they had the line back up minutes before the yard engine arrived. Fellow UTU members on CN respected the line, turned around, and went home. Members then held the line for 18 hours during the holiday before other unionists relieved them.
Ohio
The UTU Ohio Legislative Board was successful in obtaining revised language in two bills making the rounds in the Ohio House of Representatives which would have been detrimental to train crews had they passed into law as originally worded.

Both could have held train or engine service employees responsible and open to prosecution when a train blocked a railroad grade crossing. A related measure, H.B. 516, originally read that, “No railroad company and no train conductor or other person in charge of a train shall obstruct, or permit or cause to be obstructed, a public street...” designated as an emergency crossing.

As UTU press time, Assistant Director Joe Boda said that the bills’ sponsor, Rep. Rex Damschroder, had agreed to delete “conductor or other person in charge of a train” from the bills’ text.

State Legislative Director William J. Thompson reports that the UTU is taking a neutral position on both substitute bills as currently written.

Arkansas
Hot Springs, Ark., the birthplace of the UTU, became another page in the union’s history book last month as the Arkansas Legislature held its reorganization meeting there aboard Members, the first reorganization meeting held in the union’s mobile education and training center.

During the Jan. 4-6 meeting, Don Beavers was elected to his sixth consecutive term as director of the state legislative board. The Federal Railroad Administration also conducted a comprehensive training session for board members.

North Carolina
The UTU’s North Carolina Legislative Board has established an informational website which reports Director Richard H. Westbrook, Jr.

Although still under construction, UTU members can access the website for the board’s activity report, legislative updates, UTU designated legal counsel, links to the state’s U.S. legislators, and to send electronic mail messages to Westbrook.

UTU members can access the site at <http://www.hotstown.aol.com/nelogisativedb/index.htm> or by following the appropriate links from the UTU International’s web page at <http://www.utu.org>.

“We have in the past been a very active board under the leadership of James Stem. I plan to continue to be very active in local and state-wide politics,” Westbrook said.

Mississippi
Because no candidate received a majority of the votes cast in last November’s gubernatorial race, the Mississippi House of Representatives last month selected Democrat Ronnie Musgrove as governor of the state.

“Ronnie was elected with the support of UTU and the whole labor movement,” said State Legislative Director A. Neal Fowler.

“Through TPEL, we were able to hold on to a majority in the state house, which secured the election of Ronnie Musgrove.”

Fowler said that organized labor was also very instrumental in electing Amy Tuck as lieutenant governor. “She is one of the most influential people in the state right now,” said Fowler, who explained that Tuck will be appointing all of the members in state’s Senate committees.

North Dakota
At a meeting with UTU members on Jan. 21, U.S. Cong. Earl Pomeroy (D-N.D.) announced that he would co-sponsor H.R. 3091, the legislation pending in Congress which would allow rail workers to mark off for up to 72 hours after working or being available for duty for seven consecutive days.

In addition, Pomeroy pledged to contact Burlington Northern Santa Fe officials and urge them not to detour coal traffic out of North Dakota. BNSF had recently announced plans to re-route about one-third of the state’s current coal traffic out of the state by the end of January, said Legislative Director John Risch.

More than 100 UTU members are already without jobs in the state because of slow traffic on the BNSF and CP Rail, Risch said.

Thirteen members of UTU Local 1144 at Mandan met with Pomeroy to explain how difficult their lives were without predictable days and convinced him to support the legislation.

Risch also said that Cong. Earl Pomeroy (D-Minn.), who represents many UTU members living in western Minnesota but working in North Dakota, is already a co-sponsor of H.R. 3091.

Your TPEL support makes difference
It is said that the next president of the United States will appoint the majority to the Supreme Court during his term in office. That is very important to all of us. Do you want a president who will appoint conservative justices, or a president who will appoint justices that will be sympathetic to causes that affect the everyday lives of American workers?

Support the UTU’s Transportation Political Education League (TPEL) with your voluntary contributions. We need the Democrats in Congress which should get legislation passed which would prohibit striker replacement.

Oregon
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December, said Legislative Director Don Beavers (656), Assistant Legislative Director James Matthew (656), Jimmy Minor (733), Pat Lynch (507) and Legislative Director Don Beavers (656).

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“We have in the past been a very active board under the leadership of James Stem. I plan to continue to be very active in local and state-wide politics,” Westbrook said.

Good new year for yardmasters
The New Year has begun on a positive note for the Yardmasters Department.

Grand Trunk Western (Canadian National) General Chairperson L. J. Forchione and his committee have received membership ratification of an interim contract modification that increases the daily rate and benefits for yardmasters employed on the Grand Trunk Western Railroad.

The contract provides for a lump-sum increase in the basic daily rate of pay by approximately 9%, establishes a guaranteed extra board, restructures overtime calling procedures, provides training pay of one hour per day, and includes a paid training agreement for current and future yardmasters.

These benefits are added to those in the current contract, whose moratorium expires in 2001.

General Chairperson Forchione is to be commended for his determination and hard work in those negotiations.

Meanwhile, General Chairperson J.R. Camby and his committee on Amtrak have reached a tentative agreement for the Amtrak yardmasters.

The proposal is now before the membership for ratification.

This will bring to a close the longest contract negotiations we have had with Amtrak.

Immediately following ratification, Section 6 Notices will be served on the yardmasters to initiate the next round of negotiations.

Effective January 1, the Yardmasters’ Supplemental Life Insurance Plan changed administrators to Minnesota Mutual Life. If you have any questions contact the Yardmasters Department at (216) 228-9400 ext. 315.
Historic agreement on RRB

For the first time in 25 years, there is promise the Railroad Retirement System will provide major new benefits to retirees and will fix some old wrongs.

This historic agreement took a powerful coalition of 10 unions working with the carriers in a new economic climate to achieve.

However, the job isn’t over yet. Congress must pass the legislation we will be proposing, and it will take the efforts of all of us to make sure it happens. When the time comes, we will call on all of you to let your voices be heard in the halls of Congress.

Notably absent from this coalition, however, are the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees. With all of the rhetoric they have espoused about solidarity, it is more than ironic that it is the UTU that stands with the rest of rail-transportation labor while they stand on the outside looking in.

Thanks go to the leadership of all of our coalition partners who understand that it takes cooperation between labor and the carriers for legislation to pass in Congress. We want to give special thanks to Robert Scardelletti, international president of the Transportation Communications Union, and Daniel Pickett, international president of the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen, for their noble efforts.

We also wish to thank Robert Allen, president of the National Railway Labor Conference, for his leadership.

CN/BNSF merger: No thanks

Everyone but the kitchen sink (and we’re still waiting for its press release) is opposed to the proposed merger between the Canadian National and Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroads.

Never before in the history of railroading have so many groups, including the UTU, rallied forces so quickly to oppose any merger. In fact, the UTU was the first union to publicly oppose this proposed deal.

North America does not need another rail merger that promises the sky but can’t deliver the goods. North America’s rail workers don’t need more disruption in their lives.

An open letter to all railroad chief executives

Dear Mr. Railroad CEO:

The week before Christmas, rumors began flying that there would be a BNSF-Canadian National merger. On the morning of December 20, a joint news announcement was made. There were bright smiles from the top managers at both railroads and the usual set of promises: single line service, synergies of the two corporations, improved service to shippers, millions in new income for stockholders, tremendous cost savings through the elimination of thousands of jobs and duplicative facilities. There was champagne for the house and pats on the back for everyone.

However, Wall Street has seen this show before - it has played longer than the musical “Cats” has on Broadway without the box office success. It was obvious from Wall Street’s chilly response that they had seen this play before and they didn’t like it.

After the merger announcement, the stocks of the four major U.S. railroads – BNSF, CSX, Norfolk Southern and Union Pacific – started a nose dive. In fact, they just didn’t go down, they fell like rocks.

The railroad CEOs have taken their big corporate jets to Wall Street and peddled this story before. It’s the same one they used in the BN/SF merger, the UP/SF merger, and the Contiatal takeover by NS and CSX. In spite of all the promises, the results have been exactly the same. Service got worse, a lot worse. Shippers screamed at Congress, the Surface Transportation Board, and anyone else who would listen. Shipments were delayed not just by days but also sometimes more than a month. Costs went through the ceiling. And seniority districts were ripped apart and recreated.

We believe that the special panel of labor relations professionals appointed by the NMB will rule on March 1 that all employees who operate trains share a community of interest and it will therefore authorize an election. This union continues to believe that the future of railroading demands that one powerful union represent all of the bargaining units and operat- ing crafts equally and fairly in the 21st Century.

Over the last several months, more and more locomotive engineers have realized that their historical craft will continue to have autonomy in the UTU after the merger. The losers are the employees who stick by the company.

More than a month of heated rhetoric has followed the UTU’s “Death of a Scare” campaign has made its way down the ladder, and more and more operating employees have told us they prefer one union that will fully protect the historical craft autonomy of locomotive engineers, conductors, trainmen, and switchmen as the single bargai- ning representative.

They understand that the only real change is that all of the contracts will be held by one union – the UTU – and not by two unions. Contrary to what the BLS has said in recent months, the UP cannot void those contracts because of this vote. They wouldn’t dare, and legally couldn’t even if they wanted to.

Your mothers and sisters also know that the UTU would never have agreed to sell out the crafts of conductor and locomotive engi- neer on VIA Rail, as the BLE did, to create a blurred craft called “operating engineer.” When it came to protecting the craft autonomy of locomotive engineers and conductors on VIA Rail, the BLE failed to do either and sold out both.

The UTU is also the only union that is totally committed to ending the entry rate and dual basis of pay system for the 85,000 employees. You need look no further than the BLE’s recent agreement with Nor- folk Southern, which really main- tained the status quo and an 85% entry rate.

Change is never easy. But it is far preferable to standing with your feet in concrete and trying to keep things from changing in a chang- ing world.

One powerful union

By March 1, we will know if there will be a representation elec- tion on the Union Pacific (UP) Railroad.

That is because the BLE refused to re-enter unification talks with us, as the National Mediation Board (NMB) suggested, and as we told AFL-CIO facilitator Tom Donahue we were prepared to do. Remember that the UTU never left the negotiating table. The BLE walked away from a signed unification agree- ment after its two top officers, including its cur- rent president, signed it, by concocting reasons that have proven to be false. It was, therefore, impossible to jump- start negotiations all by ourselves.

It has now been more than two years since the UTU asked the NMB to sanction an election on the UP. In that time there has been a great deal of heated rhetoric between the BLE and the UTU.

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By Mr. Railroad CEO:

The only winners were the managers who quit and took buyouts because they didn’t want to work for the railroad anymore – or, like you, they didn’t have jobs anymore. Some stockholders who sold won because they didn’t want to work for the railroad anymore – or, like you, they didn’t have jobs anymore. Some stockholders who sold won because they didn’t believe the stock was going up and wanted to take all the money and run because they no longer trusted you, Mr. Railroad CEO.

The losers are the employees who stick by the company.

UTU has been making these predictions about mergers since Moby Dick was a novel. It appears that the Wall Street types have finally seen the light. I believe it was Mark Twain who said the definition of insanity was “to keep doing the same thing the same way and expect different results.”

The unions have been awake all the way, the shippers and the Wall Street types have woken up, and I would suggest that it is time for you to put down the champagne, order a cup of coffee and join us. Another round of merg- ers isn’t going to work for anybody.

You should park the corporate jet and the chauffeur-driven limous and take the elevator down from the top floor penthouse offices and sit down with the representatives of the government, your shippers, and railroad labor, and figure out how to make this industry work. There should be no more blaming, no more finger-pointing, no more name-calling. Maybe if you stop right now and roll up your sleeves, work hard, work smart and say a few prayers, you might save this industry.

The alternative is to keep trying to sell tickets to the same old show that it is already playing to an empty house. The choice is yours.
VANCOUVER – A nine-day surprise lockout of 1,600 union workers at BC Rail Ltd. between December 27 and January 5 tested the resolve of rail employees during the holiday season.

But it was BC Rail who took it on the chin. They were pummeled in the Canadian media and by strikers who suffered because the carrier locked out its employees. The result is that the employees will get their first wage increase in five years.

UTU members took the lead in applying pressure to the carrier at the bargaining table and on the picket line.

Robert Sharpe, UTU general chairperson and alternate international vice president, is chairman of the Council of Trade Unions, which bargains on behalf of the seven railway unions in British Columbia (BC). Sharpe was instrumental in ending the lockout. A phone call from BC Premier Dan Miller also helped end the costly dispute.

“All the parties are very glad to see the end of this,” said Sharpe.

He said the wage increase the union has agreed to accept from the Crown corporation, which owns BC Rail, falls within the 2% guideline governing public sector employees in British Columbia.

“We will send this out for ratification by our members and are recommending acceptance,” Sharpe said.

Results of the ratification vote are expected by February 4, 2000.

UTU was the first union to pay its members strike benefits. “The way the UTU backed us up was really impressive,” said David Moorhouse, secretary/treasurer of Local 1778. “We got our union to act in a timely manner, which made a big difference. In fact, we were the first of the seven crafts involved to get strike pay, and the members and their families really appreciated that.”

Moorhouse praised UTU members for stepping up to the plate during the lockout. “Our guys really grabbed the ball and ran with it,” he said. “We handled the bulk of the night shifts on the picket line. When it came to being upfront, our guys were right there. So I’m really happy with the way we stepped to the front.”

“This one interchange track (manned by our pickets) became a strongholds, and a symbol of our resolve to pressure BC Rail back to the bargaining table.”

Mooorhouse praised Local Chairperson Steve Edgar and Local President Erik Lonnie for the roles they played during the lockout.

“Steve proved himself to be the hardest-working guy serving above and beyond the call of duty,” said Moorhouse. “A lot of credit has to go to our Local President Erik Lonnie, who handled media relations. His work with the Canadian national press, in particular, deserves mention.”

However, because the new three-year agreement is retroactive to December 31, 1997, the settlement represents only a temporary solution to the contract disputes.

“This speaks volumes about our reputation for quality representation, both inside and outside the transportation industry,” Boyd said.

The new class brings to 47 the number of UTU members specifically trained to assist the union in organizing shortline railroads and commuter airlines.

BC Rail continues to face significant challenges, including the as-yet unknown impact of CN’s planned $19-billion merger with U.S. giant Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corp. However, Sharpe said that BC Rail employees should not have to bear the brunt of future cost-cutting efforts.

“We have already made huge adjustments,” he said.

He added that the number of personnel required to operate freight trains in British Columbia has dropped to two from five in 1986.

Special organizers attend seminar to sharpen skills

WASHINGTON – Seeking to help unorganized workers find fairness and dignity in the workplace, 15 members of the United Transportation Union participated in a seminar this past December at the George Meany Center for Labor Studies as part of their training to serve as special organizing representatives for their union.

Scattered across the country from California to Iowa to Florida, the 15 came together to participate in the Meany Center’s “Organizing Under the Railway Labor Act” program.

The week-long seminar included instruction in topics such as communication skills, development of organizing plans, first-contract campaigns and development of workplace committees, among others.

UTU Assistant President Byron A. Boyd, Jr., was also on hand to speak to the group about the importance of assisting the unorganized, from a representatives’ initial contact with employees through obtaining their first labor agreement.

“The UTU is proud that not a week passes by that we do not have at least one contact requesting our assistance in obtaining union representation. This speaks volumes about our reputation for quality representation, both inside and outside the transportation industry,” Boyd said.

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BC Rail lockout shows resolve of UTU, rail labor

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He added that the number of personnel required to operate freight trains in British Columbia has dropped to two from five in 1986.

Special organizers attend seminar to sharpen skills

WASHINGTON – Seeking to help unorganized workers find fairness and dignity in the workplace, 15 members of the United Transportation Union participated in a seminar this past December at the George Meany Center for Labor Studies as part of their training to serve as special organizing representatives for their union.

Scattered across the country from California to Iowa to Florida, the 15 came together to participate in the Meany Center’s “Organizing Under the Railway Labor Act” program.

The week-long seminar included instruction in topics such as communication skills, development of organizing plans, first-contract campaigns and development of workplace committees, among others.

UTU Assistant President Byron A. Boyd, Jr., was also on hand to speak to the group about the importance of assisting the unorganized, from a representatives’ initial contact with employees through obtaining their first labor agreement.

“The UTU is proud that not a week passes by that we do not have at least one contact requesting our assistance in obtaining union representation. This speaks volumes about our reputation for quality representation, both inside and outside the transportation industry,” Boyd said.

The new class brings to 47 the number of UTU members specifically trained to assist the union in organizing shortline railroads and commuter airlines.

BC Rail lockout shows resolve of UTU, rail labor

A nine-day lockout of 1,600 union workers at BC Rail Ltd. between December 27 and January 5 tested the resolve of rail employees during the holiday season.

But it was BC Rail who took it on the chin. They were pummeled in the Canadian media and by strikers who suffered because the carrier locked out its employees. The result is that the employees will get their first wage increase in five years.

UTU members took the lead in applying pressure to the carrier at the bargaining table and on the picket line.

Robert Sharpe, UTU general chairperson and alternate international vice president, is chairman of the Council of Trade Unions, which bargains on behalf of the seven railway unions in British Columbia (BC). Sharpe was instrumental in ending the lockout. A phone call from BC Premier Dan Miller also helped end the costly dispute.

“All the parties are very glad to see the end of this,” said Sharpe.

He said the wage increase the union has agreed to accept from the Crown corporation, which owns BC Rail, falls within the 2% guideline governing public sector employees in British Columbia.

“We will send this out for ratification by our members and are recommending acceptance,” Sharpe said.

Results of the ratification vote are expected by February 4, 2000.

UTU was the first union to pay its members strike benefits. “The way the UTU backed us up was really impressive,” said David Moorhouse, secretary/treasurer of Local 1778. “We got our union to act in a timely manner, which made a big difference. In fact, we were the first of the seven crafts involved to get strike pay, and the members and their families really appreciated that.”

Moorhouse praised UTU members for stepping up to the plate during the lockout. “Our guys really grabbed the ball and ran with it,” he said. “We handled the bulk of the night shifts on the picket line. When it came to being upfront, our guys were right there. So I’m really happy with the way we stepped to the front.”

“This one interchange track (manned by our pickets) became a stronghold, and a symbol of our resolve to pressure BC Rail back to the bargaining table.”

Mooorhouse praised Local Chairperson Steve Edgar and Local President Erik Lonnie for the roles they played during the lockout.

“Steve proved himself to be the hardest-working guy serving above and beyond the call of duty,” said Moorhouse. “A lot of credit has to go to our Local President Erik Lonnie, who handled media relations. His work with the Canadian national press, in particular, deserves mention.”

However, because the new three-year agreement is retroactive to December 31, 1997, the settlement represents only a temporary solution to the contract disputes.

“This speaks volumes about our reputation for quality representation, both inside and outside the transportation industry,” Boyd said.

The new class brings to 47 the number of UTU members specifically trained to assist the union in organizing shortline railroads and commuter airlines.
Continued from page 1

Richard R. Kasher will make a final and bind- ing decision.

The BLE wrote to the NMB on January 10, say- ing it would not resume talks with the UTU and later asked that the panel hold another hearing. The panel declined to hold any further hearings on the dispute at that time.

“We never left the table and have never left the unification process,” said Little. “We trust that the special panel of labor relations profes- sionals will act on the merits of this case and agree with the UTU that a representation dis- pute does exist on the Union Pacific Railroad among its train and engine service employees. We look forward to resolving this issue once and for all.”

Little added, “It’s the beginning of a new century and we believe the right thing to do today. Everything we are doing to do in the last century, is for the UTU and BLE to unite on a powerful, fraternal basis.”

If the panel agrees with the UTU’s petition, an election would then be held on the Union Pacific Railroad after the March 1 run- ning. The UTU and BLE represent approxi- mately 22,000 employees on the UP. The UTU represents about 14,000 employees and the BLE represents about 8,000 workers.

In his conversation with Donahue, Little revisited the UTU’s commitment in time and resources to unification between the two unions. On May 8, 1999, without notice to the UTU or Donahue, the BLE issued a press release saying it was ending its involvement in unification even after its two top International officers had signed the unification agreement. The BLE then became embroiled in a bitter recall election in which less than 50% of its members bothered to vote. In that election, International President Clarence V. Morin was defeated by only 18 votes by then-First Vice President Ed Dubroski. After winning by the slimmest of margins, Dubroski was tagged with the nickname “Landslide Eddie.” He is the BLE’s sixth president in the last 15 years. Both Morin and Dubroski signed the unifica- tion agreement with the UTU but later reneged on their word.

The proposed railway legislation would be included in the Canadian Transportation Act, which is due for its five-year revision this sum- mer.

Many of the amendments will be aimed specifically at the proposed merger of CN and BNSF, which has raised considerable concern among railway shippers, union leaders and manufacturers.

“We doubt the consolidation will go ahead as it’s now proposed,” a government source told The Globe and Mail. He added that govern- ment is expected to raise so many issues that BNSF may re-think the merger, or perhaps cancel it.

The proposed merger has raised hackles among Canadian’s shippers because it would create the largest railway in North America, with 80,000 miles (130,000 kilometers) of track, 67,000 staff and revenue of $18.5 billion a year. North American Railways Inc. will have its head office in Montreal. But many shippers are worried that decision making, and even the head office, will eventually gravitate to BNSFs current headquarters in Dallas once CN’s chief executive officer, Paul Tellier, retires, in about four years.

RBB changes

Continued from page 1

by Congress, these changes would be the first major ones to the railroad retirement system in more than 25 years without corre- sponding cutbacks.

Today, employees must attain age 62 and have one year’s service in order to receive an unreduced annuity. Under the proposed change, employees with 30 years of service will be able to retire at age 60 with an unre- duced annuity. In addition, they will be able to gain GA-46000 coverage, and the $75,000 lifetime maximum will be annually increased to keep pace with the rate of medical inflation.

“The history of railroad retirement is that the unions and carriers have to support changes in order for Congress to support it,” said Paul C. Thompson, UTU general secre- tary and treasurer. “We have forged a powerful coalition among rail labor and a partnership with the carriers to get the job done. This is a major victory for all retirees and their spouses. We have lowered the retirement age to 62 with full benefits, including healthcare, and fixed the widows’ benefit.”

The other unions joining the UTU in the coalition are the Brotherhood of Railroad Signal- men International, Brotherhood of Electric- al Workers, Transport Workers Union, Inter- national Association of Machinists, Trans- portation Communications Union, Brother- hood of Locomotive Engineermen (BLET), American Train Dispatchers (ATTD), International Brotherhood of Boilermakers and Black- smiths, Sheet Metal Workers International and the National Conference of Firemen and Oilers division of the Service Employees Inter- national Union.

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, however, are not part of the coal- ition. Ironically, the ATTD split from the BLE International on this issue.

The improvements are made possible because the agreement calls for changing the current law that limits the investment of Rail- road Retirement trust fund assets. Under the agreement, a newly established investment board with equal labor-management participa- tion would be permitted to invest trust fund assets like other large pension plans. Actuaries say that this should increase future returns.

“Our starting point was that nothing could be done that would jeopardize the fiscal sol- vency of the current retirement system,” said Thompson. “The legislation will also require that only the carriers will absorb any future tax increases that might be necessary to protect the retirement system from no tax increases or benefit reduction for employees and retirees.”

The highlights of the proposed amendments to the RRA include:

• Unreduced retirement benefits at age 60 with 30 years of service, including healthcare coverage between age 60 and 65.

Today, if employees with 30 years of service retire at age 60 or 61, their annuity is perma- nently reduced by taking 20% or more off the Tier 1 amount, and the annuities of their spouses are also reduced. This significant per- manent reduction discourages most eligible employees from retiring before age 62. Under the proposed change, employees with 30 years of service will be able to retire at age 60 with an unreduced annuity.

In addition, employees working today for one of the national carriers who retire at age 60 are ineligible for the National Early Retire- ment Major Medical Benefit, known as GA- 46000. That means they go without health- care coverage until age 65 when Medicare kicks in, which is a detriment to an earlier retirement.

Under the new agreement, GA-46000 will be provided to employees retiring at age 60 with 30 years of service. In addition, the carri- ers have agreed to eliminate the cap of $75,000 in GA-46000 and to index it based upon the medical CPI, which is currently run- ning at about 5%.

This means even for existing retirees who are currently...
RRB changes
Continued from page 1
under GA-4600. The NRLC has committed to try to obtain the same benefit for carriers not currently in GA-4600.

• Expansion of “widow(er)” benefit
Under the current railroad retirement system, the widow(er) is eligible for the full amount of the deceased spouse’s Tier I benefit, but only 50% of the deceased employee’s Tier II benefit.
Under the proposed change, the surviving spouse will be guaranteed an amount no less than the amount of the annuity that the employee was receiving the month before death. An eligible surviving spouse will receive the greater of the annuity the widow or widower would have otherwise received or the guaranteed amount. This guarantee will apply to all eligible surviving spouses upon enactment, and is a major improvement over House Resolution 52, which was introduced in Congress last year.

• No Tier II tax increase for employees
The agreement requires the carriers to automatically absorb any future tax increase necessary to keep the railroad retirement system solvent. The carriers agreed to accept any and all risks associated with a newly established investment board that would be permitted to invest railroad retirement trust fund assets like other large pension plans. Current law restricts investment of assets to U.S. Treasury issues. By allowing assets to be invested in other large pension plans, the railroad retirement system should have higher returns and more funds available, which can then be returned to the parties in the form of improved employee benefits and decreased employer taxes. Rail labor and management will have an equal number of members on the investment board. In addition, the proposed changes include a provision that will automatically increase or decrease railroad retirement taxes as needed to maintain an adequately funded trust fund. The carriers, however, will fund any increases.

• Five-year vesting
An employee currently must have 10 years (120 months) of creditable railroad service to be eligible for retirement benefits. Under the agreement, the vesting requirement would be reduced to five years for employees currently in service.

• Repeal of retirement benefit maximum for long-term employees
Currently the total amount of railroad retirement benefits payable to an employee and spouse is limited to the Railroad Retirement Act Maximum (RRAM) geared to the employee’s average monthly earnings prior to retirement. The RRAM amount is derived from the highest two years of creditable railroad service or social security covered earnings in the 10-year period ending with the year the employee’s annuity begins.
When the benefit maximum is applicable, the reduction in earned annuities can be significant, and most often penalizes long-service

voices:

Paul Bigby II
L-32, Glendale, Cal.

“I’m an engineer on the Union Pacific and I’ve been working on the rails for more than 27 years. I think engineers and conductors should have more input. We know what we can, and cannot, do with our trains. Rather than run the engine by a formula, people in the cab should be allowed to decide how many engines or helpers are needed. Track, weather, sags, and steeper inclines aren’t taken into consideration by the formula, and doing it by the book makes the trip a lot longer, creating greater potential for fatigue.”

Mark Sears
L-1976, St. Paul, Minn.

“I’ve been on the Soo Line 26 years, working as a yardmaster since 1989. I’d change the way we’re scheduled to work, with an eye on hours and days off. Things have gotten progressively worse and worse in this regard. The workload and stress are incredible, but what does it to me is the split shifts and the different hours you work. You do no regularity eating or sleeping. Some jobs are under hours-of-service laws, but others aren’t, and they just abuse you if they have no one to replace you.”

José Sanchez
L-1563, El Monte, Cal.

“I’ve been a bus operator for LACMTA for more than eight years, and I’ve seen a lot of bias and stereotyping on the job that really hurts morale. The company has rules prohibiting that behavior, but it seems they’re not being properly enforced. Instead of making more rules, I would also put together more runs that work as straight time instead of split shifts, and have a place where those working split shifts could get some rest.”

John Fitzgerald
L-1637, Wishram, Wash.

“I’m a BNSF general chairperson (GO-386). If I ran the railroad, I would ensure my subordinates demonstrated the utmost in integrity and honesty in actions and communications with scheduled ranks. I’d utilize the knowledge and abilities of both scheduled and exempt employees, and I’d set the foundation for a true change in the railroad’s culture to eliminate the militaristic styles. The only railroad that can be used as an example to date is the CSX under Mr. Snow, and that evolution is in the early stages.”

How would you change on-the-job operations?

Monthly winner
This month’s lucky winner of his choice of any item of apparel bearing the UTU logo is A. Dolph Zarate of La Puente, Calif. Brother Zarate is a retired member of Local 1563 in El Monte, Cal., which represents workers employed by the Los Angeles County Transit Authority. These items are awarded every month by random drawing as a show of appreciation to the many members who have supported the UTU throughout the years. Congratulations to Brother Zarate!
Senior News

Warm-blooded retiree hosts Polar Bear Club

Sofie at (509) 763-2197, or send e-mail to sofie@theutu.com. As a member of the Polar Bear Club she started in 1992, she gathers each New Year’s Eve on fellow Retiree Program member Ray Zufall’s dock to take an invigorating dip.

“Sofie is a friend of mine,” Sofie said in reference to Zufall, a retired BNSF switchman from Local 426, Spokane, Wash., who has yet to get into the swim of things. “He thinks I’m crazy.”

The club, with 22 full-fledged members, began when a friend bet Sofie she could swim later into the fall than Sofie could, and then gawked at Sofie by taking a shower at the local state park and showing up with wet hair. Despite the dejection, Sofie was hooked, and her enthusiasm is contagious. The 66-year-old swim now plays every Friday from September through May.

“Members are required to take three swims between December 1 and March 31,” Sofie said. “Those who do earn a T-shirt and will be recognized. Those who don’t earn a T-shirt and will be hoodwinked Sofie by taking a shower at the dock after a swim, it feels like it’s about 10 degrees, but you feel young again.”

“I haven’t had a cold or the flu since I started doing this,” Sofie claimed. “Standing on the dock after a swim, it feels like it’s about 10 degrees, but you feel young again.”

Those interested in the club can contact Sofie at (509) 763-2197, or send e-mail to the club’s secretary at <swhitt@get.net>.

Swiss rail tour adds more dates

Following are the names of the members of the UTU Retiree Program who have died recently, according to reports received at UTU International Headquarters. These brothers and sisters will be missed by their many friends and by fellow UTU Retiree Program members.

Drug makers seek cease-fire; voew cooperation on Medicare

Pharmaceutical industry representatives have asked the White House to cease its assault on drug prices, and delivered a promise to work with the president and Congress to establish Medicare prescription-drug coverage this year.

The move represents a change for the industry, which in the past said only the way to provide drug benefits to Medicare beneficiaries was through health maintenance organizations (HMOs) and other private health plans that serve about 16% of those on Medicare.

But recently, drug company representatives softened their stance, saying they could accept legislation to provide Medicare drug benefits as a step toward restructuring Medicare.

At the heart of the matter is the drug industry’s fear that government-subsidized drug coverage would lead to efforts to set drug prices. Democrats are expected to take up the issue of coverage for prescription drugs in Congress and in election campaigns. The drug industry representatives indicated their statements to the White House reflect policies recently endorsed by the executive committee of their trade association.

White House officials said President Clinton would continue to push his plan for Medicare coverage. Under the president’s proposal, Medicare would pay a portion of a beneficiary’s drug expenses, up to certain limits. The maximum federal payment would start at $1,000 a year and rise gradually to $2,500 in 2008.

Observers believe the industry’s move may indicate it sees Medicare drug coverage as inevitable.
Regional Meetings 2000

The UTU/UTUIA’s Regional Meetings scheduled for this coming summer promise fraternalism, education and fun. Each Regional Meeting lasts a full three days, with the President’s Banquet on the evening of the third day. The $125 advance registration fee per member or guest includes: Sunday welcome reception; Monday lunch and evening buffet dinner and entertainment; Tuesday lunch and evening dinner and entertainment; Wednesday lunch and evening Presidential reception and banquet, as well as all training workshop materials. On-site registration is $175 per member or guest.

New this year are one-day registrations for those members who would like to attend the Regional Meetings but can’t spare the time away from work or family. The cost of a one-day registration for any day is $50. Payments for individual events, such as lunches and tours, can be made at each meeting.

Also new this year are registration procedures, with separate registration forms for members and guests. Additionally, credit cards are now being accepted for payment of Regional Meeting fees. At this time registration is not available on the UTU website.

Details on the UTU/UTUIA golf outings, which are held the Sunday morning before the first day of each Regional Meeting, will be announced soon. Each outing will cost $80, which includes greens fees, golf carts and transportation from the host hotel. All courses require soft spikes and proper attire. Deadline for registration is two weeks prior to the outing. Make all checks (U.S. funds only, please) payable to “UTU Regional Meeting.” Send your completed forms to UTU Meeting Registration, 14600 Detroit Ave., Cleveland, OH 44107-4250. You may cancel seven full days prior to arrival with no penalty. Please fax any changes or cancellations immediately to the UTU International at (216) 228-5755.

**June 12-14, 2000**

Reno Hilton  
2500 East Second St., Reno, Nevada 89595  
Hotel direct reservations: (775) 789-2126  
Toll-free reservations: (800) 648-6000  
Reservation code: UTU Regional Meeting  
Room rate: $99 single/double; $105 triple/quad  
Reservation deadline: May 1, 2000  
Self parking: free; valet parking: tip only

**July 10-12, 2000**

Sheraton Hotel  
2101 Civic Center Blvd., Birmingham, Ala. 35203  
Hotel direct reservations: (205) 324-5000  
Toll-free reservations: (800) 325-3535  
Reservation code: UTU Regional Meeting  
Room rate: $99 single/double; $105 triple/quad  
Reservation deadline: June 1, 2000  
Parking: self $7 per day; valet $12 per day, both with in/out privileges

**August 28-30, 2000**

Minneapolis Hilton and Towers  
1001 Marquette Ave., Minneapolis, Minn. 55403  
Hotel direct reservations: (612) 397-4999  
Toll-free reservations: (800) 445-8667  
Reservation code: UTU Regional Meeting  
Room rate: $119 single/double; additional person $20  
Reservation deadline: July 20, 2000  
Parking: self $12.50 per day; valet $20 per day, both with in/out privileges

**Discount airfares available**  
UTU members planning to attend one of these Regional Meetings should know that discount air fares to the Regional Meeting cities have been arranged by the International. Members wishing to inquire about discount air fares to Reno, Nev., or Birmingham, Ala., should call Southwest Airlines toll-free at (800) 433-1349. Identify yourself as with the UTU and refer to I.D. code G0530 for Reno or I.D. code G0540 for Birmingham, Ala.

Those inquiring about discount air fares to Minneapolis should call Northwest/Continental Airlines toll-free at (800) 328-1111 and refer to code: World File NMPFR.

For the lowest-possible fare, a Saturday night stay is required.

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**UTU Regional Meeting Registration Form**

By registering in advance for the UTU/UTUIA Regional Meetings, you will speed registration procedures at the meeting sites and help organizers plan more accurately. Additionally, personalized name badges and information kits will be waiting for you upon arrival. Which Regional Meeting will you be attending?  
☐ Reno  ☐ Birmingham  ☐ Minneapolis

UTU Local  
Name  
Title (if any)  
Name for Badge (if different)  
Home address  
City/State/ZIP  
Daytime telephone number  
How will you be paying?  
☐ By enclosed check  
☐ By credit card  
Circle type of credit card  
Visa  MasterCard  
Credit card number  
Date of expiration  
Signature  
On-site registration is $175 per member or guest

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**Guest Registration Form**

To be used by spouses, children and guests of UTU members attending a Regional Meeting.

Which Regional Meeting will you be attending?  
☐ Reno  ☐ Birmingham  ☐ Minneapolis

Name  
Name of Member  
Local  
Relationship to member  
Address  
City/State/ZIP  
On-site registration is $175 per member or guest

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**Golf Registration Form**

Which golf outing will you be attending?  
☐ Reno  ☐ Birmingham  ☐ Minneapolis

Name  
Address  
City/State/ZIP  
Handicap or average 18-hole score

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With no penalty.
At age 68 and with no plans to retire, James Holmes holds the highest seniority on the former Southern Pacific (now Union Pacific) Gulf Division.

A nine-day lockout of BC Rail workers tested the resolve of employees during the holidays. General Chairperson Robert Sharpe explains the problems.


The UTU News is now available in a web-optimized format that includes all pictures and text. Look for it and the UTU Daily News Digest at <www.utu.org>.

Make your IRA contribution for the year 2000 and start earning 6% interest immediately. Your contribution can be made to a Traditional IRA or the new Roth IRA, which permits your funds to accumulate tax-free once certain minimum requirements are met.

A Flexible Premium Deferred Annuity also earns 6% interest and offers you tax-deferred savings on all of your contributions.

Start saving for your future today. Contact your UTUIA representative or mail the coupon below for more information on these outstanding tax-deferred and tax-free products.
One Union with the Power in Washington, D.C.

When it comes to getting things done in Washington, D.C., in the 21st Century, the UTU leads rather than follows. It has earned a reputation in the corridors of power for political action and integrity.

Listen to what America's leaders say about the UTU:

“I believe very deeply in the UTU. I believe in you.” – Vice President Al Gore

“The United Transportation Union is the preeminent rail and transportation union in North America. Under the steady leadership of Charlie Little, the UTU is growing in membership and in financial strength.” – Gov. Mel Carnahan

“Ninety-eight percent of the candidates that this union endorsed won their elections.” – Vice President Al Gore

“You can be assured that when we win the House back we will have the UTU in our head everyday.” – Richard Gephardt, House Democratic Leader

“President Little has put the whole issue of organizing upfront where it belongs...and Byron Boyd has earned a reputation for integrity and telling it like it is.” – David Bonior, House Democratic Whip

Now, more than ever, we need the Power of One union representing your interests in Washington, D.C.

Special Unity Poster #3: Display this poster to show your support for unity among UTU and BLE members