



**UNIFIED SYSTEM DIVISION
NEWSLETTER
VOLUME 25 - April, May, June, 2015**

Right to Work....code words for busting unions.



BARGAINING UPDATE

National Round off to Slow Start

January 15, 2015

The BMWED/SMART-Mechanical bargaining coalition met for the first time with the National Carriers' Conference Committee (NCCC) on January 15, 2015 at the NCCC's offices in Crystal City, Virginia. The parties reviewed and discussed, in general terms, their respective "Section 6 notices," seeking changes to existing agreements. (The term "Section 6 notice" refers to that Section of the Railway Labor Act, federal law that governs the formal start of bargaining between rail labor and railroad management.) Both parties pledged to work diligently to reach a voluntary agreement. The next bargaining session is scheduled for February 24 and 25, 2015 at the NCCC offices. The topic of bargaining will be healthcare issues. Prior to that meeting, the parties will present agreed upon questions to their respective healthcare experts, who will provide answers to the bargaining committees prior to the February meeting. The parties believe this process will allow the bargaining committee maximum time at the bargaining table to focus on crafting an agreement acceptable to all parties. Updates will be provided after each bargaining session. Members are encouraged to check the union's web and Facebook sites for bargaining information.

February 24, 2015

The BMWED/SMART Mechanical coalition met with the National Carriers' Conference Committee (NCCC) on February 24, 2015 at the NCCC offices in Arlington, Virginia. The parties agreed to focus on health and welfare issues first and created a subcommittee consisting of each side's health care experts to meet and explore possible cost savings from administrative changes to the health and welfare plans. The subcommittee is obtaining information from current healthcare vendors and other third parties. The subcommittee will then report its findings to the bargaining groups who will then engage in bargaining regarding possible changes to the health and welfare benefits. At this time, the subcommittee is waiting on information from some vendors so a new bargaining session has not been scheduled. The TCU bargaining coalition is pursuing a similar strategy and is facing the same delays in vendor responses to the subcommittee. At this time, the next bargaining session will be in late June or early July, by which time the subcommittee should have the necessary information to make its report.

DM&E Contract Negotiations Begin

ON January 5, 2015 Unified System Division General Chairman Louis R. Below served the Canadian Pacific Railroad a Section 6 Notice on behalf of employees of the former DM&E Railroad. The Section 6 Notice was very short and to the point. The Notice request that employees of the former DM&E represented by the USD be treated as the rest of the Maintenance of Way Employees who work on the Canadian Pacific Property. This includes but not limited to wage equality, benefit equality, and establishing parity in work rules, as well as provide income guarantees and relocation benefits to any DM&E employees who are adversely affected by the sale or lease of any rail lines subject to the scope of the BMWED-DM&E Agreement. The first round of talks for the DM&E were scheduled for the week of April 6-10, 2015. After request by the Canadian Pacific to delay the start of the meeting until April 8, 2015, the parties met briefly before arriving at an impasse and negotiations were halted. At the present time there are no further meetings scheduled.

"The basic goal of labor will not change. It is -- as it has always been, and I am sure always will be -- to better the standards of life for all who work for wages and to seek decency and justice and dignity for all Americans."—George Meany

UNIFIED SYSTEM DIVISION NEWS

Information At Your Fingertips

There are currently many exciting improvements and advancements going on within the Unified System Division. The System has taken continuous steps to improve the everyday lives and well being of our members. You have probably noticed the growing presence of Unified System Division Officers at start-up meetings and on property visits from System Officers. We are also making every effort to improve communication with the members of the USD by way of many technological advances that have come available in recent years through the unprecedented growth of the internet and services that are available for mobile phones and tablet users. If you are a member of the Unified System Division and have yet to visit the member website at www.usdbmwed.org you are missing out on a wealth of information available for you to grow your knowledge base in not only the various Collective Bargaining Agreements administered by the Unified System Division, but also information regarding Railroad Retirement and a link to the RRB website, health benefits and services available by clicking on the link to "Your Track to Health" which will give you contact information and the vast number of services provided by United Healthcare, Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, Met Life, Aetna, Eye Med, Trustmark, as well as Prescription Drug Services, Behavioral Health, Supplemental Sickness, and assistance with Flexible Spending Accounts. The website also provides a up to date information on Pay Rates, Rosters, Local Lodges, Local Lodge Officer Contact information, Contract Bargaining, upcoming events around the system, contact information for each of the System Officers as well as the central office. Once you visit the website be sure to register as a member of the Unified System Division which will open the door for other information to become available to you through email and text alerts regarding important information and request of your assistance in the War on Workers that is active increasing not only in the rail industry but across the Nation at a more rapid pace than ever imagined. It is all available at your fingertips at www.usdbmwed.org. The choice is yours to assure you are up to date on the information and developments which effect your everyday life as well as your families.

Phone App Development

Development of a Phone App is currently underway and will be available to Unified System Division Members in the upcoming months. The app will allow members to access the Unified System Division Website for all the information available to them mentioned above, as well as give the System Officers the ability to send gang visit Locations, Local Lodge Meeting Announcements, as well as general information sent directly to the members at the app location. The Unified System Division App will also give the members the long anticipated ability to file a "time claim" from the palm of their hand. Members will be able to file claims, give witness statements, and past practice statements from their phone using the phones key pad or the talk to text feature which will give the user the ability to enter the claim information by speaking into their phones microphone system which will record the data entered and then submit the claim via email at the members demand. The USD App will be available to both Apple and Android customers sometime in mid to late summer.

Joke of the Day

"A unionized public employee, a member of the Tea Party and a Big Corp CEO are sitting at a table. In the middle of the table there is a plate with a dozen cookies on it. The CEO reaches across and takes 11 cookies, looks at the tea partier and says, "Look out for that union guy, he wants a piece of your cookie."

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

Upcoming Lodge Meetings Across the System

Lodge 1046 of Elburn, IL is scheduled meet July 1, 2015

Lodge 1879 of St. Paul, MN is scheduled meet July 2, 2015

Lodge 325 of Colfax, WA is scheduled meet July 11, 2015

Lodge 1133 of Marysville, KS and Lodge 1216 of Salina, KS is scheduled for a joint meeting on July 18, 2015 at Sac & Fox Casino located in Powhattan, KS

Lodge 278 of Albert Lea, MN is scheduled meet July 24, 2015

Lodge 968 of Salt Lake City, UT is scheduled to meet August 6, 2015 at Cabela's in Provo, UT

Lodge 1709 of Helper ,UT is scheduled to meet September 25, 2015 in Spanish Fork, UT

Lodge 968 of Salt Lake City, UT, Lodge 1227 of Ogden, UT and Lodge 1402 of Pocatello, ID is scheduled to hold their annual picnic on August 15, 2015 at Downata Hot Springs Resort in Downey, ID

Lodge 1020 of Flagstaff, AZ is scheduled to meet August 22, 2015 in Gallup, NM

Lodge 1097 of Trenton, MO and Lodge 2427 of Chillicothe, MO is scheduled to hold their annual picnic August 29, 2015 at Moberly Park in Trenton, MO

Lodge 757 of Portland, OR is scheduled to meet September 18, 2015

Lodge 1709 of Helper ,UT is scheduled to meet September 25, 2015 in Spanish Fork, UT at Amber's Family Restaurant

Lodge 918 of Green River, WY is scheduled to meet September 26, 2015 at the Oaktree in Green River

*****Each member should check with their Local Lodge Officers for updated meeting times and location*****

RAILROAD RETIREMENT BOARD INFORMATION

Basic Service Requirements

The basic requirement for a regular employee annuity is 120 months (10 years) of creditable railroad service or 60 months (5 years) of creditable railroad service if such service was performed after 1995. Service months need not be consecutive, and, in some cases, military service may be counted as railroad service.

Credit for a month of railroad service is given for every month in which an employee had some compensated service for an employer covered by the Railroad Retirement Act, even if only one day's service is performed in the month. (However, local lodge compensation earned after 1974 is disregarded for any calendar month in which it is less than \$25.) Under certain circumstances, additional months of service may be deemed.

Covered employers include railroads engaged in interstate commerce and some of their subsidiaries, railroad associations and national railway labor organizations.

Railroad retirement benefits are based on months of service and earnings credits. Earnings are creditable up to certain annual maximums on the amount of compensation subject to railroad retirement taxes.

Age and Service, Disability and Supplemental Annuities

Employees with 30 or more years of creditable service. They are eligible for regular annuities based on age and service the first full month they are age 60. Early retirement reductions are applied if the employee first became eligible for a 60/30 annuity July 1, 1984, or later and retired at ages 60 or 61 before 2002.

Employees with 10-29 years of creditable service, or 5-9 years, if at least 5 years were after 1995. They are eligible for regular annuities based on age and service the first full month they are age 62. Early retirement annuity reductions are applied to annuities awarded before full retirement age, which ranges from age 65 for those born before 1938 to age 67 for those born in 1960 or later, the same as under social security. Reduced annuities are still payable at age 62 but the maximum reduction will be 30 percent rather than 20 percent by the year 2022. The tier II portion of an annuity (as defined below) is not reduced beyond 20 percent if the employee had any creditable railroad service before August 12, 1983. See Railroad Retirement Annuity Formula Components for a detailed explanation of age reductions.

An annuity based on age cannot be paid until the employee stops railroad employment, files an application and gives up any rights to return to work for a railroad employer.

A Disability Annuity Can be paid for:

Total disability, at any age, if an employee is permanently disabled for all regular work and has at least 10 years (120 months) of creditable railroad service. Employees with 5-9 years (60-119 months) of creditable railroad service, if at least 5 years were performed after 1995, may qualify for tier I only (as defined below) before retirement age on the basis of total disability if they also meet certain social security earnings requirements. An age reduced tier II amount would be payable at age 62.

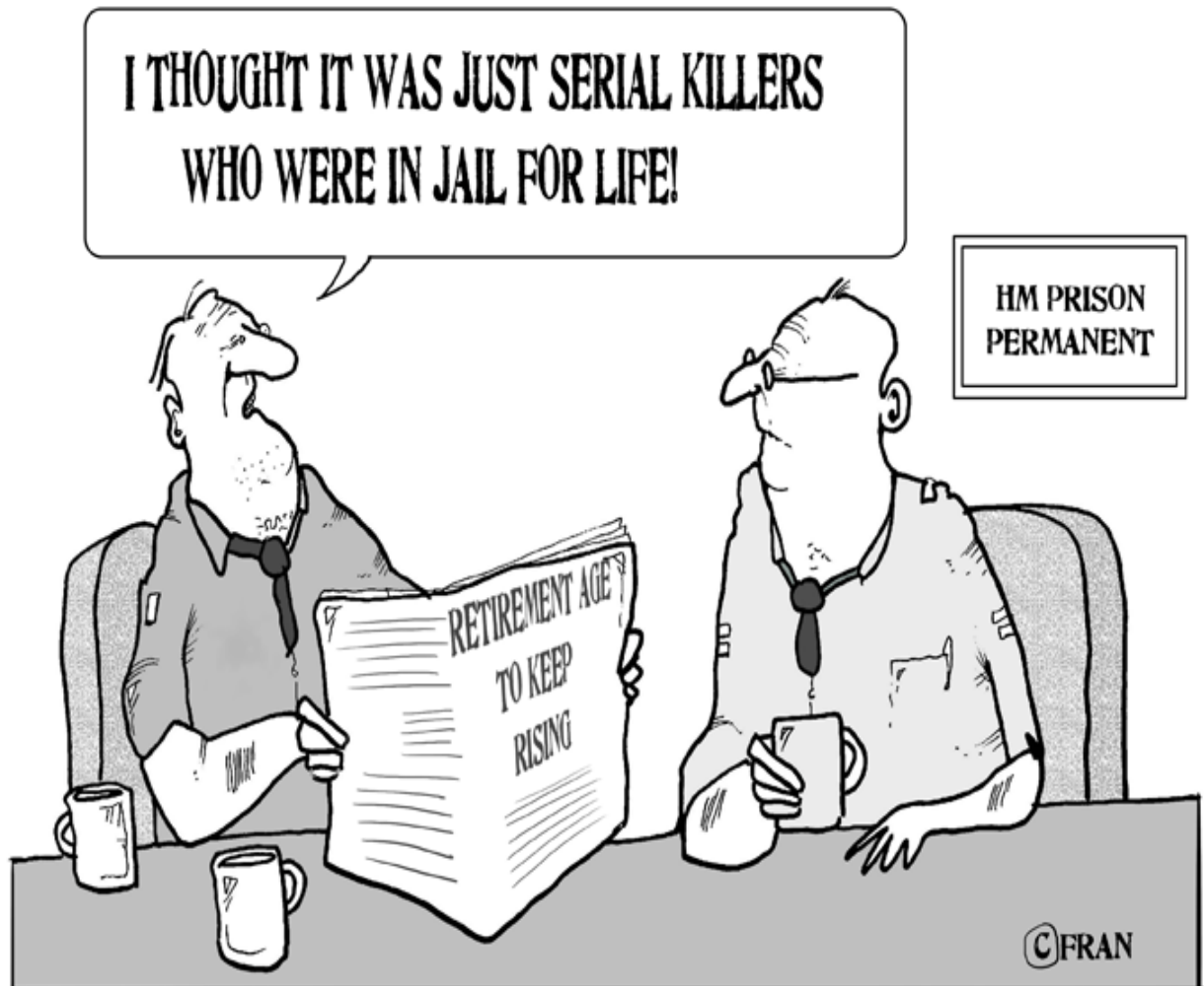
Occupational disability, at age 60, if an employee has at least 10 years of railroad service or at any age if the employee has at least 20 years (240 months) of service, when the employee is permanently disabled for his or her regular railroad occupation. An annuity based on occupational, rather than total, disability also requires a "current connection" with the railroad industry.

A 5-month waiting period beginning with the month after the month of the onset of disability is required before any disability annuity payments can begin.

An employee can be in compensated service while filing a disability annuity application as long as the compensated service is not active service and terminates within 90 days from the date of filing. However, in order for a supplemental annuity to be paid by the RRB, or for an eligible spouse to begin receiving annuity payments, a disabled annuitant under full retirement age must relinquish employment rights.

Your System Officers at a Glance Louis R. Below

This quarter newsletters' featured Officer is General Chairman Louis R. Below. Louis began his railroad career in 1977 on the former Southern Pacific Railroad. He worked for 17 years on Travelling Gangs for Tie, Rail, Holland Welding and Surfacing Gangs. Louis served his union in his local lodge as a Local Chairman and then served on the Pacific Federation E. Board. Louis was elected as a full time System Officer in 1994 on the former Pacific Federation (Pac Fed) where he served as Secretary-Treasurer, Vice Chairman and General Chairman. His General Chairman term for the Pac Fed ended in April 2010 when the Pac Fed merged into the Unified System Division. At the time of the merger Louis assumed the role of Vice Chairman in order to assure a successful merger and the opportunity to better his Federation even through sacrifice to himself. In October 2010, he was elected to 1st Vice Chairman\Secretary-Treasurer of the Unified System Division where he served until April 2012 when he was elected to General Chairman of the Unified System Division which he still currently holds. Louis and his wife Shirley have two boys, Aaron who is currently a Freshman at Cal-Poly University San Luis Obispo who plans on pursuing a career in the Medical Field and Brandon who is on the midst of completion of his Freshman Year of High school where he excels in Baseball.



VERY IMPORTANT REMINDER

The Unified System Division Executive Board conducted their regular business meeting in compliance with the Unified System By-Laws June 2—June 5, 2015. The Executive Board received the detailed Claim report, the financial report of the Unified System Division for the Fiscal Year ending March 31, 2015 as well as any other pertinent information and strategical outlook for the year to come.

Mr. Galen E. Owen
1st Vice Chairman S/T
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