



FROM THE PRESIDENT

— Jerry C. Boles, BRS President

Struggles Ahead

As we move forward in today's era of railroading, I am compelled to discuss with you the many issues that face our Organization, our colleagues, the labor movement, and the working class in general.

As many of you probably already know, I along with BLET President Dennis Pierce, SMART Transportation Division President John Previsich, IAM Assistant to the President Andrew W. Sandburg, and Amtrak FOP President

William Gonzalez were invited by U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Chairman, Peter A. Defazio, to testify on behalf of our members in front of the Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials on "The State of the Rail Workforce". A link to this hearing and testimony can be found on our website, www.brs.org.

Labor's testimony showed a side of the rail industry most carriers would prefer to keep quiet, nonetheless it is our responsibility to voice the concerns of our members

in today's ever changing industry. While many of us focused on Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR), we also clearly pointed out the direct correlation to a decline in safety where PSR has been implemented. The concerns of our members are many, and they should worry not only us, but the general public as well. The potential for catastrophe grows as railroads continue to introduce tactics to further their bottom lines all while allowing safety to take a back seat.

We must unite and let our voices be heard, we must reach out to our elected officials and inform them of our concerns, and we must stand together and support those who support Labor, our industry, and the working class.

While we are grateful for the invitation of Congress to address some of our concerns, the truth is our

testimonies were just the tip of the iceberg. Our industry, as well as labor in general, is under attack. We are taking shots from all sides and those with the power to defend the regulations and laws are not rising to the challenge. Congress and the Administration should continue to defend safety and the regulations that have protected us and the general public for many years. Instead, we are seeing the agencies and regulators hide behind executive





orders and fancy marketing schemes all while allowing the “Jackals of Wall Street” to determine what is cost beneficial and will boost corporate stocks.

My testimony covered topics such as PTC training, and the fact that some of our members believe

that the training they are receiving is not sufficient, or that they are not receiving it at all. I discussed the effects of PSR on our members, including the fact that maintenance positions are being abolished and re-established with larger territories. I pointed out that these new territories lead to increased testing requirements on each individual leaving less time for regular preventative maintenance, which heightens the potential for equipment failures and signaling issues, often occurring after hours, increasing the already extensive duties. Deferred trouble tickets and overtime issues were confronted, along with an industry-wide attack on the regulations we have previously fought to achieve, including Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Regulations.

We see attacks from the courts with rulings like the “Janus Decision”, and attacks via anti-labor appointments to positions within the government, whose decisions greatly affect our ability to protect the working class way of life. These challenges are to long-standing precedents to unionism and collective bargaining, along with efforts to deregulate or eliminate our positions with technology. These attacks come consistently, in many forms, and they threaten everything we have fought for and stand for today.

Railroads are eliminating jobs and closing facilities, they are making unilateral changes to long-standing policies and practices that infringe upon our contracts and agreements. They are introducing draconian drug and alcohol policies that undermine any efforts we make to help or

rehabilitate those that are struggling or need assistance. They are challenging us at every turn, and they are doing so simply because they believe they can. We live in an era where business’s believe they can do what they want as long as they make profits, and no one will stand up to them. They believe that our silence is our acquiescence, but I disagree.

I believe our members, labor, and the working class have had enough, but that alone will not fix the problem. We must unite and let our voices be heard, we must reach out to our elected officials and inform them of our concerns, and we must stand together and support those who support Labor, our industry, and the working class. We have to encourage those who support us to champion legislation to protect our work, our workers, and the traveling public. We must stand up to the corporate

world and let them know that we want them to succeed, but not at the cost of our safety or our livelihoods.

I do not bring these issues to you in fear or defeat,

but simply as a call to unite. As our industry changes and our nation struggles through difficult times, now more than ever it is imperative that we stand beside each other in unity and brotherhood. It is time to put aside petty differences and past arguments, and unite as labor and as a working class to bring real change to our industry and nation. It is a time to remind those who seek to abuse us and others of this working class, that we are a force to be reckoned with. It is time to wake the sleeping giant that is the labor force and remind people that when they are united they can do anything.

I am confident that if we stand together united, we can overcome PSR, or any challenge for that matter, and show the industry that it is the employees and their families that have made these companies what they are. It is about time they remember that! ■

In Solidarity,

Jerry C. Boles
BRS President

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