



# BROTHERHOOD OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND TRAINMEN

A Division of the Rail Conference of the  
INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS

Robert H. Linsey  
General Chairman  
Cole W. Davis  
First Vice General Chairman

NS Northern Lines / W&LE  
General Committee of Adjustment

March 10, 2005

**TO ALL LOCAL CHAIRMEN**  
**NS Northern Lines / W&LE**  
**General Committee of Adjustment**

Dear Sirs and Brothers:

The rumor mill has been operating full tilt recently with letters in circulation threatening dire consequences should the Trainmen on Norfolk Southern choose to unify their representation under the banner of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (BLET). While we believe most of our brothers and sisters will take the time to research the facts before jumping to any conclusions, some of these threats are so absurd that we believe we owe you a clear statement of what the facts actually are.

As most of you know, no decision has yet been reached as to whether or not we should proceed to seek such a vote. To be sure, this would not be the first time such a vote has been taken in our industry and our leaders are well experienced in such matters. We will briefly address each of the issues being raised.

**Continuity of existing agreements** – Representation votes have been taking place in this industry for many decades. *There is no record anywhere where a change in representation has ever resulted in labor agreements being terminated!* Agreements remain in effect until changed or amended as per the Railway Labor Act. It would be a neat trick, indeed, if either party could undo years of collective bargaining by inducing a change in union representation. Fortunately, the law simply does not provide for this. All agreements, be they *Crew Consist, Remote Control technology, vacation agreements, Training Agreements (LET), etc.*, would remain in full force (We wonder if the UTU had this same concern when they unsuccessfully challenged the BLE in 1989 for control of the Locomotive Engineer agreements on Norfolk Southern. Indeed, on other properties – notably the Kansas City Southern and Union Pacific – the UTU has attempted to combine the Engine and Train service crafts and obviously had no such concerns over decertification).

It is probably appropriate to repeat the written commitment made by International President Hoffa and National President Hahs that Trainmen are welcomed into the IBT-BLET on an equal basis! The commitment of our General Committee is this: No agreement affecting Trainmen

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will be negotiated and changed without the participation and a majority vote of Trainmen. Locomotive Engineers will not vote to modify Train Service agreements!

Last July this General Committee became the certified representative of Trainmen on the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railway. On that property the Trainmen have a Crew Consist agreement and the Engineers have the right to operate remote control. Today, under IBT-BLET representation, an Engineer and a Conductor, at minimum, remain on each assignment.

**Continuation of representation** – In any representation dispute, *fifty percent of the craft must submit ballots voting for a labor organization.* It doesn't matter which organization they vote for (several could be on the ballot) and the winner does not have to garner fifty per cent of the eligible voters, only approval of more than fifty percent of those that choose to vote.

When such votes take place on properties that are already represented (as opposed to a railroad that has no union), meeting this threshold rarely becomes an issue. Typically, eighty (80) percent of the eligible votes submit ballots.

**Control of the United States Railroad Retirement System** – This is a Federally run system administered by a three-member board appointed by the President of the United States. Only one member is appointed at the recommendation of rail labor which consists of several rail labor organizations representing all crafts within this industry. It is almost flattering that someone would believe the Teamsters organization could cause changes to this long solvent system – changes that would require the approval of a Republican Party-dominated Congress and White House – without the concurrence of the whole of rail labor. There is no connection between our retirement system and the other independent retirements fund, all solvent, administered by other divisions of the IBT.

**Benefits of Craft unity!** – Many allegations – all unsupported with any facts or evidence – have been made as to the potential negative impact of unifying representation of the operating crafts on Norfolk Southern. *How about some of the benefits!*

- The competition for membership would end and there would be no incentive for any organization to negotiate the elimination of jobs, a practice that has taken place with great frequency over the years. One has to wonder what was in the deal for the UTU to negotiate the remote control agreement before the expiration of the moratorium which effectively prevented the Carrier's from changing working conditions through the end of 2004. What was in the deal for the Carriers to recently grant the UTU the right to levy dues upon BLET members? It appears to be a one-sided agreement with no *quid pro quo* for the Carriers unless there is something to be read between the lines.
- There is strength in numbers and the IBT-BLET has joined with several other rail labor unions in negotiating in the current round of negotiations. The UTU has, thus far, stayed out of the coalition. There is no better way to counter the railroads which have remained in lock-step with each other.
- Engineers and Trainmen share a common workplace. It is unfortunate that the acrimony surrounding this issue frequently spills over into our job site. It is an unsafe distraction yet

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decades of attempt to peacefully co-exist have been unsuccessful. Only by unifying our representation can we put an end to this infighting.

- Our efforts today are to hold out an olive branch to all Train and Engine service employees to join in a common effort under the powerful umbrella of the largest transportation labor organization in North America.

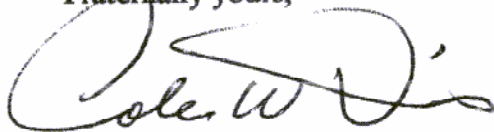
We welcome your inquiries and comments. Should anyone need clarification on any of these issues or any others that may arise, please don't hesitate to write, e-mail or call.

With best regards, we remain,

Fraternally yours,



Robert H. Linsey  
General Chairman



Cole W. Davis  
First Vice General Chairman