

## Where Are the Rail Unions in this Fight?

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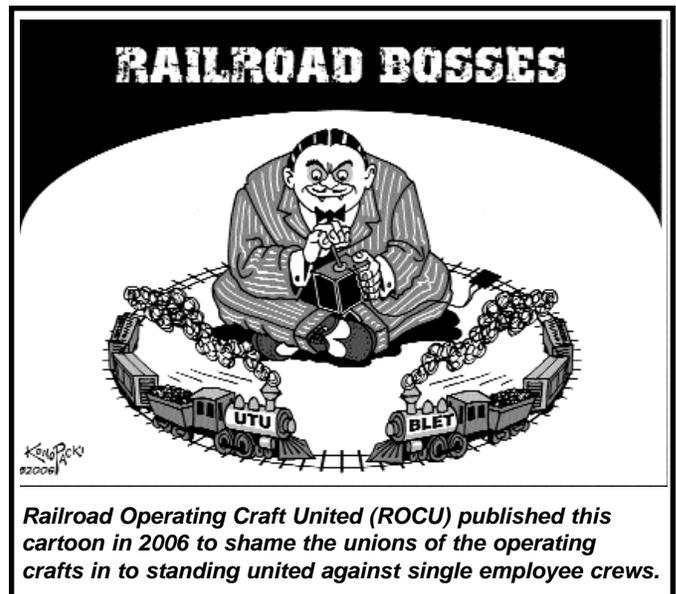
Is the job of the North American railroad conductor safe? Or do the railroads and government regulators have it in the crosshairs for elimination? This should be the number one question in the forefront of the minds of all railroad conductors' and engineers.

Along with this very important question comes a load of historical baggage. We must first understand where we have been to understand what might happen in the future. There are some things we know and there are some things we have heard. We know that all across America trains are no longer operated with cabooses. We have heard about the 1985 "Halloween Agreement" that sold out one craft and eliminated the caboos along with the jobs associated with it. We know that all over this land there are fewer and fewer jobs left that have a brakeman on the crew. We have heard of the language that is being added to our agreements that wish to combine engine service with train service to make another service craft called "Train Service Employee". We know that technological advances are making it easier for the railroad to track everything that an engineer does in the course of a trip. We have heard that there have been trains operated with no people at the controls whatsoever.

Unfortunately, the rail unions that represent engineers and conductors have yet to issue any statement that would commit them to the fight to preserve and protect the two-employee crew. A few years ago the presidents of the UTU and BLET, after several deaths in RCO operations, issued a joint statement that requested the FRA to halt the practice of single employee RCO operations. One president has since retired and the other was arrested and jailed for corruption. With the smoke settled and new union presidents in place in both organizations, RWU sent two rounds of certified mail to those new union presidents requesting that they both make a renewed commitment to oppose single employee operation of trains. Those letters were mailed on May 17th and again on August 2 of 2011. We know those letters were received, and we know that the union presidents chose not to respond.

We know the history whereby the carriers offer certain crafts another crafts' work. We know how the railroad pushes to combine many job responsibilities into a new position by pitting worker against worker. We now know that unsafe one-person operations of RCO are increasingly becoming the norm. We watched as the BLET and UTU were pitted against each other as the carriers implemented this new technology. We can only guess what is in the future for Road Conductor.

What are the important questions that must be asked? We know that Positive Train Control (PTC) will be implemented, but what will be done to keep the carriers from



using this technology to assist them in their goal of just one employee in the locomotive cab? We know that there are thirteen unions in the U.S. representing railroad workers; how do we build the solidarity with them to enlist their help in fighting single-employee trains? We know the dangers that our communities face if one fatigued worker is alone on a train; how will we educate the public to the danger?

With all of this said, it appears that if we rank and file rails don't take action NOW to oppose this possibility, then nothing will be done until it is too late to protect our jobs and our communities! The conductor craft is under attack from the greedy railroad bottom line, and no doubt the rail carriers will get the usual help from government regulators who will turn a blind eye and sanction the carriers' reckless actions. Railroad Workers United is in a position to lead the fight, by uniting all of us across craft and union boundaries and apply the pressure needed to make our unions work for us like they are supposed to. The past four years RWU has been working in our rank-and-file grassroots style to educate and inform the members of our unions about issues that unfortunately, the unions don't sometimes seem to want to address. We need your help. We are rank-and-file railroaders who are asking all rails to join us in our message of union solidarity. If we can't be one big union, we need to start acting like one. Join our campaign to oppose single employee operations of trains. If we don't fight this fight, who will?

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