

Secretary/Treasurer's Report

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With unemployment still hovering at nearly ten percent we continue to hear lawmakers, pundits, and workers ask, "Where are all the jobs?" and "When are we going to address unemployment and put Americans back to work?" When most Americans ask these questions, they need look no further than in their driveways, in their closets, and in their daily lives in order to answer these questions.

For some unknown reason, many Americans fail to connect the dots between their shopping habits and job creation in the American economy. We loudly decry the lack of "good American jobs" while we simultaneously fail to support U.S. job creation by purchasing American produced goods. Just look around your neighborhood and count the number of foreign made vehicles, or walk through an apparel store and try to find American made shoes or clothing. And how many Americans are happily shopping Wal-Mart and oblivious to the massive trade imbalance between the U.S. and the rest of the world?

Recently, as I walked through a parking lot near Washington, DC, I counted the number of U.S. and foreign nameplate vehicles parked there. I randomly picked a row of vehicles and started counting as I walked. When I got to the end of the row, I counted twenty-seven foreign nameplate vehicles and only nine American nameplate vehicles. Is it any wonder why the American economic recovery is not producing jobs at a faster pace? It is no wonder to me, and it should be no wonder to you or any other American citizen. When seventy-five percent of the cars and trucks in my experiment turn out to be non-American nameplates, it is pretty easy to see why our jobs market has not picked up steam.

I challenge every BMWED member, and every American for that matter, to try the same experiment and see if you come up with similar results. I suspect that in the vast majority of cases, you will see a similar trend. Americans' attitude towards how and where we shop is in need of a serious makeover if we are to strengthen our economy and create American jobs for American workers. We cannot continue to turn a blind eye to the direct cause and effect of purchasing imported products over domestically made products. If we do not stimulate demand by purchasing American made goods, we are doing our economy and future job growth a grave disservice that will continue to have severe ramifications for years to come. As Americans, we must support domestic job growth by putting our money where our mouths are and looking for the "made in the USA" label, preferably "union made" in the USA.

As BMWED members, we are encouraged by the Obama Administration's focus on expanding rail capacity and developing high-speed passenger rail in the United States. We support even greater investment in high-speed passenger rail as a generator of good union jobs right here at home. Our railroad tracks and bridges obviously cannot be moved out of the country, and the BMWED is committed to fighting for every available maintenance-of-way job.

The work of building and maintaining America's high-speed rail network, and the manufacturing of steel rails, passenger coaches and high-speed locomotives, must remain the dominion of our country. We must resist going down a path that will make us dependent upon foreign manufacturing and foreign produced materials for our emerging high-speed rail needs. We must start on the ground floor by focusing our nation's resources to develop a strong U.S.-based capacity to supply and sustain American high-speed rail. High-speed rail funds --your tax dollars and mine --must be invested domestically to revive our manufacturing base and produce new train sets in America, with American steel and American made components, produced and assembled by American workers.

America largely abandoned the manufacture of passenger coaches and railroad components decades ago. We remain overly-reliant upon the importation of train sets and passenger coaches from Japan, Europe, and Canada. Now, the Chinese government is moving aggressively to gain market share in our emerging high-speed rail markets. All of these countries see an opportunity to create jobs for their own economies to the detriment of the American economy and the American worker. The task of building the next generation of passenger rail must be performed by American workers in America. The United States has a real opportunity to rebuild its manufacturing capacity to produce American made trains and related components. And the United States has an opportunity to put Americans back to work and tap the skills and prowess of the American worker to build and maintain our next generation of passenger rail equipment and rail lines. Such will create good American jobs and create an environmentally friendly mode of transportation that will reduce our dependence on foreign oil, expand our manufacturing base, and reduce airport and highway congestion and pollution.

The United States is at a crossroad that could mark the revival of U.S. manufacturing and technology. Unlike my recent experience walking through the parking lot, I hope for the sake of our country and its workers that ten years from now our rail yards and terminals will be filled with high-speed locomotives, train sets, rails and technologies that proudly display "Made in the U.S.A."

