

Teamsters Canada Rail Conference scores sweeping victory over UTU at CP Rail

CLEVELAND, February 6 -- A plan by United Transportation Union leaders to raid the former Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers on the Canadian Pacific Railway has backfired on the aggressor union, resulting in a total and sweeping victory for the newly formed Teamsters Canada Rail Conference (TCRC).

The UTU leadership successfully convinced the Canadian Industrial Relations Board (CIRB) to force an election at the Canadian Pacific Railway in spite of protests from the BLE. In fact, an impartial umpire with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) ruled that UTU's actions constituted a raid under the CLC Bylaws.

"Nevertheless, the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference fought an uphill battle and turned the tables on the aggressive UTU leadership, claiming a total victory," said Don M. Hahs, National President of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen. "The TCRC members were outnumbered and caught off guard by an underhanded attack -- that began on a legal holiday when offices were closed -- but still managed to pull off this amazing win.

"We did not seek this election -- it was forced upon us by the UTU leadership and the Canadian Industrial Relations Board. The UTU leaders lit the fuse on a plan they thought would destroy the BLE. Instead, it blew up in their faces."

The UTU leadership forced the issue, believing it could easily win an election based on its larger membership numbers. There are approximately 1,700 engineers at CP and approximately 2,800 trainmen, who were represented by UTU.

As part of the election, employees were required to answer two questions.

The first question for the 4,500 to vote on was whether to keep the Canadian Council of Railway Operating Unions (CCROU), the joint BLE-UTU negotiating committee. The voters said no by about 30 votes.

The second question was, "Which union do you want to represent you?"

Of the 4,449 eligible voters, 3,173 cast votes. A majority 1,687 selected the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference over the UTU.

"In a unit dominated by trainmen represented by UTU, Teamsters Canada Rail Conference won by 201 votes," said Gilles Halle, President of TCRC. "As a result, Teamsters Canada Rail Conference not only kept the 1,700 engineers, it added 2,800 trainmen.

"We thank all those who supported us and want to assure all our new trainmen members that we will work for a smooth transition that respects current agreements and seniority rules," Halle continued. "If and when any change is made, it will be done in consultation with the affected members."

"Teamsters Canada Rail Conference will shortly become the principal interlocutor during negotiation between CN, CP and its workers," said François Laporte, from Teamsters Canada's national office. "We will be able to sit quickly at the negotiation table with management and get the best collective agreement. The era of divided workers in the railway industry is over; we are now united."

IBT General President James P. Hoffa congratulated Gilles Halle and Bob Bouvier, President of Teamsters Canada.

"The strong vote for the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference demonstrates that employees at Canadian Pacific want the best representation available and that they trust the Teamsters to provide that," Hoffa said. "We are creating one umbrella for workers so that they win the best contracts, best benefits and the respect and dignity that they deserve."

In closing, Teamsters Canada Rail Conference applied recently for certification to represent members of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way (BMW) at CP and is awaiting the Canadian Industrial Relation Board's decision. Furthermore, a similar request will be made for members of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way (BMW) at CN, which allow further unification of railway workers in Canada.