

BARGAINING UPDATE – 11/20/11

From: President F. N. Simpson

Late Thursday evening, four more unions, the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen, Sheet Metal Workers International Association, National Conference of Firemen and Oilers, and International Brotherhood of Boilermakers made tentative agreements with the Railroads. I congratulate those Unions on making agreements they believe are in the best interests of their respective memberships. I sincerely wish the Railroads would make a reasonable offer to us that the BMWED leadership could take to the members. Unfortunately, the Railroads continue to stonewall any attempt to address the away from home expenses issue that the Presidential Emergency Board bungled in its recommendations. At this moment, three unions remain without tentative agreements: the American Train Dispatchers Association, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen and us. No further meetings are scheduled between BMWED and the Railroads.

On Thursday, IBT General President Jim Hoffa telephoned the White House to express his concern that BMWED members were not treated fairly by the PEB and that the Railroads were stonewalling a reasonable settlement. I have mobilized our Legislative Department to lobby Capitol Hill vigorously. This week, over 20 legislative representatives have informed members of Congress that the PEB recommendations on away from home expenses were unfair and unjust. We have spread the word that all we seek is a fair deal for railroad employees who work hundreds of miles from home performing the hard work that keeps the nation's rail system functioning. BMWED legislative representatives will return to the Hill "en masse" beginning on November 28th, as Congress returns from its Thanksgiving recess.

The BMWED remains committed to reaching a voluntary agreement. We see no reason why the Railroads would risk a nationwide disruption to the economy over the matter of reimbursement of expenses incurred by their employees while working away from home. Our traveling members have not received an increase in meal or lodging per diem since January 1, 2005 and they have not received an increase in travel allowances for over 15 years. The Railroads know our demands are just, yet they continue to say "trust me," if you only agree to talks with no end, we might fix your problems. However, if those talks lead nowhere, BMWED traveling members will have gone more than a decade without increase in meal and lodging reimbursement and over 20 years without an increase in travel allowance. It is time for the Railroads, at their most profitable point in history, to step forward and do the right thing for the hard working men and women who build and maintain the tracks, bridges and buildings used by the Railroads.

Brothers and sisters, stay strong and stay united. We will prevail and achieve a fair resolution of our issue.