

Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters

November 14, 2011

A Message From President Simpson

Last week, both the Rail Labor Bargaining Coalition (RLBC) and the coalition led by the Transportation Communications International Union (TCU) met with the Railroads to try to reach a voluntary agreement following the release of the report of Presidential Emergency Board No. 243 on November 5, 2011. Bargaining with the RLBC was unproductive. The TCU-led coalition met with the Railroads on Thursday and Friday and has another meeting scheduled for Monday, November 14, 2011.

Throughout this process, the Railroads have insisted that they will agree to nothing other than that recommended by PEB 243. That means for BMWED, all issues related to away from home expenses are sent to "local handling" with no way to compel an agreement. As I said earlier, that is unacceptable to the BMWED. Traveling employees have been without an adjustment to meals and lodging reimbursement since January 1, 2005. Travel allowance reimbursement has not been adjusted for over 15 years. Simple fairness and economic justice demands that these reimbursement allowances be increased to accommodate the increased costs to BMWED members when they work away from home.

I said at the beginning of this process that the BMWED would not leave the bargaining table without making improvements in away from home expenses and living conditions for traveling employees. The report of PEB 243 made that job harder – but it is not impossible. Next week, BMWED legislative representatives will swarm Capitol Hill, spreading the message that BMWED traveling employees deserve increases in the allowances that reimburse them for the costs of traveling and working away from home in the service of the railroad. We will continue to demand that the Railroads bargain over these issues now and bargain fairly. This is a struggle we can win, although it will not be easy. Our path to victory will require unity and resolve. Don't listen to rumors. Get your information here and from BMWED officers. Show solidarity with the other brother and sister railroad employees who are members of the RLBC and TCU coalition unions. They are all fighting the good fight here to improve their lot in life. If one or more unions settle with the Railroads, wish them well. They have had to fight this same battle and have had to make the hard decision as to when they must settle rather than fight on in a futile battle. Their choices going forward, like ours, will be honorable ones. Solidarity today, tomorrow and forever.