

BMWE: Setting the record straight

CLEVELAND, August 27 -- Recently, RRESQ (Railroad Employee Safety and Quality) circulated an article produced by the UTU that contained false information. Below is one unsolicited response to this article from the BMWE's Director of Safety and Education Rick Inclima.

Dear Friends from RRESQ:

My name is Rick Inclima, and I am currently the Director of Safety and Education for the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees and have been a member in good standing of the BMWE for over 28 years. I have been on the RRESQ mailing list for some time now and have had the opportunity to interact with RRESQ. I have also responded to safety questions/inquiries from RRESQ posed directly to me or forwarded to me from other sources, such as the AFL-CIO. I believe that RRESQ serves an important purpose as a voice for railroad safety, and I applaud your efforts in the railroad safety arena.

However, I recently received an email from RRESQ titled, "Are Teamsters Eying Rail Retirement Assets" and felt compelled to respond. As a member of the BMWE, I try not to get in the middle of the ongoing fraternal fight between BLE and UTU. I suggest that RRESQ also refrain from entering the fray or being used as a pawn in that unfortunate spat.

The notion that the Teamsters are somehow going to take over Railroad Retirement is pure bunk, and I am surprised that RRESQ would circulate such false and untrue propaganda on behalf of the UTU. In my humble opinion, this unfounded falsehood has been manufactured by the UTU, plain and simple. There is no factual basis for such an outlandish statement, and it is derived from UTU's attempt to divide rail labor for its own political purposes.

The Teamsters nor any union is going to take over the RRB or combine it with another pension plan. This is just fear-mongering from the UTU, with no basis in reality. It would take, at the very least, an act of Congress to make such a change, and none of the rail unions would agree to share our hard earned RRB benefits that we have paid into for our entire careers. And the Railroads would certainly not agree to share the fund that they have paid into on our behalf as part of our contract settlements since day one. It's just nonsense, plain and simple.

The UTU propaganda piece states, "No other transportation union--EXCEPT the United Transportation Union--has as strong a lobbying presence in Washington, D.C. as does the Teamsters." However, as strong as the UTU proclaims to be in Washington, DC, their own non-railroad members (e.g., 12,000 UTU bus drivers) are not covered by Railroad Retirement. Why? Because they are not employed by a Railroad employer just as truck drivers, warehouse workers, UPS employees, etc., are not employed by a Railroad employer. If you are not a railroad employee working for a railroad employer or working full time for one of the traditional railroad Brotherhoods (such as BLE, BMWE, UTU, BRS, etc., which are considered railroad employers under the RRB) you are not eligible to participate in Railroad Retirement. Don't you think that if it could be done, the UTU would have already put their non-rail bus drivers under RRB? It hasn't been done by UTU because it couldn't be done by UTU any more than it could be done by the Teamsters or anyone else. It is total fabrication, pure and simple!

I agree with one statement in the UTU article, which said, "When railroaders are divided,

they are in imminent danger of being conquered." In my humble opinion, it's time for UTU to follow its own words, rejoin the AFL-CIO (which they abandoned in order to raid the BLE), stop trying to divide the rail unions against one another, and stop the ridiculous and unfounded lies regarding the BLET/IBT and Railroad Retirement.

I have many close and dear friends in the UTU, and I will stick by those Brothers and Sisters regardless of the actions of their leaders. However, as far as the UTU-manufactured RRB lie goes, "It's never going to happen, it's never been considered, and it will never be allowed by Rail Labor, the Carriers, the Board, or the US Congress," and you can quote me on that.

In the interest of fairness and balance, I respectfully request RRESQ to distribute this response to all those members of rail labor who received the UTU article. Thank you.

In Unity,

Rick Inclima, BMW

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