

President Hahs statement on BMW/IBT merger vote

CLEVELAND, August 30 -- The following is a statement by BLET National President Don Hahs regarding the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees proposed merger with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters:

I would like to congratulate the leaders of the BMW for taking the historic step of unanimously approving a merger agreement with the IBT and sending it out for ratification by its membership.

Your vote is the next step in a new era of transportation unity. The proposed merger of the BMW and the IBT will continue the work that the BLET started with its merger last year.

I urge the brothers and sisters of the BMW to vote for the merger and hope -- one day soon -- to welcome them into the Rail Conference with open arms.

Rail Labor needs to be united under one roof, and the entrance of the BMW into the Rail Conference would be the next step towards this goal. Labor can accomplish a lot by working together.

During the time the BLET was considering its merger with the IBT, one labor leader said that now is the time for Rail Labor to get in the parade or watch it go by. We need to use the strength that we have collectively, and we must get bigger, badder and stronger by joining together.

The integration phase of our merger has just begun, but from the outset, the benefits of this merger have been remarkable. The IBT has been magnanimous in its lending of resources and the professional team and talent that President James Hoffa has assembled is an inspiration to all.

For too long Rail Labor has been divided, each with our own agendas. Rail Labor must be able to move forward in a spirit of cooperation for the membership. With this step, we must try to finally present a united front and make real changes in the industry. Working with the different crafts must be the agenda for all rail labor leaders for the benefit of all our members.

It is my hope that the members of the BMW will vote to join their BLET Brothers and Sisters under the IBT umbrella, and that others will follow us in beginning a new era of transportation labor unity.

Monday, August 30, 2004