

**Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employes Division
of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters**



NEWS CLIPS

September 18, 2009

Randall Brassell, Director of Communications
Telephone: 615-521-4097 (Fax) 615-824-2164
email: rbrassell1@aol.com

BMWED system federations merge

Monday, September 14, 2009

The governing bodies of the Consolidated Rail System Federation and the Nickel Plate - Wheeling & Lake Erie Federation, of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division finalized a merger between the two federations. The newly merged federation will retain the name, Consolidated Rail System Federation.

The Consolidated Rail System Federation will now represent more than 2,200 members of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and will continue to maintain an office in Port Clinton, Ohio.

CRSF General Chairman Bradley Winter was elected to head the newly merged and reorganized federation. Former NPW&LE General Chairman Paul Beard will continue to serve the CRSF as vice chairman.

The Consolidated Rail System Federation now represents maintenance-of-way workers who build, construct, inspect and maintain railroad tracks, bridges, buildings and equipment for CSX, NS, Amtrak, CN/Grand Trunk, Conrail, Springfield Terminal, MBCR and the St. Lawrence & Atlantic Railroads from the coast of Maine west to St. Louis.

Obama: We Need Strong Unions for a Strong Economy

Posted By [Seth Michaels](#) On September 15, 2009 @ 3:03 pm In [Legislation & Politics](#) | [8 Comments](#)

President Barack Obama had a strong, inspiring [1] [message](#) for delegates to the 2009 AFL-CIO Convention: We're going to make this country work again.

In a speech punctuated by chants and standing ovations, Obama said he's committed to the same goals as the union movement: restoring the economy, getting health care for everyone and passing the [2] [Employee Free Choice Act](#):

"These are the reforms I'm proposing. These are the reforms labor has been championing. These are the reforms the American people need. And these are the reforms I intend to sign into law.

"Quality, affordable health insurance. A world-class education. Good jobs that pay well and can't be outsourced. A strong labor movement. That's how we'll lift up hardworking families. That's how we'll grow our middle class. That's how we'll put opportunity within reach in the United States of America."

Throughout, the enthusiastic crowd gave him multiple standing ovations—when one woman shouted “I love you,” he responded: “I love you, too, sister.” In turn, Obama showed he understands the needs of working people and the unions that represent them:

“When labor succeeds—that’s when our middle class succeeds. And when our middle class succeeds—that’s when the United States of America succeeds.”

Obama pledged his continued support of the Employee Free Choice Act, because “when workers want a union, they should get a union.”

The economic crisis was brought on by greed and irresponsibility, Obama said, and we can’t wait to rebuild a stronger, better and fairer economy:

The problems in our economy preceded this economic crisis. Just last week, a Census report came out showing that in 2008, before this downturn, family income fell to its lowest point in over a decade; and more families slid into poverty. That is unacceptable. And I refuse to let America go back to the culture of irresponsibility that made it possible.

Obama spent much of his speech talking about health care and thanked union members for their hard work on making health reform possible:

Few have fought for this cause harder, and few have championed it longer than you...you know why this is so important. You know this isn’t just about the millions of Americans who don’t have health insurance, it’s about the hundreds of millions more who do: Americans who worry that they’ll lose their insurance if they lose their job, who fear their coverage will be denied because of a pre-existing condition, who know that one accident or illness could mean financial ruin.

When are we going to stop this? When are we going to say enough is enough? How many more workers have to lose their coverage? How many more families have to go into the red for a sick loved one? We have talked this issue to death year after year, decade after decade...now is the time for action. Now is the time to deliver on health insurance reform.

Obama also said that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act helped pull the economy up and prevent even worse crisis. He pledged to keep working to create good jobs and make sure that “Made in America” won’t just be a slogan, but a reality.

Obama has already signed into law pro-worker legislation like the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act and an expansion of health care to millions of children in need. He asked the attendees to come together and fight with him for an America with lasting prosperity.

AAR: Traffic decline tapering off

September 15, 2009

The Association of American Railroads late Thursday reported that, while U.S. freight rail carloads of 1,116,182 for August were 16.4% lower compared with the same month last year, the

percentage decline for the month was the lowest since February.

AAR's monthly Rail Time Indicators Report, which consists of traffic data framed with other key economic indicators to show how freight rail ties into the broader U.S. economy, shows that carload data for certain commodity groups had notable traffic changes in August. Chemicals, which are used as a raw material in many types of manufacturing, were up 14% at 134,601 carloads, compared to their lowest point in March 2009. "This increase in carloads of chemicals is in line with the August Purchasing Managers Index, up 4% from July 2009," said AAR. The autos and autoparts commodity group, at 44,272 carloads, grew 40% in August from July 2009, "a significant monthly boost, likely the result of the federal 'Cash for Clunkers' program."

More consumer-driven intermodal traffic was down 16.7% compared with August 2008. However, the average weekly intermodal count for trailers was 196,066 units, the highest since January 2009.

"August was another month where we are seeing traffic data moving in the right direction, but we are still in a wait-and-see mode," said AAR Senior Vice President of Policy and Economics John Gray. "Railroads are beginning to bring cars out of storage, a promising sign there is growing demand to move more things by rail. However, to date, the improvements remain too small to judge whether they are the result of seasonal factors or indicators of an emerging recovery."

U.S. rail fatalities down 11.9% in first half of 2009

September 15, 2009

U.S. railroads reported 327 fatalities in the first six months of 2009, mostly due to trespassing and highway-rail grade crossing collisions. That was an 11.9% improvement over the 371 fatalities reported in the same period last year.

Trespassing fatalities dropped 8.6% to 202; grade crossing fatalities were down 16.0% to 110; and employee fatalities declined 23.1% to 10.

Preliminary statistics compiled by the Federal Railroad Administration's Office of Safety Analysis showed that 711 large and small railroads reported 5,035 accidents and incidents in this year's first half, down 20.8% from the same period last year.

Train accidents declined 30.3% to 892. They resulted in no fatalities, compared with one in the 2008 period.

Collisions were down 27.3% to 64; derailments fell 33.6% to 619; and yard accidents declined 32.9% to 461.

Many Employers to Raise Cost of Health Benefits, Survey Finds

By David S. Hilzenrath
Washington Post Staff Writer
Wednesday, September 16, 2009

Though Americans who already have medical coverage may be wary of change, a new survey indicates that they may be hard-pressed to escape it -- even in the absence of health-care reform.

As businesses contend with rising costs, many workers face an erosion of health benefits next year, according to an annual survey released Tuesday by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Health Research and Educational Trust.

Forty percent of employers surveyed said they are likely to increase the amount their workers pay out of pocket for doctor visits. Almost as many said they are likely to raise annual deductibles and the amount workers pay for prescription drugs.

Nine percent said they plan to tighten eligibility for health benefits; 8 percent said they plan to drop coverage entirely. Forty-one percent of employers said they are "somewhat" or "very" likely to increase the amount employees pay in premiums -- though that would not necessarily mean employees would pay a higher percentage of the premiums. Employers could simply be passing along the same share of the overall increase that they are doing this year.

The authors of the study said the findings underscore the need for federal action to rein in costs.

The survey is one of several reports providing fresh ammunition to President Obama as he struggles to overhaul the nation's health-care system. One of his biggest challenges has been winning over Americans who are satisfied with their existing coverage.

A major business lobby weighed in Tuesday, saying that if current trends continue, annual health-care costs for employers will rise 166 percent over the next decade -- to \$28,530 per employee.

"Maintaining the status quo is simply not an option," said Antonio M. Perez, chief executive of Eastman Kodak and a leader of the Business Roundtable. "These costs are unsustainable and would put millions of workers at risk," Perez said in a statement.

Rather than letting the trends go unchecked, employers will probably adopt a variety of cost-saving measures, said Helen Darling, president of the National Business Group on Health, an alliance of corporations. Those steps could include giving employees financial incentives to participate in weight-loss programs, order prescription drugs by mail and undergo health assessments, she said. In addition, before workers pursue costly procedures such as back surgery,

they could be required to receive briefings that explain the potential downside of the treatment, Darling said.

Almost two-thirds of corporations surveyed by the Mercer consulting firm plan to call on employees to pay a greater share of health plan costs next year, according to a report last week.

The Kaiser Family Foundation survey, released Tuesday, obtained in-depth responses from more than 2,000 private firms and non-federal public employers. The foundation focuses on health issues; its collaborator, the Health Research and Educational Trust, is affiliated with the American Hospital Association. Annual premium increases for families, which totaled 13 percent in 2002 and 2003, have held steady at 5 percent since 2007, the groups reported. Premiums for single coverage did not rise significantly in 2009, breaking a long-standing trend.

However, premiums have continued to rise faster than wages and overall inflation, the survey found. Though family premiums for 2009 rose 5 percent, during the 12-month period ending in April, general inflation fell 0.7 percent.

September 16, 2009

TROUBLE ON THE TRACKS, TWO TRAINS WERE ON A COLLISION COURSE:

Train officials are investigating how two trains got onto the same track headed for each other. The train company CSX, which operates the section of the track involved, confirmed there were two commuter rail trains on the Worcester line heading right for each other.

Passengers on the outbound train said they felt the train come to an abrupt stop and then travel backwards.

"The train pulled away from Back Bay and we were moving forward, and then all of a sudden it came to an abrupt halt. Nothing fell down or anything, but it was definitely a quick forward motion when it braked. Probably about five seconds later, we started moving backwards," said Sarah Visveek, a passenger on the outbound train.

The conductor came on over the intercom and told passengers they were on the wrong track and needed to go back to switch.

"Just as I was getting off, the conductor told us that we came within a hundred feet of hitting another train," said Jenna Sherman, a passenger.

Both trains had passengers on board at the time.

CSX is the same company that was sued along with a lumber company by the MBTA about a year and half ago when a freight train rolled down a section of track, undetected for miles, and slammed into a commuter rail train in Canton. Dozens were injured in the incident. (WHDH-tv)\

September 16, 2009, 9:54 am

Baucus Releases Senate Health Care Proposal

By [David Herszenhorn](#)

Reuters Senator Max Baucus talks with reporters on Tuesday following a meeting of the Finance Committee's bipartisan group.

It's out.

The [much-ballyhooed, long-wrangled-over Baucus health care proposal](#), which meets many of the requirements President Obama has laid out for remaking an industry that accounts for about one-sixth of the American economy, is now public. Only to be wrangled over some more.

The proposal is the result of more than a year of preparation and more than three months of intense negotiations between a small group of Democrats and Republicans led by Senator Max Baucus, Democrat of Montana, the chairman of the Finance Committee.

The first surprise in the Baucus plan: a slimmed down price-tag of \$856 billion over 10 years. Earlier versions of the health care legislation had come in costing \$1 trillion or more. But stay tuned for a close look at the fine print; Congressional budget-scoring is often as much art as science.

Another number to watch: 13 percent. That's the share of family income that the Baucus plan envisions middle-class American families having to pay in health insurance premiums before co-payments, deductibles and other cost-sharing.

And senators in both parties are questioning whether, at the end of the day, insurance will be affordable to the people who need it most — perhaps the single most crucial question for all of the health care overhaul proposals.

The Baucus bill seeks to extend health coverage to more than 30 million uninsured American citizens. To do so, it would broadly expand Medicaid, the state-federal insurance program for the poor, and provide government subsidies to modest-income individuals and families to help them buy coverage.

The bill would also create new, state insurance marketplaces, or exchanges, where consumers could shop for insurance and compare plans.

All of the insurance plans in the exchange would have to meet strict new government requirements. Insurance companies could not bar coverage based on pre-existing medical conditions, and could only increase the cost of premiums based on a small number of factors, like age, tobacco use and

whether a plan is for an individual or a family.

Stay with Prescriptions throughout today as we bring you the latest developments, including a news conference with Mr. Baucus at noon.

• SEPTEMBER 16, 2009

Specter, Unions Disagree on Path for Overhaul of Labor Laws

By MELANIE TROTTMAN

PITTSBURGH -- Sen. Arlen Specter told the AFL-CIO convention Tuesday that he and a small group of Democratic senators have a road map for putting a long-stalled, union-backed overhaul of labor laws on track toward passage -- an assertion that was quickly dismissed by leaders of the AFL-CIO.

The latest confusion over the Employee Free Choice Act highlights the difficulty the proposal is causing for congressional Democrats, labor leaders and President Barack Obama.

The act would make it easier for unions to organize workers and win initial labor contracts through binding arbitration, which they say would help to counter what they call employer intimidation. It's a top legislative priority for union leaders, but is strongly opposed by business groups, which say the current proposal would allow unions to bypass secret ballot elections and stall contract talks until federal arbitrators impose settlements.

The measure has failed to win the 60 votes needed to overcome a filibuster in the Senate. The bill faces opposition from Republicans and a group of Democrats from more conservative states where the measure is viewed as a threat to jobs.

Mr. Specter, who recently switched from the Republican to Democratic Party -- and is running for re-election in 2010 -- said the proposed changes would throw out the so-called card-check provision that would have allowed unions to organize workers by simply having them sign cards instead of voting in secret-ballot elections. The new version would call instead for prompt, secret-ballot elections, he said. It would also require that each side structure what it says is its final, best offer before turning to arbitration.

Mr. Specter has for months been trying to broker a deal to revive the bill. He said Tuesday that Democratic senators participating in the talks included himself, Tom Harkin of Iowa, Chuck Schumer of New York, Mark Pryor of Arkansas, Sherrod Brown of Ohio and Thomas Carper of Delaware.

Union leaders and business groups kept their distance from Mr. Specter's effort.

Incoming AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said card check legislation was still in play. The chairman of AFL-CIO's organizing committee, Larry Cohen, said that until there were 60 Democratic-controlled votes in the Senate, "We don't even want to finalize a bill, because who are we discussing it with?"

Business groups expressed continued opposition. The National Association of Manufacturers said the modified version outlined by Mr. Specter was unacceptable.

"The prompt certification that he's talking about is code for ambush elections," said Jay Timmons, the trade association's executive vice president. He added that the arbitration proposals still allowed "a government-appointed bureaucrat to make decisions which need to be made at a local business level."

Steven J. Law, chief legal officer and general counsel at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which has been a leading voice against the bill, said Mr. Specter's proposed omission of the card-check clause was an effort to gain support from moderate Democrats. But "in the end card check would come back," he said.

The Chamber also opposes the proposed changes to arbitration. "To make the government the tie-breaker of last best offers suffers from the same basic flaws we find with forced government arbitration," said Mr. Law.

Mr. Specter said the proposal would help pull "people to the center," adding that the last best offer narrows the arbitrators' discretion.

• SEPTEMBER 16, 2009

Obama Appeals for Union Support on Health Bill

By JONATHAN WEISMAN

PITTSBURGH -- President Barack Obama swept into union country Tuesday to rally organized labor behind his push to overhaul the nation's health-care system, with campaign-style speeches in Ohio and at an AFL-CIO convention urging workers to back him.

"How much longer are we going to have to wait? It can't wait," Mr. Obama said to union leaders in Pittsburgh. The crowd responded with loud cheers and chants of "We can't wait."

In Lordstown, Ohio, he appealed for support from workers at a General Motors Co. small-car factory. "As long as you've got an ounce of fight in you, I've got a ton of fight in me," Mr. Obama said. "I've said it before: I'm skinny, but I'm tough. So give it for me, guys."

After a bruising summer, the president shed some of his nonchalance about the rising and bitter opposition to his policies and proposals. He made a nod to "a lot of stuff" supporters have been hearing "from folks who are not that friendly to me."

And he saw his audiences today as a respite from those critics. Outgoing AFL-CIO President John Sweeney hailed Mr. Obama's decision Friday night to impose stiff tariffs on Chinese car and light-truck tires. That decision has angered some conservatives and raised the specter of a trade war with the nation that Mr. Obama is counting on to finance a record budget deficit and help pressure Iran and North Korea to give up their nuclear programs.

But it was popular in a region battered by foreign competition and manufacturing imports. Jon Carmichael, 30 years old, of Cortland, Ohio, said he encouraged the president to use tariffs more widely to protect U.S. manufacturers during a closed-door roundtable Mr. Obama held with a dozen GM workers before his speech. Mr. Obama was noncommittal, saying he could only do so much under the rules of the World Trade Organization. Instead, he told the group, he needed to focus on prying foreign markets open to U.S. products.

The president's visit to the sprawling Lordstown GM plant marked the first meeting with GM workers since his administration effectively took over the company.

In a rousing address, Mr. Obama hailed the return of 150 workers here Monday, and the pending return of more than 1,000 more in the next three weeks as the plant gears up to build more Chevrolet Cobalts. Inventories of the small cars were depleted by the "cash for clunkers" program, and the Lordstown plant is preparing to launch the Chevy Cruze, a small, high-mileage car, next year -- just the sort of vehicle the Obama administration has hoped GM would embrace.

Mr. Obama said he hadn't run for president to run a car company. "It wasn't on my to-do list. It wasn't even something on my want-to-do list."

But, he said, "for me to just let the auto industry collapse, to vanish, would have done unbelievable damage."

The workers here showed thunderous gratitude to a commander-in-chief who has taken a significant political hit for his GM intervention. Lines of diminutive Cobalts formed the backdrop for Mr. Obama's speech, a marked contrast to the Firebirds, Cavaliers and Chevy vans the plant used to produce. Mr. Obama made it clear he did want something from them: their vocal support for his agenda, especially his push to overhaul the U.S. health-care system.

At the AFL-CIO convention, Mr. Sweeney promised, "we in this room are the wind at his back."

But former Republican Sen. Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania didn't let up. In a conference call organized by the Republican National Committee, Mr. Santorum said the president's plan to cap the emissions of global warming gases would be "devastating" to western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio steel-and-coal country. And the resurgent medical industry of Pittsburgh would "suffer greatly from the Obama socialized medicine proposal."

"He's coming to sell a message that I think won't resonate," Mr. Santorum said.

Mr. Obama framed the struggles of the labor movement as the struggle to maintain a prosperous middle class and an egalitarian society.

"The fundamental test of our time is whether we will heed this lesson, whether we will let America become a nation of the very rich and the very poor, of the haves and the have-nots," he said, "or whether we will remain true to the promise of this country and build a future where the success of all of us is built on the success of each of us."

The working-class, mainly white auto workers in Lordstown and Pittsburgh are precisely the kind of voters Mr. Obama has had a tough time with. Hillary Rodham Clinton ran well in this region with her wins over Mr. Obama in the Ohio and Pennsylvania Democratic primaries, and he is still struggling with the demographic.

But a dozen workers who sat down with the president before his speech were positive. Jay Tomasic, 31, of Berlin Center, Ohio, dismissed the angry sentiment over Mr. Obama's economic agenda. "Any time you change things, you have people opposed to change," he said.

But Mr. Tomasic is not so sure Mr. Obama's plans for GM -- or the turnaround he hailed at Lordstown -- will take. In the wake of the GM shake-up, three shifts at the plant were cut. Auto-parts maker Delphi slashed jobs here as well. The "cash for clunkers" rebound is cause for some hope, Mr. Tomasic said. But, he added, "the jury's still out."

U.S. carload freight still struggles to gain ground

September 18, 2009

U.S. carload freight traffic for the week ended September 12 was down 19.8% compared with the same week in 2008, the Association of American Railroads reported. AAR noted part of the decline could be attributed to the 2009 Labor Day (September 7); last year's corresponding week 36 did not include the holiday.

All 19 carload freight commodity groups measured by AAR were down from last year. Farm products not including grain fell a modest 1.5%; metallic ores plunged 52.3%.

U.S. intermodal traffic also fell 25.8% from the same week last year. Container volume fell 20.9% and trailer volume dropped 43.9%.

Canadian railroads reported volume fell 22.1% for the week compared with last year; intermodal volume declined 27.5%. Mexico's two major railroads reported originated volume down a modest 1% from the same week last year, while intermodal registered a gain, up 8.4%.

Combined North American rail volume for the first 36 weeks of 2009 on 13 reporting U.S.,

Canadian, and Mexican railroads was down 19.2% from last year. Combined intermodal volume fell 16.9% during the period measured against the comparable 2008 span.

Train crew employment up slightly in month

September 18, 2009

Train crew employment on U.S. railroads in mid-August stood at 57,167, an increase of 353, or 0.62%, over July, although the transportation (train and engine) group trailed August 2008 numbers by 15.86%.

Also registering improvement in August was the transportation (other than train and engine) category, which at 6,685 was up 2.12% over July and 1.27% higher than in August 2008.

Total Class I employment in August at 150,064 was off 0.22%, or 336, from July and down 8.65% from August 2008.