



Railroad Workers United

Solidarity • Unity • Democracy

The Rank & File in Action!

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Statement of Principles

Adopted at the Founding Convention April 11, 2008

Unity of All Rail Crafts: For decades, the carriers have played one craft off against the other to our mutual detriment. This lack of unity has contributed greatly to our lack of power, which has in turn hampered our ability to negotiate and enforce good contracts. We are unable to effectively confront the carriers on issues of vital concern to our membership—attendance, crew fatigue, discipline, safety, etc.—because we are divided. The carriers are degrading and deskilling our crafts, implementing new technologies that threaten our jobs, our safety and livelihoods, propose the dismantling of FELA, demand drastic health care concessions, and more. In the face of this aggressive attack, is there any doubt of the need for the greatest possible cross-craft unity? Therefore, Railroad Workers United supports the greatest possible unity and cooperation between all rail crafts and unions both at the leadership level and among the rank-and-file.

An End to Inter-Union Conflict: We condemn any and all hostilities between the rail unions. The open warfare between the UTU and the BLET is especially to be condemned. We demand an immediate halt to the irresponsible and reckless name calling, mud slinging and finger pointing that the leadership has long engaged in. We favor neither union in this – or in any other – destructive fratricide between brothers and sisters who are each others' natural allies.

Rank-and-File Democracy: Union leadership is all too often out of touch with the needs and issues of the membership. We need unions that are built upon democratic control by their members, unions that are not simply dues collection agencies for a few highly paid officials with jobs-for-life. We need constitutional provisions that include, but are by no means limited to: direct election of officers at all levels, including General Chairmen; the right to recall of officers; salary and expenditure limits; an end to special perks and privileges; proportional representation at conventions; and guarantees of protection for minority and dissenting views.

Membership Participation and Action: In addition to building unity and democracy, it is of equal importance that we build a rail labor movement based on the mass action of the members themselves. For too many years we have allowed our unions to be "led" by a small handful, while the average union member has remained uninformed, uninterested and uninvolved. In order to effectively stand up to the carriers, we must overcome the cynicism, apathy and despair of the ranks, and build in its place a union of inspired, educated, and active members who are willing to take action on the job in defense of our jobs and our unions.

Solidarity: For years, we have allowed the Carriers to whipsaw craft against craft, member against member. It's time we returned to the labor standard of "An injury to One is an Injury to All!" Only when we stand up for each other, go to bat for each other, and take action on the job in defense of each other, will we have a strong union. Remember, this is how unions were built in the first place! If the Carmen on the BNSF in Seattle are under attack, we ALL are under attack. When UP engineers are threatened, we ALL are threatened. Railroad Workers United strives to rebuild this spirit of solidarity.

No to Concessionary Bargaining: After decades of concessionary bargaining, rail workers have practically come to expect lousy contracts. We say NO! to further give-backs at the bargaining table. If the union cannot at least maintain the current standard of living and working conditions for its members, it will become increasingly irrelevant in their lives. We are committed to a coordinated bargaining strategy of all rail unions. We pledge ourselves to oppose any and all concessions at the bargaining table, and pledge to build a fighting movement of rank-and-filers that includes all railroad crafts to take the necessary action to defend our jobs, our livelihoods, our rights and our union!