

Support strike action at Canadian Pacific! For a united movement of North American railroaders against wage cuts and brutal working hours!

BNSF Workers Rank-and-File Committee
15 March 2022

Dear Canadian Pacific railroad workers,

The BNSF Workers Rank-and-File Committee sends our greetings and solidarity to our three thousand brothers and sisters at Canadian Pacific, who voted last month overwhelmingly to authorize strike action. We call on our fellow BNSF workers and Class I railroaders throughout North America to do everything they can to support the struggle at CP.

You at Canadian Pacific are fighting against the same things that we at BNSF and workers throughout the industry are fighting against: cuts to health care and benefits, wage increases canceled out by inflation, and above all, brutal working schedules and the campaign by management to move to one-man train crews.

These attacks are being coordinated against us by the Wall Street cabal which control the industry, including Warren Buffett at BNSF, Bill Gates at Canadian National, and hedge fund TCI at Canadian Pacific. In the time-honored divide-and-conquer strategy, TCI is using the pending merger between CP and Kansas City Southern, which it itself had engineered, in order to push for massive cuts at Canadian National, where it is also a major shareholder, in the name of “competitiveness.”

Here at BNSF, like you, we also voted overwhelmingly to strike earlier this year. At issue for us is the new points-based “Hi Viz” attendance which threatens to remove what little personal time we have left, and pave the way for the company to fire and replace higher seniority workers. But a federal judge has banned us from striking and other forms of “self-help.”

The judge justified his decision by citing ongoing supply chain issues, declaring it was in the “public interest” for the government to prevent us from striking. With this ruling, the courts have declared that they give absolute priority to the bogus “right” of corporations to profits over our rights as workers to see our families or to work safe and reasonable hours. But whatever the courts believe, we are not slaves, and we have rights that we demand be respected.

The court has farmed out enforcement of the injunction to the BLET and SMART-TD unions, who are doing so as aggressively as possible, while advising us only to wait for this “process” which is geared entirely for the companies’ benefit to play out—which will lead only to defeat.

In response to the treachery of the unions and the pro-corporate attacks from the courts, we have founded the BNSF Workers Rank-and-File Committee. In opposition to the bankrupt “strategy” of the unions, we counterposed in our founding statement the strategy of the international unity of the working class, who are facing the same attacks, including court and government interventions. Instead of waiting for the pro-corporate courts and federal mediators to rule in favor of BNSF as they always do, we are instead turning to the growing wave of struggles by workers throughout the United States and around the world for strength and support.

The Canadian government pretends that it is more “progressive” than that of United States, but this is a lie. We understand that you won’t be legally allowed to strike until the expiration of a required mediation

period on March 16. In the meantime, there can't be any doubt that both the government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in Canada and the Biden administration in the US will put immense pressure on you to stay on the job and not strike. They may accuse you of violating "national unity" in what is effectively a time of war over Ukraine, or even accuse you, as the corporate press in Britain recently accused striking London subway workers, of being "Putin's patsies." We urge you to reject this and to hold strong.

In reality, behind demands for "national unity" lie the demands for "national profits." At CP, for example, they are worried that a strike could jeopardize the transport of fertilizer to Canadian and American agribusiness, which are poised to reap windfall profits now that Russia and Ukraine, two of the largest exporters of grain, have been knocked out of the world market. It is the same in the oil and gas industry, where huge North American firms such as Marathon are licking their chops at \$130 per barrel oil prices and \$4 and even \$5 per gallon gasoline. While the major corporations engage in war profiteering, inflation will eat up our standard of living even more quickly than before.

They want "national unity" all right—the unity of the government, the major corporations and their trade union lackeys. The workers of all countries, as always, will be made to fit the bill.

Unsurprisingly, the BLET has not breathed a word to us about your struggle, even though the BLET is a division within the Teamsters union, of which you at CP are members. This shows the real role of the pro-corporate "unions" is not to unite but to divide us—by company, by job classification, and, worst of all, by nationality. But we know that we all have the same interests, regardless of which country we happen to live in.

Trudeau, like Biden, is enlisting the services of the union bureaucracy as part of a strategy to enforce "labor peace." The Teamsters in Canada have dutifully enforced concessions after the last three strikes at Canadian Pacific. In the last one, in 2018, they hailed the Trudeau government as a friend and ally. Trudeau, meanwhile, accepted this groveling praise while holding behind his back anti-strike legislation in case the unions weren't able to keep the strike under control.

Here in America, the BLET and SMART-TD claim that their hands are tied by laws such as the Railway Labor Act of 1926, which all but bans strikes in the American railroad industry. But the fact that the experience in Canada is essentially the same shows that this is a lie—as far as they are concerned, the RLA is only an additional weapon to use against rank-and-file opposition.

All of this proves the need for a united struggle, bringing together workers across the Class I railroads in North America. We propose to you and to the workers at the other railroads to establish contact, discuss common strategy and build a powerful movement, organized through rank-and-file committees, independent of both the pro-corporate unions and the corporate political parties in each country.

The first principle of this movement should be the international unity of the working class across national boundaries. We must reject "America First," "Canada First" and "Mexico First" rhetoric for what they are, attempts to divide us against each other. In reality, we are all fighting for the same thing. This includes:

1. An immediate end to "Hi Viz," Precision Scheduled Railroading, and all other brutal scheduling regimes.
2. Full funding for our pensions, including the restoration of all cuts
3. Cost of Living Adjustments in order to insulate us from the impact of inflation
4. A permanent end to the industry-wide campaign for single-person crews.

To fight for this program requires new organizations. The unions are corporate entities, not organizations which represent us. They long ago merged themselves with both corporate management and the government. This is why we must organize ourselves into new, really democratic organizations, rank-and-file committees controlled by workers ourselves, not by well-heeled bureaucrats.

If you agree with us, join us—there's no time to delay. Email us today at bnsfwrfc@gmail.com.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact