

After rejection of BMWED contract: Fight against union sabotage! Prepare a strike before the midterm elections!

The Railroad Workers Rank-and-File Committee
10 October 2022

Take up the fight for rank-and-file control! Join the Railroad Workers Rank-and-File Committee by sending an email to railwrfc@gmail.com, texting (314) 529-1064 or filling out the form at the bottom of this page.

Attend the RWRFC's upcoming public meeting Wednesday at 7pm EDT/6pm CDT, "No more delays! Organize the rank and file to fight for strike action!" Register for the event [here](#).

Brothers and sisters,

The vote by maintenance of way workers to reject the BMWED's sellout contract shows the power and determination of the rank and file. After weeks of delays, intimidation and divide-and-conquer tactics aimed at trying to soften up resistance, workers in the third-largest rail union rejected a contract that met none of their demands.

The real level of opposition was even greater than the 56 percent vote against. Given the turnout, less than 20 percent of eligible voters cast their ballot in favor of this garbage deal.

BMWED members have not only voted against a contract but the entire state-controlled, pro-business framework in which the union apparatus is embedded. It is a vote of no confidence in the union negotiators and expresses the determination of workers to launch a national strike to bring the carriers and their government backers to their knees.

Railroaders have been incredibly patient, using every other available recourse to push for their demands for more than three years without any success. But on September 16, the provisions of the Railway Labor Act became exhausted. There is no longer any legal restriction on our right to self-help. What else can we

be expected to do at this point but to utilize our constitutionally protected right to strike?

The main remaining obstacle is the opposition of the union bureaucracy. Far from yielding to our rank-and-file pressure, the BMWED officialdom is already doubling down. Following the example set by the IAM last month, they have responded to the "no" vote by unilaterally extending the strike deadline to "five days after Congress reconvenes."

This is an act of sabotage. The bureaucrats at all 12 rail unions never tire of threatening workers with congressional intervention, acting as Congress's bag men and messenger boys. But by extending the strike deadline until after the midterm elections on November 8, they are deliberately *inviting* Congress to pass anti-strike legislation, giving them the chance to intervene with fewer political repercussions. They are even baking in an extra five days to allow Congress to take their time to work out legislation for the second the deadline expires, without suffering the indignity of calling a special session that cuts their post-election vacations!

The union bureaucracy has shown that there is no line that it will not cross in their bid to ram these deals through against our will. The IAM has already set the pattern the BMWED will follow next. BMWED negotiators will now meet with the company to work out a "second" tentative agreement, with identical economics to the first, and use that to postpone the strike deadline even further.

This follows the fraudulent vote at the IBEW, where many workers did not even receive ballots. And the BLET and SMART-TD are also extending their contract votes until after the midterms, with the last day

of voting on November 16.

We cannot allow this to stand! We must strike immediately, when our position is strongest. Any delay only helps our enemies.

The bureaucracy is fighting us, and will fight us, every step of the way. Weeks after the provisions of the Railway Labor Act finally expired, the union officialdom has stepped forward to enforce de facto injunctions against striking through endless bureaucratic delays.

At our last public meeting on September 28, hundreds of railroaders around the country voted to approve a resolution expressing the will of the rank and file, which declared in part:

In the past two weeks, the unions have worked nonstop to sabotage our struggle. They are postponing deadlines until after the midterm elections. They are presenting TAs that we already rejected. They are planning to ram through the PEB recommendations no matter how we vote.

We, the rank-and-file workers, declare that our patience is exhausted. We are not going to accept contracts stuffed down our throats through the methods of injunction and dictatorship, whether through the mechanism of congressional decree or the treachery of the unions. We have the right to take collective action, up to and including a strike [emphasis added].

This resolution must now be enforced through organized, independent action. If there is to be a strike, you must exercise your First Amendment right to free speech to prepare the ground for it.

Here is what we urge our coworkers to do:

- **Organize informational pickets at your workplace to raise the demand for strike action among your coworkers.** The pickets themselves will be a major step in the preparation of a strike, because it will establish independent lines of communication not controlled by the apparatus and demonstrate to your coworkers their ability to act in defiance of the bureaucracy.

- **Develop a rank-and-file committee at your yard, affiliated with the national Railroad Workers Rank-and-File Committee.** Hardly a single worker can be found who isn't furious, but this anger is by and large still unorganized. We must build the alternative structures which allow us to democratically organize joint action on a national scale to countermand the

decisions of the apparatus.

- **Attend this Wednesday's public meeting sponsored by the Railroad Workers Rank-and-File Committee.** Come prepared to speak and discuss strategy with your coworkers from around the country.

The bureaucracy wants us to believe that they are all-powerful, but they're not. The vote shows they're losing control of the situation, and they know it. The BLET and SMART TD are issuing nervous statements virtually every day against "misinformation," by which they mean the fact that nobody believes the unions' lies and workers are using social media to exchange information independent of them.

But if there is to be a different outcome this time than a sellout, we have to be the ones to fight for it. No one will do it for us. To take up the fight, contact us today and join the Railroad Workers Rank-and-File Committee.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact