

Oppose the censorship of WSWS rail coverage on Reddit and Facebook!

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Several supporters of the Railroad Workers Rank-and-File Committee have reported that attempts to share links to committee statements posted on the *World Socialist Web Site* to popular social media websites and Facebook groups have been deleted or blocked without explanation in recent days.

In the last 24 hours, two different supporters of the committee have reported that attempts to post a recently published letter written by a Chicago-area railroader were removed on the popular social news aggregation website Reddit.

Reddit is one of the largest social media websites on the planet, with over 1.7 billion visitors in May 2022. The advertising-based, for-profit website was valued at over \$10 billion in August 2021 following an additional \$700 million in funding led by Fidelity Investments.

The posts that were removed were made in the r/railroading subreddit, a popular message board frequented by railroad workers.

In his letter, the Brotherhood of Locomotives and Engineers Trainmen member wrote: “The entire approach to our contract negotiations was a sham from beginning to end. The BLET hierarchy never imagined that they’d be faced with a majority vote to authorize an actual strike. What followed was pure political theater which left the rank and file of the BLET with little to no recourse.

“However, there may be another reason that our union leaders were secretly hoping for the strike vote to fail. I suspect it has something to do with the current financial status of the BLET strike fund. Does anyone actually know how much money has been set aside or reserved in this fund? Have these resources ever been used by our union leaders for other purposes without the express knowledge or consent of BLET members?”

Despite the fact that the letter was written by a

railroad worker and did not violate any of the subreddit rules, on two separate occasions it was removed without explanation after being posted.

This is not the first time posts linking to the WSWS on the r/railroading subreddit have been deleted without explanation. In the last month supporters of the committee have reported that their recent reply to BMWED president Tony Cardwell: Who has the right to “sanction” a strike—the bureaucracy or the workers? was also removed from the subreddit without explanation.

In October 2022, at least 10 posts either linking directly to statements from the Rank-and-File Committee or to railroad reporting on the WSWS have been removed from the r/railroading subreddit. This is despite the fact that posts that have been allowed to remain on the subreddit generate thousands of views, strong discussions and positive reactions from workers, some of whom have publicly expressed their appreciation for statements written by the Rank-and-File Committee and articles posted by the WSWS.

“[WSWS] articles have been a breath of fresh air,” one r/railroading commenter said last week.

Another commented on a WSWS article posted to the subreddit, saying, “I’m pleased that WSWS reports on railroads so frequently and in what depth they have.”

In response to the censoring of letters by railroaders, one Baltimore area member of the Rank-and-File Committee told the WSWS. “Those who engage in censoring opposing viewpoints signify a weakness in defending their position.”

Railroaders should oppose the attempts to censor articles by the WSWS, which is an attack on the democratic rights of all railroaders. The WSWS is being singled out for its support for rank-and-file opposition to the union bureaucracy’s attempts to

enforce the sellout deal brokered by the Biden administration and its defiance of the overwhelming support for strike action.

The censorship of WSWs articles only works to the benefit of the pro-corporate bureaucrats and the rail companies. The significant increase in the censorship of WSWs articles comes as 60,000 engineers and conductors begin their contract vote in a drawn-out process which is widely anticipated to result in a “no” vote. This would effectively mean the collapse of the Biden-sponsored settlement to avert a national strike, which did next to nothing to address workers’ demands.

The business press, Washington and the union bureaucracy reacted to last week’s rejection of the deal by railroad signalmen with alarm because the vote, the third such rejection out of 12 railroad unions, created momentum against the deal going into the critical vote for rail crews.

Speaking to Fox Business on Tuesday, Brotherhood of Railway Signalmen President Michael Baldwin described a national rail strike as “the last thing we want to do as an organization. I don’t believe that any of rail labor really wants to strike.” In fact, after three years of working with an expired contract in which the carriers and the government have refused to budge on workers’ demands, support for strike action is overwhelming among the rank and file. They have repeatedly authorized strike action by 99 percent or more.

Pointing to the sensitivity of the union bureaucracy towards the threat which it faces from below, a Wisconsin-area railroader told the WSWs that they had previously been banned from the r/railroading subreddit for speaking out against the union apparatus.

“I did create a Reddit account but was banned for 28 days on r/railroading due to my opinion against union guys,” the worker told a WSWs reporter. “I have about 20 days left before I can get back on it. They clearly did not like my opinion.”

There is no question the censoring of WSWs material is deliberate. For years, Reddit moderators have banned WSWs links on the popular r/coronavirus and r/politics subreddits without explanation.

Reddit is not the only platform where supporters of the committee have reported material from the WSWs has been banned.

In October following the WSWs exposure of the fraudulent IBEW vote, supporters of the committee were banned from the public Facebook group “IF YOU WORK(ED) ON THE RAILROAD (railfans welcome).” Previous posts made by supporters in the group, some of which had gathered hundreds of reactions, comments and shares, were deleted.

Attempts to censor the WSWs and rank-and-file opposition to the Biden-brokered tentative agreements, negotiated in secret with high-level union bureaucrats and the carriers last month, continue to fail.

WSWs articles are being read and shared by thousands every day. This past Sunday, hundreds of railroaders attended the third public meeting of the Railroad Workers Rank-and-File Committee which the WSWs helped to promote.

There remains, despite the best attempts of the union bureaucrats and the corporate media to sell the garbage tentative agreements, enormous support for a strike among the over 120,000 rank-and-file railroad workers who have labored without a contract for over three years.

While tens of thousands of rail workers have been driven out of the industry by impossibly austere attendance policies which leave train crews on call 24/7, the major Class I rail carriers have reaped enormous profits.

Last month, Norfolk Southern reported that in the third quarter the rail generated \$958 million in profit or “27 percent more third-quarter profit” compared to last year. The eastern-US based rail company reported \$3.34 billion in revenue despite shipping 2 percent less product.

Also in October, CSX reported a third quarter profit of \$1.1 billion, a 15 percent increase compared to the \$968 million last year.

CSX third quarter profits already factor in the \$42 million it will cost the company to implement the wage “increases,” under the deal which has not yet even been ratified. These are actually pay cuts since they do not keep pace with over 8 percent year-to-year inflation.



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