

February 8, 2008

Dear Brother and Sister Amtrak Employees:

A very long wait is over. Finally, after more than 8 years of off and on bargaining, petitions to the National Mediation Board seeking a release from mediation, testimony to Congress over Amtrak's failure to bargain, and Presidential intervention in our negotiations; we have a tentative agreement with Amtrak. We consider this Agreement a substantial success because it gives back no work rules to Amtrak and puts Amtrak workers' wages back on the same footing as your brothers and sisters who work for the major freight railroads. This tentative agreement shows the power and strength that Unions working together can command even in the face of hostile management, a hostile White House and critics in Congress. We stuck together and proved to everyone that our cause, the cause of justice for Amtrak workers, was right and our contract demands were fair and reasonable. We applaud all of you for demonstrating a level of patience in a bargaining process that was frustrating at best and dysfunctional at worst.

Over 8 years ago, all of the Unions served notice on Amtrak seeking changes in our collective bargaining agreements. Amtrak's response was unyielding, "make an agreement that permits the contracting out of work; change starting time and work week schedules to fit management's whims; combine craft work and, yes, after you agree to all of that -- no backpay." We refused to cave in to Amtrak's strong arm tactics because to do so, on Amtrak's terms, would have meant the end of your jobs on Amtrak. In the end, the PEB vindicated our position, saying "there is a serious question as to whether Amtrak desired to obtain agreements from the Organizations in this proceeding other than under terms evidencing complete capitulation in several areas in which such capitulation could not reasonably be expected." All of us were right to stick to our positions, because our positions were fair and reasonable.

All of us took a great deal of verbal abuse during this process from Amtrak's misguided critics who found every real or imagined reason to criticize rail passenger transportation and blame the "unions" for all of the ills facing Amtrak. We also took abuse from Amtrak, when it tried to contract out your jobs or send them overseas. Through all of this, like good unionists, we stuck it out – together, fighting for the economic justice Amtrak workers deserve.

We also want to express our thanks for the steadfast support we received from Labor's friends in Congress. Senators Edward Kennedy, Frank Lautenberg, and Dick Durbin, along with Representative James Oberstar very clearly told Amtrak it was time to settle and accept the PEB's recommendations. Their help finally allowed us to cross the finish line. We also want to note the strong support given by Senator Patty Murray in the Amtrak appropriations process. Her subcommittee's report on Amtrak appropriations helped debunk Amtrak's claim of Congressional hostility to increased Amtrak funding. To all of Rail Labor's friends in Congress, we say "thank you," you made a difference for our members and we will not forget your help.

Today, the task is almost over. We have a tentative agreement which is enclosed within. Please read the enclosed summary and the entire agreement. Compare it to Amtrak's demands to the PEB for the right to contract out all your work, combine crafts and destroy the 40 hour work week. You will see that together, we held our ground, and obtained real wage gains and preserved rules and benefits that Amtrak wanted to destroy. We strongly urge that you vote to ratify this Agreement.  
In solidarity,

F. Leo McCann, President  
American Train Dispatchers Association

Freddie N. Simpson, President  
Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division/IBT

W. Dan Pickett, International President  
Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen

Gary Maslanka

Vice Chairman, Joint Council of Carmen, Helpers, Coach Cleaners & Apprentices  
Director of Railroad Division, Transport Workers Union of America

Carl Tingle

Chairman, Joint Council of Carmen, Helpers, Coach Cleaners & Apprentices  
General Vice President, TCU Carmen Division

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Edwin D. Hill".

Edwin D. Hill, International President  
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

Robert Roach, Jr., General Vice President

International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers

George J. Francisco, Jr., President

National Conference of Firemen and Oilers/SEIU

Joseph J. Derillo, Sr.

International Representative, TCU ARASA Division/Maintenance  
Of Way and Maintenance of Equipment Supervisors